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KONFERENSI INTERNASIONAL KESUSASTRAAN XXVII

HOTEL SANTIKA BANGKA, 20 - 22 SEPTEMBER 2018

Sastra Menanamkan Harmoni Kehidupan

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STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL DEMANDS OF ROALD DAHL'S CINDERELLA

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the elements of narrative structure found in *Cinderella*, a narrative poem written by Roald Dahl, a British writer. According to William Labov, the structure of a narrative consists of six elements, namely an abstract, an orientation, complicating action, evaluation, a resolution, and a coda. It has to be understood as well that in a narrative, besides this structural demand, a narrative should also meet the functional demand, which refers more to how a writer can make his writing as interestingly as possible so that the writing is appealing to the readers. This functional demand can be most clearly seen in the evaluation element of the narrative structure. Roald Dahl's *Cinderella* is a narrative poem based on the well-known French fairy tale by Perrault. However, in Dahl's version there are strikingly different elements from the original, which makes this narrative poem enticing to read. His witty and creative use of language also supports a distinctive evaluation. The discussion will cover how Roald Dahl can successfully meet the two kinds of demands in this narrative poem.

Keywords: narrative structure, narrative poem, structural demand, functional demand

ABSTRAK

Makalah ini membahas unsur-unsur struktur naratif yang ditemukan dalam *Cinderella*, sebuah puisi narasi yang ditulis oleh Roald Dahl, seorang penulis Inggris. Menurut William Labov, struktur narasi terdiri dari enam elemen, yaitu abstrak, orientasi, tindakan yang rumit, evaluasi, resolusi, dan coda. Harus dipahami juga bahwa dalam sebuah naratif, selain permintaan struktural ini, narasi juga harus memenuhi permintaan fungsional, yang lebih mengacu pada bagaimana seorang penulis dapat membuat tulisannya semenarik mungkin sehingga tulisannya menarik bagi para pembaca. . Permintaan fungsional ini dapat dilihat paling jelas dalam elemen evaluasi struktur narasi. *Cinderella* karya Roald Dahl adalah puisi naratif berdasarkan dongeng Perancis yang terkenal oleh Perrault. Namun, dalam versi Dahl ada unsur-unsur yang sangat berbeda dari aslinya, yang membuat puisi naratif ini menarik untuk dibaca. Penggunaan bahasa yang cerdas dan kreatif juga mendukung evaluasi khusus. Pembahasan akan mencakup bagaimana Roald Dahl dapat berhasil memenuhi dua jenis tuntutan dalam puisi narasi ini.

Kata Kunci: struktur narasi, puisi naratif, permintaan struktural, permintaan fungsional

INTRODUCTION

Every writer has their own styles and techniques in narrating a story. Whatever the style is, a writer should be aware that the narrating style has to be interesting and outstanding in order to get the readers' attention. A common and ordinary style of writing will certainly make the story less attractive despite having a good story. This is what basically is required from a writer: the structural demand and the functional demand. Thus, in terms of the narrative structure, to meet the structural demand, a writer will have to work on making the structure of the story as clear and logical as possible so that the story will be understood well by the reader. Besides, a writer will also have to think about how to narrate the story in order to meet the functional demand. The story must be conveyed in an attractive way so that the readers will enjoy reading it a lot.

The paper will unveil the narrative structure of Roald Dahl's *Cinderella*, one of the six narrative poems in *Revolting Rhymes*, which was published in 1982. To put it simply, narrative structure is a way of telling stories and the narrative structure of this narrative poem is atypical and captivating. Roald Dahl is a British writer who is famous for children's novels. In the *New York Times Book Review* in 1964, Dahl was said to know "how to appeal to children" (as cited in Sturrock, 2010, *Breaking Point*). Despite being a very popular writer, he is also criticized for being quite harsh in telling the stories, which often creates a controversy. In his defense, Dahl states that children's sense of humor is much cruder than adults, and that he is writing stories that appeal much to his readers (Roald Dahl Biography, 2016, para. 14). Apart from this, what people should acknowledge is that in a story, the form is as essential as the content, and Roald Dahl is one of those writers whose outstanding form of writing is worth analyzing.

The grand theory of this analysis is Stylistics, which is sometimes called "...literary linguistics. It is the study and analysis of texts; it is in particular, although not exclusively, the study and analysis of literary texts" (Burke, 2014, p. 1). The specific theory used is that of narrative structure proposed by William Labov, an American linguist. In Labov's theory of narrative structure there are six elements: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and

coda. Furthermore, the complicating action and resolution material is used to support the structural demand since this is more about the narrative events. On the other hand, the evaluation material has the biggest role for meeting the functional demand for it is in the evaluation part that a writer can highlight and emphasize the entertaining and instructive functions (Toolan, 1998, pp. 137-138).

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a library research analysis. The method used is the descriptive method, which aims to describe some facts and take the real picture of them. This means that there will be a clear, systematic, accurate, and factual picture of the condition. In this case, the real condition is gained through the data obtained, their characteristics and all the related phenomena. Consequently, in this research method, accurate interpretation is made based on the real data, which characterizes this research as a qualitative research.

