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# PROCEEDINGS

## International Seminar

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT V

September 2–3, 2015



**Revised Edition**

Master Program in Linguistics, Diponegoro University  
in Collaboration with  
Balai Bahasa Provinsi Jawa Tengah



# Proceedings International Seminar Language Maintenance and Shift V

“The Role of Indigenous Languages in Constructing Identity”

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## NOTE

This international seminar on Language Maintenance and Shift V (LAMAS V for short) is a continuation of the previous LAMAS seminars conducted annually by the Master Program in Linguistics, Diponegoro University in cooperation with *Balai Bahasa Provinsi Jawa Tengah*.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the seminar committee for putting together the seminar that gave rise to this compilation of papers. Thanks also go to the Head and the Secretary of the Master Program in Linguistics Diponegoro University, without whom the seminar would not have been possible.

The table of contents lists 92 papers presented at the seminar. Of these papers, 5 papers are presented by invited keynote speakers. They are Prof. Aron Reppmann, Ph.D. (Trinity Christian College, USA), Prof. Yudha Thianto, Ph.D. (Trinity Christian College, USA), Dr. Priyankoo Sarmah, Ph.D. (Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, India), Helena I.R. Agustien, Ph.D. (Semarang State University, Indonesia), and Dr. M. Suryadi, M.Hum. (Diponegoro University, Indonesia).

In terms of the topic areas, the papers are in sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, theoretical linguistics, antropolinguistics, pragmatics, applied linguistics, and discourse analysis.



**NOTE FOR REVISED EDITION**

There is a little change in this revised edition, which as the shifting of some parts of the article by Tatan Tawami and Retno Purwani Sari entitled “Sundanese Identity Represented by the Talents of *Ini Talkshow* A Study of Pragmatics” on page 166 to 167. This has an impact on the change of table of contents.



**SCHEDULE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND SHIFT V  
"The Role of Indigenous Languages in Constructing Identity"**

<b>WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2015</b>					
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## LANGUAGE PLAY AND ITS FUNCTIONS IN CHILDREN'S FICTION

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### Abstract

Language play in fiction can be used as a means to attract readers' attention and as such, language play is a means of foregrounding. The readers can notice and feel that the parts containing language play stand out more, which makes them more special compared with the other parts. The research belongs to Stylistics, a study of style. It focuses on the various linguistic forms of language play found in Roald Dahl's *The Witches*. This research investigates the different types of language play that occur in children's fiction. These types will be classified in terms of Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, and Semantics. Furthermore, the research will also discuss the literal and contextual meaning of language play as well as its functions. There are some findings resulted from the research. Language play in children's fiction, as shown in this particular novel, is basically an exploitation of repetition and deviation. The function of language play is mostly to entertain the readers as it builds humor and creates aesthetics.

**Keywords:** language play, foregrounding, exploitation, humor, aesthetics

### INTRODUCTION

Playing with language is an activity that people usually do despite the fact that they may not realize it. In communication people can play with language or respond to language play. Crystal (1998: 1) said that playing with language can result in enjoyment. This activity is done by exploiting the language – using a certain language feature in an uncommon way. Besides, language play can also be formed by manipulating the language – by bending and breaking the rules. We can find language play in any text, for instance in daily conversation, advertisement and campaign slogans, newspaper headlines, comics, literary works such as novels, short stories and poems.

I believe language play can be analysed in a more academic way, in the area of Linguistics, since the use of language play actually signifies a high level of language competence. In playing with abbreviation, for example, we have to be able to know first the relationship between the words and the pronunciation. In using the abbreviation (2) "4 u", it must be known that in English the pronunciation of the words 4 (*four*) and *for* is the same, [fɔː]; and so is the pronunciation of "u" and "you", [u:], which in Linguistics is called homonymy – two words having the same pronunciation but different spelling and meaning. Thus, what is meant by "4 u" is "for you".

As a matter of fact, language play is all around us. Language play can make a message more beautiful and attractive. If the message is a campaign or advertisement slogan, it is expected that the receiver will be attracted to approve of the philosophy of the slogan or buy the product being offered. If the message is a newspaper headline, more and more readers will be interested in reading the article. Thus, it can be said that the language play in the texts found in our social life has the aesthetic as well as persuasive functions.

Besides, language play can also be found in literary works, for instance in poems or novels. A fictional text is a text that does not refer to the real world but to the imaginary world. (Zaimar & Harahap, 2009: 23, 26). A fictional text is of course not the same as the factual one as a fictional text is more subjective and individualistic, and does not have any direct relation to the social needs and convention.

The creativity that uses language as its medium obliges an author to use interesting and unusual language; in other words, an author has to "escape from banality" (Leech, 1991: 23). In this case, an author has to exploit the language in an attractive way, by using out-of-the-ordinary language so much so that the readers are able to detect something "not right", which in Stylistics is called *foregrounding* (Wales, 1994: 181–182).

