

THE ACCEPTABILITY OF ONLINE INDONESIAN CHILDREN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, there is a big concern that Indonesian kids prefer foreign literay works to the Indonesian ones. Meanwhile, the development of technology has made it possible for us to express our idea freely. This influences the development of child literature; online children literature has emerged in the form of websites such as www.indonesiabercerita.org and www.kidnesia.com. These websites have enriched Indonesian children literature especially the modern one. This research investigates whether the contents of the stories in the aforementioned websites are suitable with a child literature construction. The data were 10 stories taken randomly from both websites. An FGD with a child literature expert and website visitors was also conducted. The data were analyzed by identifying the elements of fiction and relating the result of FGD to the text identification. The result shows that the websites have one main difference. The stories in IndonesiaBercerita are written by adult for children, while those of Kidnesia are written by children. However, the stories in both websites have similar structure. The themes are about children's daily life, such as birthdays, pets, family, and love to mother, and thus influence the characters, involving a child, family members, and friends. The plot consists of initiating event > rising action > conflict > climax > falling action > resolution. The stories contain moral values about love, friendship, and courtesy. It can be said that the stories in those websites are suitable for Indonesian kids. They are entertaining and easy to read, give knowledge, and have moral values.

Key words: acceptability, children, fiction, Indonesia, literature

INTRODUCTION

At the age of 2-13 years, which is commonly referred to as golden age, children develop their physical and mental abilities. Their ability to absorb information and knowledge reaches its peak. The information and knowledge that children obtain will influence their development.

Therefore, the golden age plays a crucial role in optimizing children's intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence.

In children development age there is a point in which children's thought is full of imagination, willingness of making friends, and desire to have a power (Clippinger, 2008). Children literature or story is one of the tools to deliver children's imagination. Heywood (in Grenby, 2001:6) states that there is a close relationship between childhood and literary texts since these texts can help to realize fictional characters in children's imagination.

Children literature is different from the adult one. Children literature should give a moral lesson that can shape children's personality. Moreover, it should stimulate children's imagination and creativity, and give practical knowledge. Children literature is expected to be entertaining since children need to feel happy and to get spiritual satisfaction which will eventually lead to their emotional intelligence (Wahidin, 2009).

Indonesian children literature has not yet been very popular in Indonesia. There are indeed books about Indonesian folktales and legends written for children, but foreign literature is likely to outnumber the Indonesian one. Children are more familiar to Disney stories, American superheroes, and Japanese manga than to Ajisaka, Timun Mas, and Sabai nan Aluih. The dominance of foreign literature in the form of comics or translated books may influence the unpopularity of Indonesian literature. According to Purbani, there are many children books in book stores and libraries, and this implies the high interest of Indonesian children in reading. However, there is a concern on why Indonesian children prefer foreign books to local ones. One reason is explained by the chief of Kelompok Pecinta Bacaan Anak, Murti Bunanta (Facri, 2013), that Indonesian children literature has weaknesses in terms of its storyline and illustration.

Meanwhile, the development of technology has made it possible for us to express our idea freely. This also affects the development of child literature; online children literature has emerged in the form of websites such as www.indonesiabercerita.org and www.kidnesia.com. These websites have enriched Indonesian children literature especially

the modern one. Now people can create their own stories that they can be accessed easily. The two website have different point of view. www.indonesiabercerita.org is a website that provides stories and podcast to help parents to give stories for the children. Meanwhile www.kidnesia.com is a website that provide a section to help children to write their own fiction. In this website, children can upload their own work and the other children can also give respond to the work. Both websites are interactive website where people can give comment and advice about the stories, but www.kidnesia.com emphasized on the interaction between children.

Online literature emergence can be a good sign for Indonesian children literature. However, the freedom of expression in the online world may lead to a concern that children will access materials that are not suitable for their age. As children literary works are available online, a control on whether these works are acceptable and whether they are appropriate for the readers is needed. As it is said above, children literature should not only be entertaining but also educating.

