
ROALD DAHL'S USE OF LANGUAGE PLAY IN *CHARLIE AND THE GREAT GLASS ELEVATOR*

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ABSTRACT. Nowadays playing with language has already become a common thing that we do in our daily conversation, usually with the expected purpose of making an utterance more attractive, humorous, and entertaining. If further analysed, linguistically, language play actually makes use of the linguistic elements such as those in the phonological, morphological, semantic and graphological areas. In children's books, language play is often used as a tool to make the stories more attractive for children. This is gained from the pleasant sounds as well as humorous meanings produced and also from more detailed and clearer descriptions of the stories. These are the effects produced by the use of the various items of language play, such as the use of unique similes, homophones and homonyms, contradictory words, allusion, alliterations, spelling, etc. These all are the reasons for a novel being special and unique.

Key words: Language play, linguistic elements, children.

**PENGUNAAN PERMAINAN BAHASA OLEH ROALD DAHL
DALAM *CHARLIE AND THE GREAT GLASS ELEVATOR***

ABSTRAK. Saat ini bermain dengan bahasa telah menjadi satu hal yang umum yang kita lakukan dalam percakapan sehari-hari, biasanya dengan tujuan membuat ujaran kita lebih menarik, lucu, dan menghibur. Jika dikaji lebih lanjut secara linguistik, permainan bahasa menggunakan elemen-elemen linguistik seperti yang terdapat dalam bidang fonologis, morfologis, semantik dan juga grafologis. Dalam cerita anak-anak, permainan bahasa sering dijadikan alat untuk membuat cerita menjadi lebih menarik untuk anak-anak. Hal ini diperoleh lewat bunyi-bunyi yang enak didengar dan juga makna yang lucu yang dihasilkan serta deskripsi cerita yang lebih rinci dan jelas. Hal-hal ini merupakan efek yang dihasilkan oleh penggunaan bentuk-bentuk permainan bahasa, seperti penggunaan simili yang unik, homofon dan homonim, kata-kata yang bertentangan, alusi, aliterasi, ejaan, dll. Semuanya merupakan alasan yang membuat sebuah novel istimewa dan unik.

Kata kunci: Permainan bahasa, elemen linguistik, anak-anak.

INTRODUCTION

In doing something, for example reading, it is naturally easy for children to feel bored and finally they will stop or reject reading any books. Besides, children also have high imagination. Because of those reasons, authors of children's books are expected to create and write children's stories as interestingly as they can. In this way, children can both have fun and get some moral lessons when reading books. They can also enjoy their reading more if they can use their imagination as freely as possible.

One of the ways to make the stories more interesting and imaginative for children is by using language play. According to Elkind (1987: 24), being playful with language can help improve children's language development.

...play provides a best defense against stress because it allows for the flexibility a child needs while working out of his or her questions about the perceived world. Play allows children to assimilate and accommodate at a rate that is personally satisfying.... If a child has found learning to read to be stressful in any way, play is a way to help restore cognitive flexibility as well as a positive attitude. These characteristics contribute to the complex nature of play and reveal the qualities that makes language play capable of serving "use of mind", as well as language and literacy development.

Roald Dahl is one extraordinary author of children's books with a special use of language play. Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator (1998) is only one of the many examples of his books which use language play. The language play obviously makes the stories more interesting and imaginative. Crystal (1998: 1) mentions that 'language play is an action of manipulating the language by bending and breaking its rules.' Furthermore, Cook (2000: 228) states that there are two classifications of language play: (a) play with language form, such as with the sounds of language, with rhyme, rhythm, song, alliteration, puns, grammatical parallelism, and (b) semantic play, play with units of meaning, combining them in ways that do not exist: fictions. Cook (2000: 200) also states that language play is used for the purposes of enjoyment, self-amusement, and fun.

As the basis of the analysis of the forms of language play in Roald Dahl's novel, linguistic theories such as those in the areas of Semantics, Morphology, Phonology, and Graphology are needed. In Semantics, in which we study '... the relation of the event to features of meaning' (Bloomfield, 1961: 74), there are some elements found in the forms of language play in the novel, such as homophony, homonymy, figurative language, contradictory words, and allusion.

