

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology used to conduct this research. This chapter is divided into four subchapters. They are research design, data source, research procedure, summary of the novel and concluding remarks. The research procedure subchapter is divided into three parts: data collection, data analysis and data presentation.

3.1. Research Design

As a study of text, this research uses qualitative method. This method is more focused on the process of describing and interpreting which may result in development of new concepts, theory, or an evaluation of an organizational process (Hancock, Ockleford, & Winridge, 2009). According to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) qualitative textual analysis involves “the identification and interpretation of a set of verbal or non-verbal signs” (p. 210). This method is more appropriate as “the cultural strategies, metaphors and taboos that characterize humanity’s responses to death can best be accessed through qualitative methodologies” (Bradbury, 1999, p. 26).

3.2. Data Source

The text chosen as the data source of this research is *The Thing About Jellyfish* (2015) written by Ali Benjamin. It is chosen because it is a newer children novel that explores the topic of grieving. Besides, it also has a child main character that is in a transitional phase of being a child to become a teenager, which is different from the main characters found in most children’s literature analyzed in previous studies.

Furthermore, this novel seems to be a part of the ‘bereavement turn’ which is happening in the society of postmodern era. ‘Bereavement turn’ is a cultural movement where the society start to examine their attitudes towards death and grieving within the last decades starting from the 2000s to 2010s (Day, 2012).

Meanwhile, postmodern era is the currently occurring period of time in which

Muhamad Luthfi Jayalaksana, 2019

PORTRAYAL OF GRIEVING IN ALI BENJAMIN’S THE THING ABOUT JELLYFISH (2015)

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia | repository.upi.edu | perpustakaan.upi.edu

postmodern concepts emerges. This include the emergence of postmodern concept of childhood. In a postmodern perspective, children experiences childhood that are different from previous version of childhood because they have to deal with more adult issues (Loo, 2012). Therefore, this novel may reveal changes in the society in portraying children's grieving process if compared to its portrayal in previous studies.

3.3. Research Procedure

There is a research procedure taken to conduct this research. They are data collection, data presentation and data analysis which will be elaborated below:

3.3.1. Data Collection

The data of this research are in the form of grieving contexts. The contexts are in the form of excerpts obtained from the novel that are assumed to portray or reveal the grieving process experienced by the child main character, Suzy Swanson. Thus, the data collection process began by identifying the grieving contexts portrayed in the novel. The data collected may include literary elements, such as plot, characterization, dialog, setting, and narrative devices.

3.3.2. Data Analysis

After the data collection phase, the data is presented in tables. Then, the data analysis employs Kübler-Ross and Kessler's theory of five stages of grief (2014). Schroth's theoretical framework in analyzing portrayal of death, dying and bereavement in children literature (2017) is employed to support the discussions of the findings. The analysis attempt to describe and interpret the grieving contexts to reveal how grieving is portrayed in the novel.

3.3.3. Data Presentation

The collected data are presented in tables. Data found from the same chapter are grouped together. The tables are divided into three columns and two rows. The columns consist of: (1) data number; (2) grieving stage(s); and (3) grieving context(s). The grieving stage column presents the grieving stage(s) identified from

the grieving context. The grieving context column presents the excerpts that are assumed to portray or reveal the grieving process experienced by the child main character.

Meanwhile, the rows consist of: (1) realization(s); (2) analysis. The realization row refers to the realization of the grieving stages found in the grieving context. The analysis row presents the analysis of the grieving context. Below is an example of data presentation and data analysis:

Chapter 1: ghost heart		
No.	Grieving stage(s)	Grieving context(s)
1.	Acceptance	And the whole while, your heart just keeps going. It does what it needs to do, one beat after another, until it gets the message that it's time to stop, which might happen a few minutes from now, and you don't even know it.
	Realization(s)	Because some hearts be at only about 412 million times.
	Accepting reality	Which might sound like a lot. But the truth is, it barely even gets you twelve years. (Benjamin, 2015, p. 3)
	Analysis:	The bolded statements imply Suzy's acceptance of the reality that Franny died. 'Some hearts' may refer to Franny's heart and the fact that a heart beating 412 million times equals twelve years is related to the fact that Franny dies at 12 years old. Therefore, Suzy's narration which presents these facts are her acknowledgement of the reality of Franny's death.

Table 3.3.3.1.

3.4. Summary of the Novel

The Thing About Jellyfish tells a story of a 12-year-old girl named Suzy Swanson, who has changed after she lost her friend, Franny Jackson. She is assumed to pass away because of drowning when she was swimming in the sea in Maryland at Summer vacation. After the incident, Suzy stops talking and becomes obsessed in discovering the real cause of Franny's death. She thinks that it is impossible that

Franny simply died because of drowning because Suzy knows that she is a great swimmer.

Therefore, she assumes that Franny was stung by a dangerous type of jellyfish called the Irukandji, after she is ‘introduced’ to it when she attended her school’s fall trip to the aquarium. Suzy goes to the great extent to prove her assumption. She researched all about Irukandji jellyfish from various sources on the internet. She also tries to find a scholar, or *jellyologist* as she calls them, so that she can ask for their help to proof her hypothesis.

Eventually, after researching for the scholars, Suzy finds Jamie Seymour, a James Cook University professor that have been stung by the Irukandji, who she thinks is ‘the right one.’ Afterwards, she intends to go to Australia on her own to meet Jamie Seymour so that she can discuss Franny’s death. To prepare for her trip to Australia, Suzy does many things so that her trip will succeed, which include stealing her father’s credit card information to buy an airplane ticket and stealing her mom and brother’s money. Unfortunately, her attempt to go to Australia fails because there is a rule which says 12-year-olds are not allowed to have international flight alone. Besides this main plot in the novel, there are also flashbacks that show Suzy and Franny’s friendship and how it fails prior to Franny’s death.

3.5. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has explained the research methodology used in this research. The explanation of the research methodology consists of research design, data source, and research procedure, which is further divided into data collection, data analysis and data presentation. This chapter also presents the summary of the novel that is used as the data source of this research.