



Expressive Language Used by Autistic Main Character in *Please Stand By (2017) Movie*

Reza Augusti Putri¹, Leni Marlina²

English Department

Faculty of Language and Arts

Universitas Negeri Padang

Email: rezaaugusti19@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

People with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have difficulty using language in communication. The language of autism sufferers in expressive language disorders includes phonological disorders, syntactic disorders, semantic disorders, and pragmatic disorders. The purpose of this study was to determine the types of expressive language disorders used by the main character in the movie *Please Stand By (2017)*. The method of this research was descriptive qualitative because this research describes the phenomenon of expressive language disorder in the *Please Stand By (2017) movie*. The source of data used in this research is the script from the movie. Once collected, the data are categorized and analyzed based on their respective categories. In this research, the researcher found that Wendy exhibited several symptoms of a type of expressive language disorder, namely semantic disorders and pragmatic disorders. This disorder can be seen from the symptoms shown by the main character through her speech.

Keywords: language disorder, expressive disorder, verbal impairment, autism, *Please Stand By (2017)*

A. INTRODUCTION

Disorders that involve the processing of linguistic information are language disorders or language impairments. Grammar (syntax and/or morphology), semantics (meaning), or other aspects of language can be involved in problems that may be experienced.

Language disorders are classified as either expressive or receptive. There is difficulty understanding language for a person with a receptive language disorder. The use of language is difficult for a person with an expressive language disorder. According to Field (2003: 93), the issues of a language disorder can be receptive (impaired comprehension of language), expressive (production of language), or mixed with both.

¹ English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on March 2022

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



This research tries to reveal the types of language of the expressive ability of the speech process of people with autism. Autism or autism spectrum disorder is marked by problems in social interaction and speech, and by limited and repetitive behaviors. Autism is related to an interaction of genetic and environmental conditions. The language of autism sufferers in expressive language disorder involved verbal and nonverbal impairment. Verbal has to do with the failure to convey communication verbally through words and phrases. While nonverbal impairment is indicated by autism when they are not able to express emotions in a descriptive word or phrase.

There is a variation of emotional and social deviations in the case of autism. People with autism can only be silent, or they can only echo those phrases they have heard. Both facets of speech, excluding phonological aspects, are hard to attain. Their articulation is phonologically simple enough, but certain mistakes in mentioning the object also occur. In addition, since they often mimic the word or sentence they learned or echolalia, they often experience lower syntactic and semantic capacity (Indah and Abdurrahman, 2008: 126-127).

There are several categories of vocabulary, ASD, which are echolalia, pronoun, repetition, and prosody, according to O'Neill (cited in Indah, 2011: 94). Firstly, echolalia is parroting the term they have heard, usually repeating the words or phrases of other people. Secondly, persons with ASD typically struggle to use pronouns. Repetition is the follow-up. By using repetition, they like to generate consensus. The last one is Prosody. Their voice is often bland, monotonous, and they often struggle to grasp what most people are concerned about, as seen by the style of intonation. Carroll (1985, quoted in Rofi, 2011: 13) categorized autism's language difficulties in speech into four forms and their language production. They are phonology, syntax, semantics, and the following are pragmatics.

In phonological development, they have considerable difficulty in suprasegmental features of sound production i.e. stress and intonation. The Intonation often appears to be flat and inaccurate in terms of speech stress. Fay and Schuler (1980) state that people with autism frequently have no emotion in their voice and might speak in such a monotone which can be due to the failure to process speech's suprasegmental features. Indah and Abdurrahman (2008) stated that autism sufferers experience syntactic delays due to frequent echolalia. They will usually repeat a phrase and a voice they have heard. People with autism seem to have particular difficulty in applying syntactic rules in their language. Difficulties in semantics are also experienced in verbal impairments of autism sufferers. Kuder (2003) inferred that autistic individuals have two types of semantic skill difficulties, namely, difficulty with organizing information into categories and using this information for thinking and problem-solving. In verbal impairment, the sufferer also has difficulties with pragmatic skills. People with a pragmatic disorder may demonstrate a general language delay. They may have trouble understanding the meaning of what others are saying. They may also have difficulty using language appropriate to get their needs met and to interact with others.

The researcher uses the movie and script *Please Stand By (2017)* as research objects that shows the verbal process of expressive abilities of people with autism. The researcher chose a movie as data analysis in this research because movies use expressive language as a medium to convey messages or stories to the audience, this can be seen from the visualization and vocalizations played by the players. By using movies, the researcher not only hears the language but also sees it. This is very helpful for the researcher in understanding, for example; language, general meanings, and moods that are described through expressions, gestures, and other visual cues conveyed by the actors.