Homophony is 'a pair (or more) of words having the same sound but different meaning' (Nash, 1994: 138), for example, the words see [si:] and sea [si:]. The second semantic aspect used is homonymy, which is a pair of words which have the same sound and spelling, but different in meaning' (Nash, 1998: 141), for example, the word bank, which has two meanings, 'ground near a river' and

'establishment for keeping money and valuable safely' (Hornby, 2005: 61). The third semantic aspect, figurative language, is the use of figures of speech like simile, which is the comparison between two things which are not similar by using certain words: like, as, as though, as of, as ... as, so ... as (Murphy, 1972: 23), for example, the sentence **the lamb is as white as snow**. The next semantic aspect is contradictory words, in which 'a sentence expressing one proposition is contradictory of a sentence expressing another proposition if it is impossible for both propositions to be true at the same time and of the same circumstances.' (Hurford and Heasley, 1984: 119) The last aspect in Semantics used is allusion, which is 'a reference to something in history or previous literature – like a richly connotative word or a symbol, a means of suggesting far more than it says.' (Perrine, 1978: 666) For example, the sentence "Is this Mick Jagger that I see before me?" is the literary reference to Macbeth "Is this a dagger which I see before me?" (Nash, 1998: 5)

In Morphology, which focuses on the structure of words and word formation, some word formation processes are used in the forming of language play items in the novel, namely **compounding**, **clipping**, and **affixation**.

Compounding is a word formation process in which 'two base forms are added together' (Crystal, 1998: 90), for example, **fingerprint**, **wallpaper**, and **doorknob**. Clipping is 'the process whereby a lexeme (simple or complex) is shortened, while still retaining the same meaning and still being a member of the same form class.' (Bauer, 1987: 233) Examples of this process are **fax** (<facsimile), **Mike** (<Michael), and **fridge** (<refrigerator). Affixation is 'the attachment of affixes to the existing lexical forms or stems in the process of word formation.' (Widdowson, 1996: 46). One of the processes of affixation which is found in the novel is **suffixation**, which is 'a syllable placed after a word to change its meaning or its part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb)' (Widdowson, 1996: 46). For example, the word **teach** gets the suffix **-er** and it becomes **teacher**.

The next aspects used in the forms of language play in the novel are those included in Phonology, 'the study of how speech sounds are organized and how they function in language.' (Crane *et al.*, 72). *The phonological aspect found is alliteration.*

Alliteration and assonance are both repetitions of sounds. Alliteration is 'a use of language in which the words begin with the same initial sound or letter.' (Crystal, 58), or 'the repetition of like consonant sounds' (Perrine, 1978: 666) For example, the repetition of the consonant [s] in '*In a summer season*'. Assonance is 'the repetition of vowel sounds as in the phrase '*mad as a hatter*' (Perrine, 1978: 711)

Graphological variation is 'a relatively minor and superficial part of style; concerning such matters as spelling, capitalization, hyphenation, italicization, and paragraphing.' (Leech and Short, 1994: 131) In Graphology, there is an element

included in using language play, namely **spelling**. For example, the word **beautiful** is spelled as **bewetiful** in the following joke:

'What did one sheep say to the other?'

'I think *ewe are bewetiful*.' (Crystal, 1998: 13)

In the joke above, it is clear that the humorous point lies in the misspelling of the word **beautiful** and how the misspelling, **bewetiful**, is a play on the other word **ewe**, which has to do with **sheep** in the previous sentence.

