

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the basic of the research. It begins with the background of the research in which the research questions and the aims of the research are presented. The reason for choosing the topic and its significance are also engaged with this chapter. The research design employed in the research is clarified in relation to data analysis within certain scopes. This chapter also serves with the organization of paper as the general description of the research paper.

1.1 Background

Humor cannot be separated from human life as without humor life could be monotonous. Bremmer et.al (as cited in Mawter, 2005) defines humor as message transmitted into action, speech, writing, image, or music which aims at making people smile or laugh. Different individuals might have a different sense of humor, therefore, they might respond to humorous things in a variety of ways: smiling, laughing or giving cynical comments. Related to this, in social relations, humor holds an important function. For example, many people respect a person with a good sense of humor as s/he may help strengthen the bonding between friends through delivering funny stories, making people smile or laugh (Vettin & Todt, quoted in Stillman et.al, 2007).

Humor can be found in different media and classified into several categories. For instance, humor presented in electronic media such as television is called stand-up comedy that requires a person delivering a monologue to entertain the audiences with his/her jokes. As for the printed media, humor can be found in comics, short stories, novels, newspapers, and magazines.

Many researchers such as Bardon (2005) who believe that the study of humor covers a large, relative yet rare scopes. It is a large and rare field because it connects humor to people's daily lives; it is relative due to its indicator, that is the sense of humor which determines one's reactions towards humorous situations.

When narrowing down the studies of humor in the context of literary work also applies. Humor has been discussed extensively; studies on this topic include firstly, the work of Fine (as cited in Neuendorf & Skalski, 2001) who investigates the functions of humor. In his work, Fine finds three functions of humor: to make people feel each other's chemistry; to be an ice-breaker in a bad situation and to be a good weapon to initiate conversation in a new situation. Other research is Kaufman & Kozbelt's (2009) modes of delivering humor. They note:

One main vehicle by which funny thought which can be blunt the edge of potentially controversial topics and contribute to increasing the audience's health through laughter. Clearly, from their standpoint, humor can be conveyed through creative writing.

In addition, Ostrower (2000) professes the view that humor is any communicative instance perceived as humorous which enables people to

experience joy even when faced with adversity. Further, she mentions three components of humor namely wit, mirth and laughter. She believes that if one of the three components is gone, humor would be meaningless.

From the above explanation, humor may involve a lot of aspects, namely situations, customs, habits of speech or dialects, or arrangement of words. Another point is that humor affects people in different ways: it may result in laughter or smile. Therefore, it is clear that there is a line between humor and laughter. Humor is delivered as one's efforts to make others laugh, while laughter means a happy feeling resulted in laugh due to funny things.

In order to investigate the humor in literary work, the aims of the present research are twofold. First, to investigate the construction of humor and second, to identify the functions of humor in two selected short stories: *Rape Fantasies* (1977) by Margaret Atwood and *The Concert Stages of Europe* (1978) by Jack Hodgins. The main reasons for selecting these two stories is because they share similarities in terms of humorous issues, modes of delivery and the role of the narrator.

The first short story entitled *Rape Fantasies* (1977) by Margaret Atwood revealed the conversation between five women who were discussing about their fantasy when being raped. Uniquely, they talk about it during lunch time as their response to several magazines which highlighting rape as headline news. The conversation between characters may invite the readers to laugh. To sum up, the

story is about the five female characters responding to the ideas of being raped seen from the perspective of the narrator.

The second short story entitled *The Concert Stages of Europe* (1978) by Jack Hodgins explored the first person point of view as a narrator who was a thirteen-year-old boy named Barclay or known as Clay. He is forced by his mother to participate in a talent show called the concert stages of Europe. His mother wanted Clay to be a pianist as her dream about, but Clay only wanted to be just a Finn—Finish, Finlandian. In his paradigm, being Finn—Finnish, Finlandian—means being liberate in which freedom is one of Finn—Finnish, Finlandian—main-principal. The ridiculous comments which is conveyed by the narrator made the story extremely comical. Finally Clay ended up with his mother's dream and it turned into disaster because he embarrassed his entire family in the talent show.

Both short stories bring to forth humorous issues where each of the narrator gives significant meaning and invites the reaction from the readers. Another interesting thing is the way the two short stories are conveyed; the narrator plays a role as a humorous agent of messages.

