



THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE DISORDER OF AN AUTISTIC SAVANT PORTRAYED IN LEVINSON'S *RAIN MAN* FILM (1988)

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ABSTRACT

Autistic savant as one of the language disorders can be found in daily life and it also can be portrayed in literary works and films. An autistic savant is a person with autism who has the limitation in most social functions but has cognitive abilities, such as possessing some outstanding memories and computational skills. This research aims to find out the types of language disorder and to find out the dominant type of language disorders found in autistic savant portrayed in Levinson's *Rain Man* film. This research used a descriptive method. The data used in this research were the utterances of an autistic savant. The result of this research shows that the type of expressive language disorder was obtained with the occurrence percentage of 67.7% while the receptive language disorder type was obtained by the occurrence percentage of 32.3%. From this percentage, it can be seen that the most dominant type of language disorders experienced by autistic savant in *Rain Man* film is expressive language disorder. It means the autistic savant as an adult person also has difficulty in expressing or producing language.

Key words: language disorder, autistic savant, expressive language disorder, receptive language disorder

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is a way in human communication and interaction. By using language, people express their thought, ideas and share their experiences. Unfortunately, not all people are able to speak fluently. It is difficult for them to interact with other people in daily conversation because they are not able to produce and comprehend language normally. This phenomenon is called a language disorder which caused by the impairments of the brain as a result of surgery, a stroke, an accident or old age (Field, 2003:43). Language disorder

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occurs when an individual exhibit impaired comprehension or expression of spoken, written, and other symbol systems.

People with language disorder have a problem in their daily conversation and have limitation to communicate. The sufferers do not know how to share the ideas and also being polite to others. Field (2003:93), states that problems of language disorder may be receptive (impaired language comprehension), expressive (impaired language production), and combine both of them. The phenomena of language disorder can be found from the patient of Broca Aphasia (stroke patient) and autistic people who are more related to mental disorder. The language disorder research about Broca aphasia based on videos of patient therapy has been researched by Hilfa, Syarif, Marlina (2018). Meanwhile the language disorder researches about autistic people from film and non-film have been conducted by several researches.

Carroll (2008:391), states that there are roughly four males for every one female with autistic, one to four males are affected. Autism actually is a common word which can nearly find and hears. Autism Spectrum Disorder has been characterized by qualitative behavioral abnormalities in communication, reciprocal social interaction together with patterns of repetitive, restricted and stereotyped interests and activities. These deficits are pervasive, persistent, and usually present in early childhood and likely lead to impairments in functioning across different setting. A person with deficit mental additionally has intellectual capacities, it is known as savant syndrome or autistic savant.

The savant syndrome is a phenomenon of defect cognitive, mental, or sensory disability paired with an outstanding capacity in a limited domain of the intellectual or artistic function. Exceptional abilities can emerge in the area of memory, drawing, music, reading, technical and geographical ability and calculating. Treffert (2006) has presented extensive overviews of savant syndrome. Reported savant skills include; numerical calculation, calendar calculation, perfect pitch, artistic skills, and exceptional musical abilities. A few people with savant syndrome have an excess of unique ability. Since they get an extraordinary gift which is well beyond the scope of the average human's ability, those autistic people are called an autistic savant.

The phenomenon of autistic savant does not just occur in daily life. It can be found and reflected in the film. A film can consequently communicate with the audience using both verbal and nonverbal communication since they are made in a type of varying media. Films communicate verbally to the audience through the conversation among on-screen characters and film content. Meanwhile, it communicates non-verbally through actor's gestures, body appearances, facial expression, and vocal volume.

The researcher chose film rather than reality as a source of the data for this research because a film can express more than what is being told and reality which takes a long time to get an interaction with the sufferer. This film is based on a true story inspired by Kim Peek life a Korean man who suffered savant syndrome. Furthermore, this film can be found easily from YouTube. So, it also can be watched by many people who want to understand the story about the life of autistic people.