In my opinion, language play certainly has positive effects on children, especially those of the age between 7-14 years old. At the age of 7-8, children are generally able to read and considered to have literacy skills. They also start to get interested in jokes or humour and enjoy word play – the ways words sound, puns, and even repartee and allusion. (Elkind, 1987: 29)

Pleasant sounds, such as repetition and rhyming, need to be created because they will help children to remember the words and their meanings more easily. There is a statement from 'Head Start Information and Publication Center', entitled *The Magic World of Reading: Opening Doors for Children*, quoted by Elkind (1987: 12), which says: 'Children can enjoy books with repetition and rhyme. When children hear these books again and again, they memorize the words, join in the reading, and give enjoyment to them' This is supported by Huck (1987: 13), who says, 'Listening to stories introduces children to patterns of language and extends vocabulary and meaning. Young children love to repeat such refrains.'

Children's stories have also to give clear descriptions about the characters or even the situation of the story. This can help children to understand the situation and the characters of the stories better. "Good writing or effective use of language, on any subject may produce aesthetic experiences. The imaginative use of language produces both intellectual and emotional responses. It will cause the reader to perceive characters, conflicts, elements in a setting, and universal problems of mankind..." (Huck, 1987: 4) Besides, the imaginative stories will help children's imagination well as 'literature develops children's imagination and helps them to consider nature, people, experiences, or ideas in new ways and good writing may pique the child's curiosity just as much as intriguing art.' (Huck, 1987: 8)

For the above reasons, I believe, authors of children's stories should write books which can make children not easily bored; on the contrary, they will make children enjoy their reading more. 'First and foremost, literature provides delight and enjoyment as it enlarges the child's horizons by providing new experiences and new insights.' (Huck, 1987: 7)

METHODS

The method used in this research is the descriptive method, which, according to Djajasudarma (1993:8-9), aims to make descriptions. This means that we draw pictures systematically, factually and accurately about the data we have, their characteristics as well as the relations among all the phenomena analysed. In this

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method we make accurate interpretations of the data. Thus, this is a qualitative research, especially in finding the data and figuring out the data in a scientific way.

In doing this research, I select the utterances from the novel which contain the elements of language play. Then these linguistic units are classified based on the kind of language play. Finally, I analyse the data by relating them to the effects they may produce on children as the target readers of the novel.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE PLAY IN ROALD DAHL'S *CHARLIE AND THE GREAT GLASS ELEVATOR*

In this part I would like to present the analysis of language play found in the novel *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*. The analysis contains how Dahl plays with the language by manipulating the linguistic rules, which shows Dahl's creativity of using language and at the same time produces certain effects on children as the target audience of the novel.

Table 1. List of data of language play

NO	LINGUISTIC UNITS	KINDS OF LANGUAGE PLAY
1.	We have so much time and so little to do!	Contradictory Words
2.	"He's cracked as a crab! "	Simile; Alliteration [kr]
3.	Holy rats!	Contradictory Words
4.	You're dotty as a doughnut!	Simile; Alliteration [d]
5.	..You'll never get anywhere if you go about what-iffing like that. Would Columbus have discovered America if he'd said 'What if I sink on the way over? What if I meet pirates? What if I never come back?' He wouldn't even have started! We want no what-iffers around here, right Charlie?	Suffixation
6.	"Who's there?" said the Soviet Premier. "Warren." "Warren who?" " Warren Peace by Leo Tolstoy, " said the President.	Allusion
7.	"Now, see here, Yugetoff. You get those astronauts of yours off that Space Hotel of ours this instant! Otherwise, I'm afraid we're going to have to show you just where you get off, Yugetoff! " said the President.	Homophony
8.	"And if you don't cal them off right away I'm going to tell my Chief of the Army to blow them all sky high! So chew on that, Chu-On-Dat! "	Spelling
9.	" Great Garbage! " cried the President.	Contradictory Words
10.	...the President turned white as the White House.	Simile
11.	"... The great glass elevator is shockproof, waterproof, bombproof, bulletproof, and Knidproof. So just relax and enjoy it."	Compounding
12.	"We're safe as sausages in here!" shouted Mr. Wonka.	Simile Alliteration [s]
13.	the trunk (and the suitcase) of an elephant	Homonymy
14.	the horn of a cow (it must be a loud horn)	Homonymy
15.	the hip (and the po and the pot) of a hippopotamus	Clipping
16.	the whites of twelve eggs from a treesqueak	Compounding
17.	"He's batty as a bullfrog! " cried Grandma Georgina	Simile