The researcher also found several other researchers who had conducted similar or related research with autism sufferers in movies. Among them is research done by Evi (2016), Suherman (2015), Resti, Jufrizal, and Marlina (2019), Nafiah (2008), Zainatul (2012). In addition, there are also several researchers who conducted similar research with autism sufferers in real life. Among them are done by Octavia (2018), Clara (2017), and Aulia and Jufrizal (2016).

Based on the previous research above, the researcher does not intend to take on new research topics, but the researcher continues previous research with the same focus, but with different theories and objects. This research focused on expressive language disorder through verbal. In addition, how it is represented in terms of phonological disorder, syntactic disorder, pragmatic disorder, and semantic disorder.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used the descriptive qualitative method because the researcher do research that has nothing to do with using numbers. The researcher will use several steps to collect the data which is needed for the research. First, after downloading the movie, the researcher will watch the movie many times and pay attention to some scenes to find the important parts that are related to statement problems. Then, the researcher will stop the scene when she finds language disorder characteristics in the main character. After that, the researcher will write the minutes of the scene and the utterance of an autistic main character including words, phrases, and sentences that are related to the expressive language disorder. Then, the researcher will give a sign and number to the dialog in the script which shows language disorder. After that, the data will be tabulated, so the researcher can easily classify the types of expressive language disorder used by the autistic main characters in *Please Stand By (2017)*.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. research Finding

In this part, the researcher presented the finding of this research. The types of expressive language disorders which were found in the data were shown in the data below.

1.1. Semantic Disorder

Semantic disorders are also often experienced by people with autism. When people with autism have this disorder, they have difficulty

conveying and receiving messages. So they often do not understand what the other person is saying. As explained by Lord and Paul (1997), it is stated that autistic children have difficulty understanding the meaning of what is said to them. This is illustrated in the data below.

Data 17 (minutes 03:53-04:07)

Scottie : So, next week, your sister's coming to visit. How are you feeling about it?
 Wendy : [Wendy mumbles]
 Scottie : Out loud thinking, please.
 Wendy : I'm feeling somewhat a little bit nervous.
 Scottie : What does that feel like?
 Wendy : **Like I've got to pee but I don't.**

Data 18 (minutes 35:08-35:18)

Wendy : **Excuse me, bus driver. My friend needs to pee.**
 Doris : Restroom broken. Tell your friend the next stop's in an hour.
 Wendy : Okay, thank you.

From the data shown above, it can be seen that Wendy has difficulty in choosing the right words to describe her situation at any given moment. It can be seen in data 17 when Scottie asks how Wendy feels when her sister, Audrey, will visit her. Wendy explained her worries and fears about what might happen when Audrey visited her. She explained her nervous feeling by describing it as when she wanted to pee but couldn't. In data 18, Wendy also seems to have difficulty in choosing sentences that describe her needs at that time. At that time Wendy was on the bus with her dog friend, Pete. But after a while, Pete barked, signaling that he wanted to pee. Then Wendy went to ask the bus driver for a restroom. Instead of asking where the restroom was, she said that his friend needed to pee.

Data 19 (minutes 30:11-30:24)

Wendy : Does this bus go to Los Angeles?
 Bus Driver : No, you need to go to the Transbay Terminal on Fremont Street. That's on the other side of Market Street.
 Wendy ; **Okay, thank you. [go to the wrong direction]**
 Bus Driver : Whoa, whoa, whoa!
 Wendy : Okay, thank you.

Data 20 (minutes 32:02-32:20)

Doris : you need a ticket.
 Wendy : **What?**
 Doris : You need a ticket to ride the bus.
 Wendy : **Oh. You.. need..[write a sentence in her notebook]**

Doris : Hey, little missy.. Go buy a ticket!

Data 21 (minutes 01:07:44-01:08:02)

Wendy : I need to buy a ticket to Los Angeles, please.
 Ticket Agent : That will be 22 dollars.
 Wendy : [counting coins]
 Ticket Agent : That's not going to be enough money.
 Wendy : **It's 7.52 dollars, I counted it.**
 Ticket Agent : Next.