In general, most of humor stories are delivered in the first person point of view. When delivered by different a story teller, usually it is not as funny as the original version. However, humor is also relative, meaning that what makes a person laugh can be perceived by others differently.

1.2 Statement of Problems

The present research will be guided by the following questions:

1. How is humor constructed in the texts?
2. What function does the humor serve in the texts?

1.3 Aims of the Research

The aims of the research are to find out the way humor is constructed in the texts and to find out the function of humor in the texts.

1.4 Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The issue of the research is chosen since the writer is interested to learn how a text can make people laugh. Laughter is resulted from humorous event. Therefore, in this research which is to find out two short stories create humorous situations; the humor is revealed in aim to unveil its construction and its function in creating laughter as a result—readers' response.

1.5 Significance of the Research

The research is expected to give the description dealing with the definition of humor especially in literature. Besides by exploring the research of humor, the student's appreciation will increase the understanding toward humor in the literary texts especially in short stories. And the research is also attempted to give more inspiration about writing on the new topic since the lack of previous study

focusing on humor in the English Department of UPI (Indonesia University of Education).

1.6 Research Design

The research is a qualitative research which uses descriptive methods through narrative analysis where the focus of analysis is the two selected short stories. The qualitative research tends to associate with words, languages, statistics, numerical figures, and experiences than measurements. The result of the data is the words and sentences which describe the elements of short stories that make people laugh and the function of humor in the readers' responses. Furthermore, the research is directed to find out the connection between the humorous texts with wit or narrator which is revealed in the texts.

The research finds the textual evidences that appear in the two short stories, especially the dialogue between character and also the role of the narrator. The descriptive method is considered relevant conducted in this research because it can describe the characteristic of humor presence in the short stories.

The aim of a qualitative research is to get close to the data in their natural setting. And it's also designed to reflect an individual experience in the context of their daily life. The descriptive methods are one of the qualitative research methods which analyzes the text using narrative approach.

In analyzing two selected short stories, the research has several steps until it reaches its findings. The basic step is by close reading. By using the close reading strategy, it will result the textual evidence which is the humorous events.

The analysis will be on the characters, their interactions, and comments on narrator which is united in the humor's borderline. Then, the humorous events will be labeled and interpreted by using the theory of humor and narrative. After labeling the humorous events, then this research categorizes them into the three types of humor, those are superiority, incongruity and relief. Besides, it investigates the ways of the characters react towards the narrator. The narrator holds the important part of the stories.

1.7 Scope of the Research

To limit the research scope, this research is attempted to analyze two short stories entitled *Rape Fantasies* (1977) by Margaret Atwood and *The Concert Stages of Europe* (1978) by Jack Hodgins by doing the analysis to find out the humorous events and the function of humor found in the texts.

1.8 Clarification of Terms

Humor : The attempt to stimulate amusement (Jauregui, 1998).

Short story : A prose narrative of shorter length than the novel, especially one that concentrates on a single theme.

Funny : The realistic situation. (Neuendorf and Skalski, 2001)

Laughter : A result of the physical energy which is built up to deal with disagreeable feelings. (Spencer, 1860 cited in Lynch, 2002).

Amusement : The human emotional responses to 'funny' or 'comical' objects (Jauregui, 1998).

Wit : The ability to say or write things that are both clever and amusing.

1.9 Organization of Paper

The research paper will be organized as follows:

Chapter I : Introduction

This chapter consists of the introduction which provides the information on the background, statement of problems, aim of the research, reason for choosing the topic, significances of the research, research design, scope of the research, classification of terms, and organization of the paper.

Chapter II : Literature Review

This section consists of previous researches and the theoretical reviews that are relevant to the present study, humor and a bit of narrative theory.

Chapter III : Research Method

This part deals with the methodology of the research. It consists of research questions, research subject and context, research method, research procedure, data collection and analysis which contain a data source. As well as the

explanation about the data source, the synopsis of the data which contains of two selected of the short stories.

Chapter IV : Findings and Discussion

After collecting the data, this part reports the result of the research. This chapter contains the research findings and discussions of humor and narrative.

Chapter V : Conclusion and Suggestion

This chapter presents all the conclusions and suggestions for further research.