Based on the problem previously explained, this research is aimed at investigating whether the contents of the stories in www.indonesiabercerita.org and www.kidnesia.com are suitable with a child literature construction.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section presents the theories that are used as framework for analysis.

Children Literature

Historians of children's literature generally agree that children's literature evolved "from primer to pleasure" (Mary F. Thwaite) or "from instruction to delight" (Patricia Demers and Gordon Moyles). Most historical accounts of children's books depict a steady increase in playful and entertaining textual features had created a literature whose unashamed *raison d'être* was to give pleasure to children (Touponce, 1995:175). The definition of 'children's literature' lies at the heart of its endeavor: it is a category of books the existence of which

absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children. (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1999:13).

The meaning of children's literature as 'books which are good for children' in turn crucially indicates that the two constituent terms—'children' and 'literature' within the label 'children's literature' cannot be separated and traced back to original independent meanings, and then reassembled to achieve a greater understanding of what 'children's literature' is. (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1999:13). Children book's is an enticing study because childhood is later all a state we grow away from, but the children literature is a complex study because the position it itself in between adult writers, readers, critics, and practitioners, and the child readers (Hunt, 1999:1).

Children's books are used for different purposes at different times for more things than most books are. Some are 'good' time-passers; others 'good' for acquiring literacy; others 'good' for expanding the imagination or 'good' for inculcating general (or specific) social attitudes, or 'good' for dealing with issues or coping with problems, or 'good' for reading in that 'literary' way which is a small part of adult culture, or 'good' for dealing with racism and most books do several things (Hunt, 1999:12). It is the awareness that the study of children's literature encompasses not only subtle textual distinctions but practical, life-affecting actions which holds the 'subject' of children's literature together.

The phenomenal range of prizes for 'the best' children's books awarded each year covers books which are not just abstractly 'the best', but which portray minorities, or promote peace—or which are chosen by children. The definition of 'children's literature' lies at the heart of its endeavor: it is a category of books the existence of which absolutely depends on supposed relationships with a particular reading audience: children (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1999:13). It is the awareness that the study of children's literature encompasses not only subtle textual distinctions but practical, life-affecting actions which holds the 'subject' of children's literature together.

The Construction of Children Literature

Children literature has two purposes. Besides as a personal enjoyment, children literature also brings educative element in its content. According to Brown and Tomlinson (1999:3-5), there must be a personal value that the children can get from children stories such as:

- a. **Enjoyment:** a story for children must reach this value. The enjoyment feeling can bring positive early experiences which lead to the lifetime experience.
- a. **Imagination and Inspiration:** by seeing the world around them in new ways and by considering ways of living other than their own, children increase their ability to think divergently.
- b. **Vicarious experience:** when a story is so convincingly written that readers feel as though they have lived through an experience or have actually been in the place and time where the story is set. A vicarious experience can also be a good mental exercise for children, since they asked to view situations from perspectives other than their own.
- c. **Understanding and empathy:** literature helps young people to gain an appreciation of the universality of human needs across history, which makes it possible for them to understand that all human are, to some degree, alike.
- d. **Heritage:** stories are the repositories of culture. Knowing the tales, characters, expression, and adages that are part of our cultural heritage makes us culturally literate. Stories based on fact help young people to gain a greater appreciation for what history is and for the people, both ordinary and extraordinary, who made history.
- e. **Moral reasoning:** moral decision which made by the characters in the story helps the young reader consider what they themselves would do in such situation. Regular experience can help young people to formulate their own concept of right and wrong.
- f. **Literary and Artistic Preferences :** Children who read from a wide varied of children's books soon develop their own personal preferences for types of books and select favorite authors and illustrator

As a part of fiction, children literature also has a structure. Brown and Tomlinson (1992:26) describe the elements of fiction in children literature are follows:

- a. Plot

Plot is the most important element of fiction. It tells the sequence of story. A good plot in children story can produce conflict to build the excitement and suspense that are needed to keep the reader involved. Plots are constructed in many different ways. The most usual plot structures found in the children stories are chronological plots which cover a particular period of time and relate the events in order within the time period.