From the data above, it can be seen that Wendy has difficulty receiving messages from someone. As seen in data 19 when the bus driver directed Wendy to the bus terminal bound for Los Angeles. However, after hearing the bus driver, Wendy went the other way. Data 20 also shows how Wendy has difficulty in receiving a message. When Wendy was about to board the bus, the bus driver asked for a ticket from Wendy, but at that time Wendy did not have a ticket. So the bus driver explained to Wendy that she had to have a ticket in advance to get on the bus. Instead of buying tickets, Wendy wrote down the words of the bus driver into her notebook. So the bus driver immediately directed Wendy to buy a bus ticket in advance. In data 21 Wendy also has difficulty in receiving a message from other people. Seen this in Wendy's conversation with the ticket agent. In the conversation, the ticket agent told Wendy that the money she had was not enough to buy a bus ticket but it seemed that Wendy did not understand that the money she had was not enough and kept counting the money she had.

1.2. Pragmatic Disorder

Pragmatic disorders in people with autism can be seen from their difficulty in communicating with others. They are usually unable to maintain the topic of ongoing communication. So that often they get off the topic being discussed which makes their speech incomprehensible to others. The pragmatic disorder can be observed in such turn-based conversations. It can be seen in the data below:

Data 22 (minutes 32:21-32:36)

Ticket Agent : Where are you going?
 Wendy : Los Angeles. [Small voice]
 Ticket Agent : Excuse me?
 Wendy : Los Angeles.
 Ticket Agent : One way or round-trip?
 Wendy : **What?**
 Ticket Agent : Are you staying there or are you coming back?
 Wendy : **Coming back.**
 Ticket Agent : Okay, round trip, that will be 86 dollars.

Data 23 (minutes 47:10-47:33)

- Rose : So, where is your family?
Wendy : 992 Health Road, Oakland, California.
Rose : You mean you are out here all by yourself?
Wendy : **No, I have Pete with me.**
Rose : Yeah, but who is taking care of you?
Wendy : **I am.**
Rose : Oh, honey, that's not right. You shouldn't be out here all by yourself. Why don't you come with me?

Data 24 (minutes 01:05:55-01:06:34)

- Ticket Lady : Miss? Miss? I'm sorry, but I need to close up. Do you have any place to go?
Wendy : **Paramount Pictures.** Can I wait outside for the bus to Los Angeles?
Ticket Lady : Well, I can't stop you. But you should be careful, okay?
Wendy : **I am careful. I don't walk when the sign says, "Don't walk", and I only crossed Market Street one time.**
Ticket Lady : Okay.

Data 25 (minutes 01:22:18-01:22:40)

- Audrey : Wendy, I've been thinking.. and.. I've been trying to figure out.. what Mom would have wanted for us.
Wendy : **Well, mom's dead. So, she doesn't want anything anymore.**

From the data above, it shows that Wendy has difficulty in understanding the context and the true meaning of her interlocutor's speech. It can be seen in data 22 where Wendy was asked by the ticket agent whether she would buy a one-way or round-trip ticket. Here Wendy does not understand the meaning of the sentence. So the ticket agent explained to Wendy what the question meant. On data 23, Wendy also did not understand the meaning of the other person's speech. When Rose asked who she was traveling with and who was taking care of her at the time, Wendy literally answered she was traveling with her dog Pete and she was taking care of herself. The meaning of Rose's words is that Wendy should not travel alone without her family or other people who can look after her because people like Wendy need special supervision. On data 24, Wendy also doesn't understand what the other person really means. This can be seen in Wendy's conversation with the ticket lady. When the ticket lady wanted to close the ticket booth, she asked if Wendy had a place to go, Wendy answered literally her destination. But what the ticket lady meant was whether Wendy had a place to stay that night until the ticket booth opened again the next day. And when the ticket lady said to be careful,

Wendy actually explained how she was careful when crossing the road. What the ticket lady meant was that Wendy had to be careful with crime at night because she wanted to sleep outside the ticket booth. In data 25, Wendy responds to the words of her interlocutor literally because Wendy does not understand the true meaning of her interlocutor's words. It shows when Audrey wanted to say what their dead mother wanted to them both. But Wendy responded that their mother wanted nothing more because their mother had died. Wendy took Audrey's words literally.

Data 26 (minutes 19:58-20:08)

Audrey : So, Wendy, I came to visit today because there's something I need to tell you. Um, Jack has finally found a new job and..

Wendy : **There's a star trek script-writing contest.**

Audrey : Oh, okay, cool.

Data 27 (minutes 46:52-47:05)

Rose : I've got a grandson like you. Sweetest boy in the world, but he always has trouble trying to figure it all out.