There are at least four studies which are related to the study that will be conducted. They are Sa'diyah (2008), Nafiah (2007), Firmawati (2013), Kwok, Brown, Smyth, Cardy (2014). The first and second researchers studied film. Their studies are about a psycholinguistic study in different types of language disorder. The first researcher focused on receptive language disorder meanwhile the second one focused on expressive language disorder. The finding of the first researcher shows that four kinds of speech and language disorder and the second one also found four kinds of perspective language disorder. The third and fourth researchers studied non-films. The third researcher focused on analyzing the types of communication impairments and the types of non-verbal communication. The finding of her research shows that student has difficulties to use and understand the context of the communication. The last researcher focused on analyzed meta-analysis of receptive and expressive language skills autism spectrum disorder. This research found that children with ASD may have an expressive better than receptive language disorder.

This research is similar to the four previous studies mentioned above in the way of analyzing the types of language disorder. However, there are differences between this study and the four studies above. The first difference is the subject of the research. In this research, the researcher chose an adult man as subject meanwhile the four studies above chose the children as the subject. The second is the sufferer in this research is an autistic savant whereas the sufferer the four studies above is just autism. The other difference is that the researcher analyzes this data based on two types of language disorder; expressive language disorder and receptive language disorder. Meanwhile, the four previous researchers above only focused on one type.

Based on the explanation above, it is necessary to analyze the film of *Rain Man* since this film propels other individuals who diagnosed autism and furthermore individuals have kin with autism. It encourages them through their life and thankful for each condition. They can take a big thing about existence from the film, for example, social relationship and love. Additionally, moral values will give new information about the social condition, for example; how to thankful, carry on, and how to associate with the general public.

This research can be studied from different linguistic perspective, such as from semantic and phonology studies. In morphology studies, analyzing the phenomena of autism in conversation can be done through the formation processes namely: derivation, reduplication, acronym, borrowing, clipping, compounding and blending (Rizki, Jufriзал, 2016). The researcher limited the study in psycholinguistic studies from a film which has the main character who is an autistic savant. In this case, the researcher analyzed the utterances from the autistic savant as the data. Among the explanation above, there are purposes of this research, to find out expressive language disorder and receptive language disorder and find out the dominant type of language disorders of an autistic savant portrayed in Levinson's *Rain Man* film.

There are five studies which are related to the research that will be conducted. The first one is a study that has been done by Sa'diyah (2008). Her study is about receptive language disorder of the main character in "Mozart and

the Whale” film. In her research, she found that difficulties understanding spoken a language in the main character investigated Donald Morton and Isabella Sorenson as a couple diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome. She also uses Carroll theory of language disorder. The result of her research shows that both the characters have some kinds of perspective language disorder namely absurd response (AR), odd response (OR), more relevant but no polite (RnP) response, marginal relevant (MR) response. The conclusion of the finding shows that RnP response is mostly found in both of them, while absurd response and the odd response is rarely occurring.

The related research in this field is Nafiah (2007). She studied about expressive language disorder of the autistic child in mercury rising film. She conducted the study to find out the kind of expressive language disorder produced by Simon Lynch an autistic child. The result of her study show that the character’s utterances have some kind of speech and language disorder, those are: phonological disorder (substitution, deletion, assimilation, addition), articulation disorder (the place of articulation, the manner of articulation), voice disorder (talking too long or too much, unnatural pitch, improper stress, grumbling unclear word), language disabilities (repetitive, stereotype utterance, robotic sound speech, ritualistic question and answer). The conclusion of her study that the voice disorder mostly found, and language disabilities an autistic child seldom occurs.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Fimawati (2013). Her study is about communication impairments by an autistic child with PDD-NGS at SLB Muhammadiyah Sidayu Gresik. In her research, she collected the data through on observation and video recordings of interactions by an autistic student and the teacher at the school. She used NIDCD’s theory (2010) to analyze the types of communication impairments, and also Ambady and Rosental’s theory (1998) is used to analyze the types of Non-verbal communication. The result of her study shows that the student had both communication impairments and non-verbal communication. There are four types with 46 occurrences in communication impairments, 32 situations with three types of nonverbal communication are by the participant. They had difficulties to use and understanding the meaning of the communication.

The related research has been done by Kyeong et al (2014). Their research is about comparison receptive-expressive language disorder between toddlers with autism spectrum disorder and developmental language delay. In their research, the result is based on experiments in Western countries with Western language scales. They tried to found whether the result above is applicable for toddlers in Korea with non-Western language scales. In conclusion, they found that receptive-expressive language characteristics in ASD at earlier age could be useful in the early detection of ASD.