DISCUSSION

The poem starts with an abstract in the first seven lines, which gives an idea or a clue what the story is about.

- (1) I guess you think you know this story.
- (2) You don't. The real one's much more gory.
- (3) The phoney one, the one you know,
- (4) Was cooked up years and years ago,
- (5) And made to sound all soft and sappy
- (6) just to keep the children happy.
- (7) Mind you, they got the first bit right,

In the abstract, apparently Dahl wants to give information to the readers that his version of *Cinderella* is not the same as the version they are more likely to be familiar with. He tells the readers that only the first part is the same, but the rest is more horrifying. In this very first part of the poem, it is obvious that Dahl is very

smart at giving a kind of “warning” to the readers that the poem contains something different. This is important as when the readers read the title of the poem, most of them may think that the poem is just a retelling of a story that they have already known since childhood as *Cinderella* is a very well-known fairy tale around the world. When this happens, many will most probably not continue reading the poem. As an abstract, this serves a very effective one as it will entice readers and make them feel curious to find out what kind of version this one is.

The next element is orientation, in which a writer introduces some background information such as the participants, time, and place. However, in the poem Dahl does not give any information of the setting of time and place, which gives the impression that the story is not close to reality. Besides, there are only five main participants: Cinderella, the Prince, Magic Fairy, and the two Ugly Sisters. This leads to the fact that the poem centers on mainly the same participants as in the earlier version, except for the absence of Cinderella’s stepmother. Thus, based on the abstract given, if it is said that the story here will not be the same as the previously known *Cinderella*, then the main difference will not be about the main participants; it must be about something else.

The main events of the story are covered in the complicating action. In *Cinderella* there are ten main events in the complicating action. The story develops from the first event when the Ugly Sisters go to the Palace Ball, while Cinderella is locked up in a cellar. In the abstract, Dahl already states that in his version it is only the first part that is the same as the previously known version. This means that out of the total of ten events considered to be the complicating actions, only this first event is the same, while the other nine events are different. This confirms the statement Dahl gives in the abstract that the story of Cinderella in this poem is very much different from the earlier version and now it is clear that it is the complicating action that the striking difference lies in.

The next event told in this narrative poem after the step sisters go to the Palace Ball is that Cinderella is nagging to the Magic Fairy about making it possible for her to go to the ball. Then Cinderella’s slipper is left at the palace but one of the step sisters exchanges it with her own slipper. After that, the Prince is

looking all over town to find the owner of the slipper only to find that it fits the step sister's foot. The Prince does not like this and he beheads the step sister. When the other step sister tries the slipper on, she is beheaded too. Cinderella is heartbroken when noticing the beheadings and when the Prince is about to chop her head off as well. She then makes a wish which the Magic Fairy fulfills that she can marry a decent simple man.

Considering the complicating action of the poem, it is clear that the most strikingly different event is when the Prince decapitates the two ugly sisters because he likes neither of them. Consequently, Cinderella is terrified to see this and decides not to marry the Prince. Indeed, with this kind of complicating action, Dahl's version of Cinderella is "much more gory", exactly as he has warned the readers in the abstract part. This point is also believed to be one of the factors why Dahl is sometimes questioned for being controversial as a writer of children's stories. For all the controversies, Dahl's unexpected complicating action must be acknowledged as a great element of surprise which makes the poem captivating to read. Besides, the readers can be made "awake" from the ideal dream usually provoked in fairy tales that princes are always charming and kind-hearted, not to mention wealthy, since in reality practically no one is as perfect as that.

These events in the complicating action are finally resolved in the fact that Cinderella gets married with a jam maker and lives happily ever after, as described in lines 117 - 122:

- (117) Within a minute, Cinderella
- (118) Was married to a lovely feller,
- (119) A simple jam maker by trade,
- (120) Who sold good home-made marmalade.
- (121) Their house was filled with smiles and laughter
- (122) And they were happy ever after.

This resolution again emphasizes Dahl's intention to keep the story as realistic as possible. Instead of having an ideal marriage with a rich, handsome, kindhearted

prince, the story ends with Cinderella getting married happily with just a simple man. It is also interesting to notice that the poem ends with the last line "And they were happy ever after", which is often the case in all fairy tales. However, in this poem Dahl has a different type of happiness as he tells the readers that happiness can still be fulfilled in other things than a marriage with a prince.

This is also in line with the coda element, in which the writer puts forward the realistic moral lesson of the story. The coda of this poem is stated by Cinderella in lines 112 - 115:

(112) "This time I shall be more wary.

(113) 'No more Princes, no more money.

(114) 'I have had my taste of honey.

(115) I'm wishing for a decent man.

Through these lines the readers can get the main lesson of the story that choosing someone to marry should be based on the mental character rather than the physical one.

The last element of the narrative structure is the evaluation element. This element of Dahl's *Cinderella* is worth mentioning due to the outstanding and witty use of language. The evaluation part is basically about how the events are described by the writer. There are two types of evaluation, which are external evaluation and internal evaluation. External evaluation is when a writer gives his comments or assessment on the events. This narrative poem actually begins with an external evaluation, when the writer "warns" the reader about the gory version of his Cinderella story, and thus, it serves as a foreshadowing.