b. Characters

Memorable characters populate the world of children's literature. A well portrayed character can become a friend, a role model, or a temporary parent to a child reader. Although young readers enjoy exiting events, the characters involved in those events must matter to the reader or the events no longer seem important. In a work of fiction for children there are usually one or two main character and some minor character. The main characters in an excellent work of fiction for children are rounded, fully developed characters that undergo change in response to life altering events. Children generally prefer personified animals or children of their own age, or slightly older as the main characters of their stories.

c. Setting

Setting is the time when the story occurs and the place(s) where it occurs constitutes the setting of a story. The setting has a more or less important function depending on the story.

d. Theme

The theme of a story is its underlying meaning or significance. Themes in children's books should be worthy of children's attention and should convey truth to them. Furthermore, the themes should be based on high moral and ethical standards. A theme must not overpower the plot and characters of the story. However, children read fiction for enjoyment, not for enlightenment. If the theme is expressed in a heavy handed, obvious fashion, then the pleasure of reading experience is diminished.

e. Style

Style is the way an author tells the story; it can be viewed as the writing itself, as opposed to the content of the book. Most obvious part is the words chosen to tell the story. The words should be appropriate to the story being told. The question like why

did the author choose these words or what effect the author was trying to achieve should be consider.

A story for children must be more than a plot and a character study; a story integrates all the elements of fiction into a pleasing whole.

METHODOLOGY

This research analyzed ten stories uploaded in www.indonesiabercerita.org and www.kidnesia.com in 2013. Employing a text oriented approach; the researchers focused the analysis on the intrinsic or fictional elements found in those stories. To support the analysis, the researchers also conducted interviews with an expert of children literature and parents who have children aged 2-13 and considered the comments about the story in the websites. The result of the interviews and intrinsic elements analysis of the literary works were elaborated to determine the acceptability of these stories for their target readers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

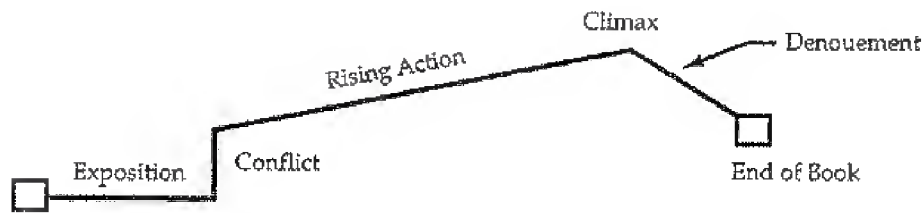
This research analyzed ten stories which were taken randomly from two websites. They are Aku Benci Sayur, Cat Shop, Adik Marin, Saputangan untuk Ibu, Sahabat Dunia Maya dan Nyata from www.kidnesia.com, and Ibu Kaulah Segalanya, Gina dan Gina, Mamaku Tercinta, Kisah Lita si Ulat, Kaos Kaki Bolong from www.indonesiabercerita.org. The analysis on their intrinsic elements yields the points below.

Plot

The plot of those ten stories can be summarized into the following scheme:

Exposition > Conflict > Rising Action > Climax > End of the story

The plot of the stories in both websites is the progressive plot. The sequence can be described as the exposition in the first paragraph, and then the conflict starts to rise in the next paragraphs, and finishes by the climax.



In exposition, the story usually starts with an introduction to the main character and setting of the story. The example can be seen in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 1:

“Hari ini seperti biasa Reza disuruh makan sayur tapi dia selalu saja menolak, padahal mama sudah membeli vitamin sayur yang mahal” (Aku Benci Sayur)

(Today, as usual, Reza was asked to eat vegetable, but he always rejected. In fact, Mom has bought an expensive vegetable vitamin.)

Conflict usually starts by introducing another character who has a problem with the main character.