In the data shown in the table above, the five similes are worth mentioning at the first place: **cracked as a crab; dotty as a doughnut; white as the White House; safe as sausages** and **batty as a bullfrog** are all humorous in meaning and unique in forms. It is not common, of course, to compare someone's craziness (**cracked, dotty** and **batty**) to a crab or a doughnut or a bullfrog as those things do not have any relevant association with craziness. The same case occurs with the comparison of being white to the White House and being safe to sausages. The simple reason why Dahl uses these weird comparisons is for creating humorous situation as well as for producing pleasant sounds because of the alliteration used in each pair of comparisons.

The contradictory words are also special. The sentence "**We have so much time and so little to do!**" is uttered by Mr. Wonka when he wants everyone in Charlie's house to hurry. This sentence really does not make any sense as when we have to hurry, of course it is caused by the fact that there is so little time and so much to do. When children notice this, they will surely find this humorous. The other contradictory words **holy rats** and **great garbage** are both used as exclamatory remarks expressing surprise and anger. Again, these exclamatory remarks are not common. Thus, this may lead to the humorous effect. Besides, this is suitable for children as they are not rude swearwords.

The new invented words such as **what-iffing** (gerund → *what-if + -ing*), **what-iffers** (Noun → *what-if + -er + -s*), **knidproof** (*knid + proof*) and **treesqueak** (*tree + squeak*) are Dahl's specialty. So is how he clips the word **hippopotamus** into **hip, po,** and **pot**. The skill and creativity shown here are indeed what Dahl deserves being remembered for. Children will find this amusing and funny.

The names given to some characters are unique and humorous. The name of the Russian Premier, **Yugetoff** is homophonous with the phrase **you get off** so that when the American President says his line, this becomes funny. The name of the Assistant-Premier of China, **Chu-On-Dat**, is intentionally similar to the phrase **chew on that**, which is also used in the same sentence: **So chew on that, Chu-On-Dat!** The phrase **chew on that** means 'ruminate in the thoughts'. (Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary Unabridged, 1979: 311) Roald Dahl cleverly uses this phrase and after making some adjustment with the spelling of a Chinese name, the name of this character becomes **Chu-On-Dat**.

The use of the homonymous words **trunk** and **horn** in the recipe for making Wonka-Vite, pills which can make the takers turn twenty years younger. The word **trunk** has two meanings, 'long nose of an elephant' (Hornby, 2005: 1645) and 'a large strong box with a lid used for storing or transporting clothes, books, etc.' (Hornby, 2005: 1645). The word **horn** also has two meanings, 'a hard pointed part that grows, usually in pairs, on the heads of some animals, such as sheep and cows. Horns are often curved.' (Hornby, 2005: 751) and 'a simple musical

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instrument that consists of a curved metal tube that you blow into' (Hornby, 2005: 751) The homophony and homonymy create a funny thing because there might be two interpretations about the ingredients of the recipe. Children may interpret that Wonka-Vite is made of a long nose of an elephant or a box for storing things and a hard pointed part which grows on the head of a certain animal or a musical instrument. Children will find this humorous.

The other form of language play is allusion in the name Warren Peace by Leo Tolstoy, which is the name of the President of the United States in the story. This name is not an ordinary name, so when children read it, they will sense something peculiar and they may find it humorous. Moreover, if they can connect this name with Leo Tolstoy, the novelist whose masterpiece is a novel entitled War and Peace, children undoubtedly appreciate Dahl's creativity in this allusion.

CONCLUSION

The language play in this novel undoubtedly shows the creative use of language. The author obviously is a genius in creating stories for children that are interesting, humorous as well as unique. Being playful with the language shows how language has been used in its maximum capacity for the purpose of giving such effects on children as not to make them bored when reading his novels. The language play used in describing the characters or the setting of the stories or in expressing what the characters say, think and do proves that language is not only used for communicating, but also for enjoyment and entertainment.

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