Wendy : **[Take out picture of Ruby from the bag] This is my niece, Ruby.**

From the data shown above, it can be seen that Wendy tends not to be able to maintain a current topic of conversation. As seen in data 26 and 27. In data 26, Audrey looks like she will explain her purpose to visit Wendy at that time. But when Audrey had not finished explaining, Wendy immediately talked about things that were not related to the topic of conversation that Audrey was explaining. In data 27, it is also seen that Wendy cannot maintain a topic of conversation with her interlocutor. It can be seen from the conversation between Wendy and Rose. When Rose was talking about her grandson who has special needs like Wendy, Wendy suddenly took out a photo of her nephew Ruby from her bag. From this data, it can be seen that Wendy can't follow the interlocutor's current topic of conversation.

2. Discussion

The focus of this research is to find out the types of expressive language used by an autistic main character in *Please Stand By (2017)* movie. Expressive language is a person's ability to express wants and needs through communication, either verbal or non-verbal. With expressive language, people will be able to easily express their thoughts, ideas, opinions, and desires to others which makes communication work well. However, there are some people who have special needs who have expressive language disorders that cause a conversation to not go well. Individuals who usually experience this event are people with autism. In this study, the researcher wants to reveal what expressive language disorders are

experienced by people with autism in the movie *Please Stand By* (2017) using the theory of Carroll (1985).

Carroll (1985), categorizes expressive language disorders in people with autism into four categories, namely phonological disorders, syntactic disorders, semantic disorders, and pragmatic disorders. From the four categories, the researcher then describes what symptoms are associated with one by these categories. So that researchers can see and find any symptoms experienced by the main character who suffers from autism in the movie *Please Stand By* (2017) which can be seen through his conversations with other people by using the script from this movie.

Based on the movie, Wendy, who suffers from autism, has difficulty in several categories of expressive language disorders experienced by people with autism. The first category of expressive language disorders that Wendy experienced is semantic disorders. There are several symptoms that can indicate that a person has this disorder. The first is to use unusual words and phrases. People with this disorder usually say words and phrases that are not normal, usually only she who understands what the words and phrases she means. But in this movie, Wendy doesn't seem to say any unusual words or phrases. Another symptom of semantic disorders is when the sufferer has difficulty in conveying messages and thoughts, so she has difficulty in choosing the right words to describe his situation at a certain time. Another symptom of this disorder is when Wendy seems to have difficulty receiving messages from other people. From the movie, the researcher saw that sometimes Wendy had difficulty understanding the speech conveyed by her interlocutor. This resulted in Wendy experiencing confusion.

The other category of expressive language disorders experienced by Wendy is pragmatic disorders. There are several symptoms that can indicate that Wendy has this disorder. The first is the difficulty in understanding the context of the conversation. From Wendy's conversation with her interlocutor seen in the movie, Wendy seems to have difficulty understanding the true meaning of the sentences spoken by her interlocutor. She only understood the sentences literally. Another symptom of this disorder is difficulty expressing oneself in social situations. But in this movie, the researcher did not find Wendy having difficulty in expressing herself in social situations. The researcher saw that Wendy could well express herself in social situations. This can be seen from Wendy's attitude when interacting with other people. She is able to interact well with other people. Another symptom of the pragmatic disorder is difficulty in maintaining ongoing communication topics. From the data that the researcher got, Wendy seemed unable to maintain or follow the topic she was talking about. When the other person talks about a topic, Wendy tends to talk about something that has nothing to do with the previous topic of conversation.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher found that not all symptoms that indicate the category of expressive language disorder were experienced by Wendy who has autism. From the data obtained, Wendy does not have symptoms that indicate a semantic disorder such as using unusual words or phrases. In the data obtained, the researcher found that Wendy can use language

that can be clearly understood by others. However, Wendy actually shows other symptoms that indicate a semantic disorder such as difficulty in receiving and conveying a message or her thoughts. As well as symptoms that indicated a pragmatic disorder. Wendy does not experience all the symptoms that indicate she has a pragmatic disorder.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that Wendy faces a semantic language disorder which involves her inability to understand someone's speech. Then, she faced pragmatic language disorders. She faced difficulties in understanding the context of a conversation and he also sometimes had difficulties in maintaining the topic of ongoing communication.

Based on the result of this research on expressive language disorder, the researcher suggests that the students who want to know more about autistic language disorder and continue doing research concerning the language of autistic use different approaches and examine language disorder in more specific aspects of language to get a deeper explanation. In addition, it is better for the next researcher to have research in real humans with autism.

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