In this paper I am interested in analysing the language play used in a children's fiction to find out how language play, as a form of foregrounding, can become an extraordinary element in a fictional text. In addition, I would also like to relate the language play forms to their functions. To limit the analysis, I would only like to analyse the single-typed language play in a novel written by Roald Dahl which is intended for young children, *The Witches*. Roald Dahl (1916-1990) was a British author who

can represent authors of British children's fiction that uses language play as a form of foregrounding.

I am of the opinion that we should appreciate authors who are creative and capable of creating language play forms as well as making the readers understand the meaning and function of the language play through the context of the story. Through this analysis, I do hope that we can also give more attention to Stylistics as part of Applied Linguistics.

In his book *Language Play*, Crystal defines language play as follows: "We play with language when we manipulate it as a source of enjoyment, either for ourselves or for the benefit of others... We are, in effect, bending and breaking the rules of the language." (Crystal, 1998: 1) Thus, language play is a form of language manipulation. The manipulation here is in its literal meaning: the linguistic units such as words, phrases, sentences, parts of words, sounds and letters are used not in accordance with the rules of the language (Crystal, 1998: 1).

To complement Crystal's definition above, Cook (2000: 5) also includes such forms as rhyme, rhythm and repetition as language play forms. Certain language features are exploited and taken advantage of and Cook names this kind of language play "exploitation of formal patterns" (2000: 122).

For example, in Edward Lear's poem below contains language play.

*The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea  
In a beautiful pea-green boat.  
They took some honey, and plenty of money,  
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.*

According to Cook (2000: 49), the language play form can be seen in the rhyme [i:] can be seen in *sea* dan *money*, and the rhyme [əʊt] in *boat* dan *note*. Furthermore, if we analyse the meaning of the poem, there are some unrealistic things: the two characters, the Owl and the Pussy-Cat, go to sea in a boat to take some honey and money.

In this paper the language play forms involve the linguistic processes in Phonology Morphology, Syntax and Semantics. In Phonology, there is the form of repetition. In Morphology, the morphological processes involved are compounding and blending. In Syntax, the language play found involves syntactic repetition. In Semantics, there are personification, simile, contradictory words.

Pragmatics studies the language in use, more specifically the "linguistic choices" of a person in doing his or her social interaction (Schneider, 2005: 869). Leech (1994: 15) defines Pragmatics as a study of meaning in relation to speech events; therefore, Pragmatics deals with contextual meaning. In this particular research, the pragmatic role here highlights the relationship between the author and the readers in the sense that what is analysed is the author's purposes of using language play in conveying his/her messages to the readers.

Crystal (1998: 1) says that playing with language is one source of fun and enjoyment. Cook (2000: 124) adds that language play functions to create relaxation and stimulation. Besides, language play also has a social benefit and a more serious goal, namely a persuasive effect, which we can find in slogans or newspaper headlines. Here language play has the function and purpose to increase the number of votes or to double up the number of products sold.

Verdonk (2002: 5) adds that playing with language can give a kind of satisfaction to the readers, for example in the use of allusion: "intertextuality appears to have the effect of giving the reader the pleasurable sense of satisfaction at having spotted the allusion, and it may often intensify the overall significance of the text" (Verdonk, 2002: 5).

When language play is seen as a form resulted from a non-bonafide communication, language play can create humour as a form of pragmatic implication. (Raskin in Wijana, 2004: 50). Humour is defined as something that is created to cause fun or laughter (Monro, 1988: 1). Moreover, Monro (1988: 1) states that the humour theories can be classified into three parts: incongruity theory, superiority theory, and release/relief theory. Since language play is a form of foregrounding resulted from a non-bonafide communication, the humour that may be resulted from language play falls into the first category, the incongruity theory.

## DISCUSSION

In this part I would analyse the language play forms in in R. Dahl's *The Witches*. There are two types of language play forms found in this novel: the single-typed language play and the multiple-typed language play, but I would like to focus more on the single-typed language play. What is meant by single-typed language play is language play which consists of only one language play form. After this,

I would relate the language play form to its function in the novel.

### Personification

There are two data of personification found in the novel:

- (1) *His black moustache was jumping up and down like crazy as he spoke.*
- (2) *His whiskers twitch with excitement.*

The two data above describe Mr. Jenkins' moustache and whiskers when he is angry. This is personification as the moustache and whiskers are treated like humans as they can jump up and down and twitch. When the readers imagine how the moustache and whiskers are jumping up and down and twitching, they will surely find this humorous. Thus, it can be said that when the author uses the language play type of personification, he has the intention of entertaining the readers, and the strategy used is by creating humour.

