

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

Humor and pictures are two things needed by children readers (Xeni, 2010; Gerrard, 2008). Humor can help children reduce fears (Xeni, 2010). In this case, the fears of children are “related to loneliness and isolation, supernatural phenomena and animals, noise and situations associated with noise, the school-life [such as] authority punishment or restrictions, supernatural events and beings, bodily injury, etc (ibid)” (Xeni, 2010, pp.1-2). In other words, humor in children’s literature cannot be simply referred to humor which is just for fun but it provides a multi-purpose (Xeni, 2010). On the other hand, pictures in picturebooks can help children to go deeper in discovering meanings through pictures (Gerrard, 2008).

As a way to fulfill children’s need of humor and pictures, it seems that humor is not only verbalized but is also visualized in children’s picturebooks. In reference to Gerrard (2008), there are differences between the words *picturebook* and *picture book*. The word *picturebook* is more appropriate to be used as

based on the premise that pictures play an integral, crucial and undeniable role in children’s reading comprehension. In short, [*picturebooks*] ... that require children to be visually literate are not simply books with pictures, as *picture book* would seem to suggest, but books in which the words and pictures are inextricably linked (p.9).

One of picturebooks is Pilkey’s *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets* (1999). The novel contains words and pictures which are inextricably linked. Written by an author-illustrator, the novel was chosen because it was justified as the most humorous novel among three novels (see Appendix 1). The readers who justified the novel are purposely read the texts by themselves as it is based on Sipe (cited in Gerrard, 2008) who argues that

when a teacher reads to a child (or group of children), the child’s reaction to the text is framed by that particular reading of the text. If, on the other hand, the child is free to read the text for himself or herself then his or her

reaction to the text and subsequent comprehension is a direct result of that child's perspective on the text alone (p.43).

Besides, illustrations in the novel which do not really portray reality are intended to encourage children to write and illustrate their own stories without concern for perfectionism (Pilkey, cited in Casey 2011). In other words, the novel is not only to entertain and to encourage children to love reading, but also to encourage children to start writing and illustrating their own stories without being afraid of 'imperfection'.

Humor can be analyzed verbally and visually. As a matter of fact, verbal and visual modes in a text cannot be separated since "visual component of a text (image) is an independently organized and structured message, connected with verbal text but not dependent on it." (Kress and van Leeuwen, cited in Hermawan, 2011, p.140). Regarding this, Halliday's (2004) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) reading images can be employed to analyze the verbal and visual modes in the novel.

Deriving from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Halliday's (2004) SFG consists of three metafunctions which are ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The three metafunctions are realized in three different structures. The first structure is Transitivity structures which indicate representational meaning. It consists of processes, participants and circumstances. The second structure is Mood structures which indicate interactional meaning. As an exchange between speaker or writer and audience, mood structures tell about what the clause is doing. The third structure is Theme structures which indicate the organization of the message. It tells about the relation between the clause, the discourse, and the context of situation (Halliday, 2004).

Adapting the Halliday's (2004) three metafunctions, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) propose representational meanings for ideational metafunction, interactive meanings for interpersonal metafunction, and compositional meanings for textual metafunction. In terms of representational meanings, the visual analysis covers narrative representations and conceptual representations.

[It] requires the identification of the represented participants (henceforth RPs), whether animate or inanimate, the processes or the activity described, the attributes or the qualities of the participants and, finally, the circumstances in which the action is being developed (Unsworth and Wheeler, as cited in Guijarro and Pinar Sanz, 2008, p. 1604).

To analyze interactive meanings, the visual analysis covers offer (information) and demand (goods or service), gaze of the participants, degrees of involvement, power relations between the viewer and the represented participants, and the degrees of social distance and intimacy (Guijarro and Pinar Sanz, 2008). Besides, in terms of compositional meanings, the visual analysis covers three aspects which are first, information value related to left-right, top-bottom, and centre-margin placement; second, visual salience related to size, colour, sharpness; and third, visual framing (Kress and van Leeuwen, Royce, Unsworth as cited in Guijarro and Pinar Sanz, 2008).

To support verbal and visual analysis of humorous events in the novel, Monro's theory of humor was employed in this study. Monro (1988) categorizes humor into three types:

1. Superiority: humor derives from the feeling of superiority over those who suffer misfortunes.
2. Incongruity: humor derives from the finding of "the inappropriate within the appropriate" and of unexpected connections between ideas.
3. Relief: humor derives from the feeling of relief which comes from the sudden removal of strain or restraint.

A study on picture books was conducted by Meerbergen (2009) who analyzed verbal and visual components of Dutch Picture Books in Swedish Translation. She relies on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of multimodal analysis which is integrated into Toury's (1995) descriptive model for translation analysis. She proposed that multimodal analysis which consists of verbal and visual analysis could be the part of translation analysis in translated picture books (Meerbergen, 2009).

Another study was conducted by Guijarro (2010) who analyzed verbal and visual modes to reveal interpersonal meanings of a picture book entitled *The Tale*

of *Peter Rabbit*. The study employed Halliday's (2004) Systemic Functional Grammar and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Social Semiotics. The study reveals that the verbal component of the picture book does not indicate much interaction because there is high presence of declarative clauses throughout the verbal narrative sequences. However, the selection of illustrations in the book is made to create engagement with the viewer conveyed by visual mode related to contact, distance and perspective (Guijarro, 2010).