Excerpt 2

“Reza, coba deh dengerin mama, kamu bisa sakit kalo gak makan sayur!” kata mama (Aku Benci Sayur)

(“Reza, listen to Mom. You can get sick if you don’t eat vegetable!” said Mom.)

The rising action of the story appears when the main character reacts to the conflict. In the rising action usually the interaction between the main character and the

Excerpt 3

“Hah, sayur!?” kata Reza kaget. (Aku Benci Sayur)

(“Whoa, vegetable!?” Reza was surprised)

Climax is the phase when the main character takes an action that can be a turning point in the story.

Excerpt 4

Reza sangat lapar tapi mau gimana lagi. Lalu Reza ingin tukaran bekal dengan temannya tapi semua temannya makan sayur. Dengan terpaksa ia mengigit makanannya dan.....
"Hmm... Enak..!" seru Reza. (Aku Benci Sayur)

(Reza was very hungry but what else could he do? Reza wanted to exchange his meal with his friend's but all his friends eat vegetable. He reluctantly bit his meal and...
"Hmm..Delicious!" shouted Reza.)

Finally, the ending of the story is the resolution of the problem which occurs between the main character and the minor character. There is always a resolution in the ending of the stories in both websites. They never leave the conflict hanging without resolution.

Excerpt 5

Di rumah, Reza langsung berkata dengan Mama, "Sayur itu nggak boleh dibenci karena sayur itu sehat." Mama hanya tersenyum. Mulai hari ini, ia tidak meminta uang jajan tapi ia meminta sayur. (Aku Benci Sayur)

(At home, Reza said to Mom, "I should not hate vegetable because it makes me healthy." Mom just smiled. From now on, he didn't ask for pocket money but vegetable instead.)

Characters

The characters found in the stories are those that are close to children's daily life. They mainly focus on friends or peer group and family. However, it is worth noting that the family members focus on mother. The characters in the stories usually consist of one main character and some minor character. The main character is usually the children and the minor characters are their friends and members of their family. The main character usually has round character. It means that the main character experienced a change of behavior in the story line. The main character that has the bad attitude at the beginning of the story usually changes their behavior in the end of the story. He becomes the good child.

Excerpt 6

Hari ini seperti biasa Reza disuruh makan sayur tapi selalu saja menolak (Aku Benci Sayur)
(Today, as usual, Reza was asked to eat vegetable, but he always rejected.)

Excerpt 7

Tuh kan, jadi jatuh semua! Bisa nggak, sih, kalo orang lagi sibuk nggak diganggu?" kataku berteriak dengan amarah (Adik Marin)

(See, everything falls! Can you just leave me alone when I'm busy?" I shouted.)

Excerpt 8

Ardi mempunyai sepasang kaos kaki bolong (Kaos Kaki Bolong)
(Ardi has a pair of perforated socks.)

Excerpt 9

Engga tahu kenapa, rasanya aku kesal sekali pada mama (Gina dan Gina)
(I don't know why I feel so upset to Mom.)

The names like Reza and Ardi are described as boys in elementary school. They are of the same age as the writers of the stories. In addition, the usage of the word Aku (I) as the main character shows that the writers consider themselves as the character in the stories.

Setting

The setting of the stories takes place at home and its surrounding areas. A place like school, park, and home are where the stories happen because these places are the ones they interact at almost every day.

Excerpt 10

Di sekolahnya mereka dijuluki penjual kucing (Cat Shop)
(At school they were called cat sellers.)

Excerpt 11

Sesampainya di rumah, aku mengganti baju dan makan nasi dan sop. (Sahabat Dunia Maya dan Nyata)
(After getting home, I changed my clothes and had rice and soup.)

Theme

The theme on the stories centers on children daily life such as family, friendship, pets, and love to mother. Themes like "vegetable" and "getting along with siblings" become the common theme in the stories. The stories about family mostly emphasize on the relation between children and their mothers.