Another comment is made by the writer concerning the physical characteristics of the stepsisters:

(57) At once, one of the Ugly Sisters,

(58) (The one whose face was blotched with blisters)

- (69) The shoe was long and very wide.
(70) (A normal foot got lost inside.)
(71) Also it smelled a wee bit icky.
(72) (The owner's feet were hot and sticky.)

The sentences in brackets are the writer's comments. Besides creating a humorous description of the ugly sister's face as well as her shoe and feet, these comments are also used to emphasize how ugly the Ugly Sisters are and how big and disgusting the shoe and feet are. The choice of words is also carefully done to create interesting rhyming couplets in the lines above (*sisters – blisters; wide – inside; icky – sticky*).

The next comment is made to give another foreshadowing as well as a suspense:

- (63) Ah ha, you see, the plot grows thicker,
(64) And Cindy's luck starts looking sicker.

This comment gives the readers a clue that the story will somehow develop to something worse, especially for Cinderella. Dahl gives this comment when one of the ugly sisters throws Cinderella's shoe away and replaces it with her own shoe so as to fit her foot perfectly.

In the other type of evaluation, the internal evaluation, a writer emphasizes or dramatizes an event by adding some things to the basic story so as to highlight attitudes or to gain the readers' attention at moments which are considered important. There are four types of internal evaluations, which are intensifying evaluation, comparator evaluation, correlative evaluation, and explicative evaluation (Toolan, 1998, pp. 139-140). In *Cinderella*, the intensifying evaluation, which functions to create "...vividness via gestures, repetitions, emphases, or dramatic sounds" (Toolan, 1998, p. 139), is the most dominant type of internal evaluation compared to the other three types.

The most obvious feature of the intensifying evaluation is the use of sound repetition at the end of each line, which is termed as rhymes. In the poem, the couplet rhymes consistently exist from the first line to the last one (line 122). Besides, the poem consists of approximately the same meter length (seven to nine syllables). The use of couplet rhymes and regular meters shows the superb quality of Dahl's use of diction.

In the poem, the use of rhymes and meters is closely related to the fact that the poem's target readers are children. Rhyming is significantly effective for children, as stated by Dunst (2011), "knowledge about and experience with nursery rhymes has been positively associated with phonological measures such as the ability to produce and detect rhyming patterns, as well as with pre-literacy measures, such as alphabet knowledge and letter-sound awareness" (as cited in Stover, 2015, p. 3). When children have the ability to detect or predict rhyme patterns, this can help their brain maximally develop. In addition, Geiger (2016) states that rhyming improves children's imagination, and it is more enjoyable for children to learn how to read by reading something with rhymes.

Furthermore, besides the rhyme couplets (*coach – brooch; those – hose*), lines 25 – 28 also show another language feature used, which is the repetition of the word "and" and the repetition of the sentence structure "Subject + Verb + Object" in line 25.

(25) 'I want a dress! I want a coach!

(26) 'And earrings and a diamond brooch!

(27) 'And silver slippers, two of those!

(28) 'And lovely nylon panty hose!

These two types of repetition is a clever foregrounding form as these lines tell about a part with a significant point, namely about the greedy characteristic of Cinderella, which is very much different from the Cinderella that people are more familiar with. By using the repetitive forms in these four lines, Dahl is emphasising this different characteristic so as to give a clue to the reader that there will be something different in the complicating action as well as in the resolution

and coda. This kind of foreshadowing definitely helps the reader a lot in following the story.

This poem also uses intensifying evaluation in the form of exaggeration or hyperboles. For example, line (70) "A normal foot got lost inside" is used to describe the step sister's big shoe. Then, in describing how pale the Prince is, line (79) says "The Prince went white from ear to ear". The next data showing exaggeration can be found in line (33) "And quickly, in no time at all, Cindy was at the Palace Ball!" and line (105) "Just then, all in a blaze of light" to describe the quickness of the actions. These hyperbolic forms are elements that can add to the beautiful and attractive forms of the story itself, especially when it creates humor as well, as in line (70) above.

CONCLUSION

As an overall conclusion, in spite of the fact that there are different versions of the fairy tale *Cinderella*, Dahl's *Cinderella* version is the most enthralling version. It is highly compelling due to the shocking events which are strikingly different compared to the other versions.

In terms of the structural criteria, the poem has certainly met the demand. All the six elements in the narrative structure can be found in the poem, which contributes to the full understanding of the poem as a whole. These elements are also neatly and logically arranged so as to make it easily understood and yet, it is also thought-provoking at the same time. Dahl brilliantly intertwines his realistic message in a fairy tale type of story.

Besides, the poem has proved to have met the functional demand. Both the external and internal types of evaluation used in the poem have certainly created a "beautiful package" of the story as well as closely affected children as the main target readers. The repetitive forms are various as they cover the repetition of sounds (rhymes), words as well as sentence structure. Undoubtedly, this is something essential in order to engage children as the main readers as children do not enjoy stories told in a solemn tone.

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