This study focuses on how humor is verbally and visually represented in a children novel entitled *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets* (1999). Combining Halliday's (2004) SFG, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) reading images theory, and Monro's (1988) theory of humor, this study employed descriptive qualitative approach in textual analysis to reveal verbal and visual representations of humor in *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets* (1999).

## **1.2 Research questions**

This study has answered a research question: how is humor verbally and visually represented in Pilkey's *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets* (1999)?

## **1.3 Aims of study**

The aim of this study is to discover how humor is verbally and visually represented in Pilkey's *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets* (1999).

## **1.4 Significance of Study**

This study is significant to reveal verbal and visual representations of humor in Pilkey's *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets* (1999). It is also significant to reveal types of humor in the novels. The types of humor revealed in the novel can indicate the appropriateness of the novel for certain age groups of children readers.

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The result of the study is also expected to make contributions and input particularly for the development of literature subjects in English Department of Indonesia University of Education, in the field SFG, reading images, multimodality, and children's literature.

To society, for people who are interested in writing or illustrating books for children, this study is useful to represent humor in stories.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on humor representations in Pilkey's *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets* (1999). The scope of the study is limited to verbal and visual analysis of humorous events in the novel.

In verbal analysis, Halliday's (2004) Systemic Functional Grammar was employed to analyze transitivity structures. Transitivity structures reveal types of processes and the participants involved in the processes. The types of processes and participants can reveal Monro's (1988) categories of humor: superiority, incongruity, and relief. The types of processes, the participants involved in the processes, in addition to the contexts of situation can indicate power among characters (Gallardo, 2006). In this study, the power relations indicate superiority humor through superior characters in the novel and incongruity humor through degradation of the superior characters.

Meanwhile, in visual analysis, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) reading images was employed to analyze representational meanings that consist of narrative and conceptual representations. The narrative representations are equal to transitivity analysis; meanwhile, the conceptual representations can emphasize the superiority of the participants through classificational processes, and the incongruity humor through attributes assigned to represented participants with their symbolic meanings.

The results of this study were interpreted to discover humor representations in Pilkey's *Captain Underpants and the Attack of the Talking Toilets* (1999).

## 1.6 Research method

The present study employed a descriptive qualitative approach in textual analysis. Study that employed a descriptive qualitative method attempted to describe phenomena or subjects by using non-numerical data, such as interviews, case studies, or participant observation (Richard and Schmidt, 2002). Meanwhile, textual analysis of data

show[s] the set of cognitive models and conceptual schemata that actually generate the text and make it stand as a unified whole. These models can be attained only through a characterisation of what relations actually underlie the generation and organisation of the text. (Al-Sharafi, 2004, p. 126)

In addition, a purposive sampling method was employed to choose participants involved in data collection. The participants were chosen by considering age and demography factors to justify that the book analyzed in this study is the most humorous books and to mark humorous events in the most humorous book. The humorous events in visual modes were collected and were juxtaposed with humorous events in verbal modes that appeared on the same page (see Appendix 2). In analyzing the data, this study employed Halliday's (2004) SFG, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) reading images and Monro's (1988) humor categorizations.

## 1.7 Clarification of the Terms

Some key terms used in this study are as follows:

1. Children's literature

Children's literature refers to "all literature intended and produced for children" (Klingberg, cited in Wohlgemuth, 1998, p.7).

2. Picturebooks

Picturebooks "are not simply books with pictures, as *picture book* would seem to suggest, but books in which the words and pictures are inextricably linked" (Gerrard, 2008, p.9).

3. Humor

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Humor refers to “any message transmitted in action, speech, writing, images or music intended to produce a smile or a laugh” ( Bremmer and Roodenberg, cited in Mawter, 2005, p.2).

#### 4. Types of humor

- Superiority: The pleasure of humor derives from the feeling of superiority over those who suffer misfortunes.
- Incongruity: The finding of “the inappropriate within the appropriate” and of unexpected connections between ideas.
- Relief: The feeling of relief comes from sudden removal of strain or restraint (Monro, 1988).

#### 5. Theory of reading images

Reading images “describe[s] the way in which depicted elements – people, places and things – combine in visual ‘statements’ of greater or lesser complexity and extension.” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p.1).

### **1.8 Organization of the Paper**

This study is organized as follows:

Chapter one consists of an introduction which provides the information on the background of the study, research question, aims of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, research method, clarification of the terms and organization of the paper.

Chapter two consists of the theoretical reviews that are relevant to the present study. The theoretical reviews consist of Halliday’s (2004) SFG (systemic functional grammar), Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) reading images, and Monro’s (1988) theory of humor.

Chapter three contains the methodology of the study including research design, research procedure, and synopsis.

Chapter four explains the findings of the study. It also discusses issues related to the findings.

The last chapter, chapter five, concludes the discussions in the previous chapter. It gathers the important points of the findings and draws suggestions for further studies.