Those all studies above give a contribution to this research. The study which was conducted by Nafiah (2007) and Firmawati (2013) inspires the researcher to conduct this study, especially in analyzing the types of language disorder which are expressive language disorder and receptive language disorder in a different object. The study which was conducted by Kyeong, Song, Kim, Oh

(2014) give the idea to the writer to know more about types of language disorder: expressive and receptive language disorder.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used descriptive qualitative because there is no statistic calculation provided in this research. Hancock, Ockleford, Windridge (2009:7), say that qualitative research is concerned with developing an explanation of social phenomena. In this case, the researcher described the types of language disorder, expressive language disorder and receptive language disorder of an autistic savant portrayed in Levinson's *Rain Man* film. The ways to collect data are: first, the researcher downloaded the film and the film's script on the internet. Second, the researcher watched the film from the beginning until the end for many times, in order to get the meaning and understand the story. The researcher also paid attention to some scenes to find the important part or utterances that related to statement problem. Third, printed the film's script in order to make it easier in getting the utterances which contain language disorder phenomena. Fourth, the researcher marked the script which involved the language disorder phenomena in order to get the data. This is done by using writing equipment which is the highlighter to mark the utterances which contain language disorder. The last is the researcher wrote down the utterances and the minutes of the scenes. This is done in order to help the researcher in identifying the types of language disorder which were expressive language disorder and receptive language disorder.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

This part presented the findings of this research. The language disorders which were found in the data were shown in the table below.

Table 1. The Occurrences of Expressive Language Disorder of an Autistic Savant Portrayed in Levinson's *Rain Man* Film

No	Expressive Language Disorder	F	%
1.	Word finding difficulties	3	2.8%
2.	Repetition	27	25.3%
3.	Overuse of non-specific words	4	3.7%
4.	Over reliance on stock phrases	21	19.6%
5.	Difficulty coming to the point of what they are trying to say	0	0
6.	Less variation intonation or volume	0	0
7.	Limitation in the form of sentence	0	0
8.	Limited vocabulary	52	48.6%
Σ		107	100%

Table 1. above shows the occurrences of symptoms of expressive language disorder. The main character has difficulty expressing and producing the language he wants to say. It can be seen that the frequent occurrences of these symptoms from the main character are the last symptom *limited vocabulary* there are 52 occurrences. The main character is hard to express the words he wants to say. This symptom is the higher occurrences of expressive language disorder. The second higher symptom is *repetition* there are 27 occurrences.

Table 2. The Occurrences of Receptive Language Disorder of an Autistic Savant Portrayed in Levinson's *Rain Man* Film

No	Receptive Language Disorder	f	%
1.	Not appearing to listen	21	41.2%
2.	Difficulty understanding complex sentences	0	0%
3.	Difficulty interpreting words or phrases	6	11.8%
4.	Demonstrating lack of interest	0	0%
5.	Difficulty understanding what other people say	23	45%
6.	Difficulty following verbal directions	1	2%
Σ		51	100%

Table 2 above shows the occurrences of receptive language disorder of an autistic savant portrayed in Levinson's *Rain Man* film. The main character is hard to comprehending and understanding what is said to him. It can be seen that there were four symptoms found in the main character. The higher percentage of the symptoms is *difficulty understanding what other people say* there were 23 occurrences.

Table 3. Total Both Expressive Language Disorder and Receptive Language Disorder

No	Types	F	%
1.	Expressive language disorder	107	67.7%
2.	Receptive language disorder	51	32.3%
Σ		158	100%

From the table above, it can be seen that the dominant type of language disorder is expressive language disorder. In this film, the main character often has difficulty expressing his language to others. The table above shows the expressive language disorder percentage exceeding half of 100%, which is 67.7%. Meanwhile, the percentage of receptive language disorder is only 32.3%, it means that the main character in this film does not really have a big problem in

understanding the language spoken to him. From the description above, it can be proven that the dominant type of the two types is expressive language disorder.