Style

The stories use Indonesian language that is easy to understand. Also, figurative language is not used in the ten stories. However, there is a difference in the language style used in www.kidsnesia.com and www.indonesiabercerita.org. In www.kidnesia.com, because the

writer is children so the writers prefer colloquial language variation. It can be seen in the example below:

Excerpt 12

“Gimana kalo tempatnya di bagasi mobil aku yang lama aja? Pertama, kita bersihkan dulu, abis itu ambil kucing dan makanannya. Selesai, deh. Tinggal jualan! Ujar Mia (Cat Shop)
(“What if we put it in my old car baggage? First, we clean it up then take the cat and its food. Done! Just sell it!” Said Mia)

The words choice such as *‘kalo,’ ‘abis,’* and *‘aja’* are non standard or colloquial variation of Indonesian language. The standard ones are *‘kalau,’ ‘habis,’* and *‘saja’*. The use of this variation infers that when writing stories, children are able to relate their real life with their stories. They also use non standard variation when talking with their friends.

On the other hand, the language style used in www.indonesiabercerita.org is a more standardized variation of Indonesian language. It can be seen in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 13

“Rumah Kakak ada di depan, kakak obati kamu di sana, ya?” Tanyanya sambil menatap wajahku. “Nama kamu siapa?” (Gina dan Gina)
(My house is just over there, I will take you there, okay?” She asked while looking at my face, “What is your name?”)

From the explanation above, it can be seen the construction of the children stories in those two websites is already suitable for the children. The stories do not leave the entertainment aspect. In www.kidnesia.com, children write their own stories so the theme and plot are usually simple. In www.indonesiabercerita.org, the stories are written by adults. Therefore, the stories have a more complex plot and the language style is also more standardized.

In addition to the fictional elements analysis, the researchers also consider comments posted by readers of both websites. It can be said that the readers also give their own judgment whether the story is good or not for them or their children. They also give comments about the story if they think that the story is rather confusing for them. The comment makes the children can interact with the other. Eventhough in advance the comments are not related to story. Some comments that related to story are provided below:

Salsha • 6 months ago

Benar! Sayur itu sehat :) jangan benci sayur apalagi sayur pare. Hayo, siapa yang benci sayur pare?

keren :)

(True! Vegetable is healthy :). Do not hate vegetable, let alone bitter melon. Who hates bitter melon?

Cool :))

Gladysxw • 3 months ago

ceritanya keren ^^

(Nice story ^^)

Adellinda • 5 months ago

Bagus :) Terus berkarya yaa :D

(Good :) Keep working :D)

Regarding the survey, some informants say that children literature should use a language that children can understand. Furthermore the story also needs to have a moral lesson. Besides the story or content, the illustration in children literature should stimulate children's imagination. An interesting point is that some informants think that foreign literature such as Disney stories are not suitable for Indonesian children. It can be seen in the following opinions:

"In my opinion, children literature must be written in a standard and comprehensive language. Using Indonesian standard variation (EYD) in children literature will also be useful for children's Indonesian language acquisition. Also, I don't think foreign stories are not appropriate for our children. I read there are stories about a witch burned in an oven and a mermaid that turned into bubbles in the air. The story of 3 Pigs and a Wolf also scare my kids." (Mrs. Nining, 33 years old, Jakarta)

"Children literature must be simple and easy to understand. The most important thing is there has to be a moral value that can be applied in children's daily life. The illustration (if any) should be catchy yet conform to our ethics and culture, and stimulates children's imagination and creativity. I personally think Disney princesses kind of stories are not suitable for children." (Mrs. Novy, 32 years old, Semarang)

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above it can be seen that the children stories which published in www.indonesiabercerita.org and www.kidsnesia.com has a simple plot. The stories mostly uses progressive plot (Exposition > Conflict > Rising Action > Climax > End of the story). The characters in the stories are mostly children in elementary school, family member and friend. The setting of the stories mostly take place in the school, home, and neighborhood.

The theme on the stories centers on children daily life such as family, friendship, pets, and love to mother. The stories use Indonesian language that is easy to understand. Regarding the survey, some informants say that children literature should use a language that children can understand. It also needs to have a moral lesson.

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