### Simile

There is one data of simile in the novel:

- (3) *Her voice had a curious rasping quality. It made a sort of metallic sound, as though her throat was full of drawing-pins.*

It is clear that in data (3) the witch's voice is compared to the sound of metal as if her throat is full of drawing pins. Obviously, this is an uncommon and exaggerated way of comparing one's voice, which leads to humour. This type of language play is also used to entertain the readers by using the strategy of creating humour.

### Contradictory words

Some contradictory words are used in the novel to create a humorous effect, as can be seen below:

- (4) *"The cleaner you happen to be, the more smelly you are to the witch."*
- (5) *"An absolutely clean child gives off a ghastly smell to a witch," my grandmother said.*
- (6) *"The dirtier you are, the less you smell."*

In data (4), (5), and (6) above, the author proposes an illogical idea by presenting two contradictory words. Logically speaking, a clean person does not smell bad. Thus, when the condition described is the opposite, this must lead to something funny. This is what the author intends to build, I believe, namely entertaining the readers by illustrating something funny.

### Word Repetition

Some words are repeated on purpose in some sentences in the novel, as can be seen in the following data:

- (7) *REAL WITCHES dress in ordinary clothes and look much like ordinary women. They live in ordinary houses and they work in ORDINARY JOBS.*
- (8) *..., a REAL WITCH is easily the most dangerous of all living creatures on the earth. What makes her doubly dangerous is the fact that she doesn't look dangerous.*
- (9) *But these were not field mice or house mice or wood mice or harvest mice. They were white mice!*

The repetition of words functions to make the sentence more beautiful as there are some things emphasized. Besides, when reading sentences containing word repetition, the readers will feel amused as they sound beautiful. Thus, in word repetition, the author is also entertaining the readers by creating something pleasant and beautiful.

### Syntactic Repetition

In the novel the author also makes use of sentence structure repetition, in this case S+V structures, as seen in the following:

- (10) *Sparks fly. Flames leap. Oil boils. Rats howl. Skin shrivels. And the child disappears!*
- (11) *Her voice ...was far louder and much much harsher. It rasped. It grated. It snarled. It scraped. It shrieked. And it growled.*

This repetition also functions to make this part of the story sound more beautiful so that the readers will normally feel amused when reading it. Consequently, as in word repetition, syntactic repetition is also



one effective strategy to entertain the readers.

### Blending

It is interesting to notice that the author invents a new word which is resulted from blending two English words, *fantastic* and *fabulous*, into *fantabulous*, as follows:

(12) "You are brilliant, O Your Grandness! You are *fantabulous!*"

This new coined word surely creates a humourous atmosphere for the readers since they feel they are not familiar with this word, but when they can figure out what this unfamiliar word comes from and what it means in the context of the story, they will feel pleased. In this case, it can be said that this is also the author's strategy to entertain the readers.

### Compounding

The author also uses the morphological process of compounding in inventing new words, together with the sound exaggeration reflected in the spelling of each compound word:

(13) ... the beak of *blabbersnitch*...

(14) ... the tongue of *catspringer*...

(15) ... the claw of *crrracrrruncher* ...

The new coined words above are the result of the compounding process as follows:

*blabbersnitch* → *blabber* + *snitch*

*catspringer* → *cat* + *springer*

*crrracrrruncher* → *crab* + *cruncher*.

These compound words of course do not exist in the English vocabulary. That's why, the readers will generally feel amused when reading them, let alone when they can figure out their meanings based on the context.

## CONCLUSION

In this part I would like to give my comments and opinion based on the findings in the previous part. After analyzing all the data of language play in Dahl's *The Witches*, I get to the conclusion that the analysis of language play and its the literal and contextual meaning cannot be separated with the analysis of the implications it brings, namely its functions to the readers. In order that we will get a complete and thorough analysis, the two aspects of analysis support each other.

I believe that the focus of language play is on the author's choice of certain linguistic forms. The author certainly has a purpose when choosing to use language play. The readers are expected to pay more attention to the language play forms as these forms exploit linguistic forms in such a way that they stand out among the other linguistic forms. The author's purpose of using language play will be understandable if the readers pay attention to the context.

Based on the findings discussed in the previous part, I am of the opinion that basically language play is a kind of exploitation of repetitions (word and syntactic repetition) and deviation (compounding, blending, personification, simile, contradictory words). All the data of language play in this novel have the pragmatic implication of entertaining the readers. The readers will find one effect that makes the part containing language play different and more special than the other parts in the text. This difference is something that will entertain the readers. What is more interesting is that an author can have various strategies in entertaining the readers through the language play he creates. In this novel, Dahl has two strategies, namely creating humor and creating aesthetics. This variation also shows the high level of creativity of the author.

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