2. Discussion

The first focus of this research is to find out expressive language disorder of an autistic savant portrayed in Levinson's *Rain Man* film. The second is to find out receptive receptive language disorder of an autistic savant portrayed in Levinson's *Rain Man* film. Field (2003:93), states that problems of language disorder may be expressive (impaired language production) and receptive (impaired language comprehension), and combine both of them. This case usually is experienced by people who have a mental disorder such as autism. Based on the finding, the researcher found that from these two types of language disorder of an autistic savant, expressive language disorder is the type of language disorder which mostly found.

The first type of language disorder found in this research is expressive language disorder. This type related to how the main character expresses and produces the language he wants to say to others. According to Sa'diyah cited in Suherman (2015:12), symptoms of an expressive language disorder consists of 8 symptoms: word finding difficulties, repetition, overuse of non-specific words, over-reliance on stock phrases, difficulty coming to the point of what his trying to say, less variation intonation of volume, limitation in the form of sentence, and limited vocabulary.

After analyzing the data, not all symptoms above were portrayed by the main character. The symptoms were not found in autistic savant are; *difficulty coming to the point of what his trying to say, less variation intonation of volume, and limitation in the form of sentence*. Meanwhile, other symptoms were portrayed by the main character with varying numbers. The highest number with the percentage of 48.6% is *limited vocabulary*. The main character is often found saying the word like "yeah". It means he experiences limitations in expressing the word he wants to say.

The second higher number of expressive language disorder is *repetition* with the percentage of 25.3 %. This result quite different from the research conducted by Nafiah (2007), she found that repetition of an autistic child seldom occurs. In her research, she focuses on expressive language disorder meanwhile, in this research focuses on two types, expressive language disorder and receptive language disorder. Among the result of this research and Nafiah's research, it is still types of language disorder which found in autistic people.

The second type of language disorder is receptive language disorder. This type is related to an autistic savant condition that has difficulty understanding what other people say to him. Symptoms in this type are: not appearing to listen, difficulty understanding complex sentences, difficulty interpreting words or phrases, demonstrating lack of interest, difficulty understanding what other people say, difficulty following verbal directions.

A receptive language disorder is the least type portrayed by the main character in *Rain Man* film. The occurrences of the symptoms were varied. The

most common symptom found of the main character is “*difficulty understanding what other people say*” with a percentage of 45%. In this type also not all symptoms occur, which are; *difficulty understanding complex sentence, demonstrating lack of interest.*

Furthermore, the researcher compares this research with the previous research which studied about language disorders. The research was conducted by Suherman (2015) in his research entitled *Language Disorder of Main Character in the Movie “My Name is Khan”* he focused on types of language disorder. In his finding, expressive language disorder also mostly found in the main character. The symptom *difficulty coming to the point of what they are trying to say* became dominant symptom of expressive language disorder, meanwhile, in this research there was no found in autistic savant. In receptive language disorder, the symptom *difficulty following verbal directions* was mostly found in the main character, meanwhile, in this research the symptom *difficulty following verbal directions* was the least symptom found in autistic savant. However, by comparing his work with this research, it is still types of language disorder which found in autistic people. The autistic people have different ways in expressing and understanding the words they want to say.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the analysis of the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that there were two types of language disorder: expressive language disorder and receptive language disorder found in autistic savant. It means he has difficulties in producing or expressing and comprehending the language. Among these two types, expressive language disorder becomes the most dominating type of language disorder of an autistic savant portrayed in Levinson’s *Rain Man* film. It means, among the utterances of the main character as an autistic savant that contain language disorder mostly has difficulties in producing and expressing his language.

This research which primarily studies about language disorder can be seen from two types: expressive language disorder and receptive language disorder. The researcher analyzed the phenomena of language disorder from a film entitled *Rain Man* by Levinson. In this film, there is the main character is named Dustin Hoffman as an autistic savant. The utterances from him that contain language disorder were the data of this research. To complete this research which is about language disorder in the different perspective area, the researcher suggests that further researchers will take another sample of different film. The researcher also suggests the next researcher can take the data from real life. Furthermore, in order to know more about language disorder, the researcher suggests that further researchers who are interested in taking in this field to analyze the other types of language disorder, that is phonology disorder and pragmatic disorder. In addition, the researcher hopes that the further researchers will create better research and more specific about language disorder.

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