

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research background, problem identification, scope of the study, research questions, purpose, definition of key terms, and significance.

1.1 Research Background

Klaler (2004) states that literature refers to the forms of writing with certain limitations; not all written works can be considered literature (Desmawati, 2018). Literature is considered a human reflection of various everyday ideas, experiences, and desires, as outlined in literary works (Putri et al., 2022; Suwastini et al., 2020). Everyone, including children, can enjoy literature. Budiman & Listyarini (2017) argues that children's literature refers to a written text made by an author for people whose age is considered to be children. McDowell (1973) argues that children's literature generally has short storylines with the children as the protagonist and usually takes the themes of fantasy, adventure, or magic (Leonardi, 2020). It is in line with Oby's (2010) argument that the characteristics of children's literature are children as the heroes, simple themes, relationships, and language (Junaid, 2017).

Unlike literature that involves various emotions and feelings of readers, children's literature focuses on helping children explore their minds and understand others (Hissan, 2012). Mikkelson (2005) states that childhood is when children dwell in fantasy and adventures, so associating literary works with children's development can increase their self-confidence and moral attitudes (Hissan, 2012). Since the theme

and content of children's literature tell about fantasy, children will find enjoyment and happiness while reading it. Children's literature can bring pleasure to children and stimulate their mental, psychological, and social development (Junaid, 2017). Mukaromah (2019) argues that children learning about social life must understand the various human characteristics and which ones are appropriate and inappropriate. Consequently, society differentiates between things considered appropriate and inappropriate for women and things considered appropriate and inappropriate for men. One form of literature is novels that can be used to learn English, considering their witty words and the complexity of their language structure. Extensive reading of a novel plays a role in vocabulary acquisition and provides direct exposure to the target language so that it can be an effective way to understand vocabulary (Tsai, 2012). Furthermore, by reading novels, students are more familiar with linguistic forms, functions of communication, and meanings that native people want to convey (Tsai, 2012). It also can be a source for students to deepen the grammar rules studied (Krasniqi, 2019). Therefore, reading novel benefits students because they can authentically learn the target language.

Children's novels can support children's moral development through the character's behavior presented in the novel (Ridwan & Mulasih, 2022). Kindness, honesty, keeping promises, and taking responsibility are moral values that must be developed to live harmoniously in society (Hissan, 2012). These moral values are portrayed in children's characters in children's novels, for instance, children's characters in Roald Dahl's novels *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory* and *The Witches* (Hissan, 2012; Giovani, 2014; Suwastini et al., 2022). In *Charlie and The Chocolate Factory*,

Charlie's willingness to share and build a harmonious relationship with his family symbolizes his kindness and responsibility (Hissan, 2012; Giovani, 2014), while Willy Wonka's intelligence and innovation in running his chocolate factory represents creativity (Giovani, 2014; Pratama & Aji, 2017; Sudewo & Munandar, 2014). Besides Willy Wonka, The Boy in *The Witches* (1983) is also described as intelligent because of his brilliant ideas in carrying out his mission (Suwastini, Dewi, et al., 2022). In addition, children's literature also contains cultural norms that play a role in the socialization process of children, such as gender (Leonardi, 2020). For example, in Roald Dahl's *The BFG*, gender equality is represented by Sophie and The BFG. The BFG does not look down on Sophie because she is a girl but considers Sophie as a companion who should work together in doing actions (Ciptaningrum & Chotib, 2013). Furthermore, Mary Malone's courage in Dahl's *Lamb to the Slaughter* caused her to become an independent woman and free from women's oppression by her husband (Tanusy, 2018).

The binary dichotomy will always benefit one of the binaries and oppress the other, for instance, men over women (Gamble, 2006). The binary dichotomy is a social construct that divides gender based on gender roles, namely masculine and feminine and determines how men and women should act, speak, walk, dress, physical appearance, role in society, and occupation (Murtiningrum et al., 2023). Cixous and Clement (1986) state that binary opposition gives negativity to the feminine dimension because of its relationship with passivity, mother, heart, and nature while giving positivity to the masculine dimension because of its relationship with activity, father, head, and culture (Gamble, 2006). (Millet, 2000) states that binary dichotomy assigned

women to house core and feminine activity while men are associated with work outside and masculine activity (Mihira et al., 2021). Things that are appropriate and inappropriate for men and women to do are presented in a binary dichotomy. Binary dichotomy controls the masculine and feminine into two opposing concepts; male/female, man/woman, boy/girl, handsome/beautiful, strong/weak, and so on (Blangsinga et al., 2021). Weedon (1987) argues that implementing binary dichotomy in a patriarchal society that prioritizes men's interests over women can lead to women's oppression (Gamble, 2006). It is because binary oppositions usually attribute weak traits to women and strong traits to men. Thus, the internalization of binary opposition is detrimental for women if they have to limit themselves so that they are irrational, dependent, or weak to be said to be good women.

Feminism is a struggle to oppose binary dichotomy and patriarchy in various forms (Gamble, 2006). Tong (2009) divided feminism into eight categories: liberal, radical, Marxist/socialist, psychoanalytic, care-focused, multicultural/global/colonial, ecofeminist, and postmodern/third wave. Among the various schools of feminism proposed by Tong (2009), liberal feminism believes that the only thing that can liberate women from patriarchal oppression is by eliminating negative feminine traits that weaken them, maintaining positive feminine traits, adopting positive masculine traits, and rejecting negative masculine traits (Tong, 2009). Therefore, it is essential for children not to internalize the binary dichotomy, which disadvantages women. Thus, children must be given examples of situations or behaviors that break down this patriarchal binary dichotomy, from the adults' behavior around them, teachers and teaching materials, and children's books. Several researchers have conducted a study

on feminism in children's literature. Ambarwa et al. (2018) and Setyadewi (2022) took an ecological, feminist approach to analyze ecofeminists in Disney movies. They found that Moana in *Moana* (2016) and Maleficent in *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019) reflect ecofeminist traits seen from their actions to love and protect nature. Ambarita & Efrata (2019) and (Aninda et al., 2019) analyzed liberal feminism in Disney movies *Aladdin* (2019) and *Brave* (2012). The result showed that the female main characters in these movies represent liberal feminism because they are brave against patriarchal systems that constrain them from doing what they want.

More specifically, Roald Dahl's novels also have been widely discussed from the feminist approach. Anggraeni & Hendrarti (2016) analyzed Roald Dahl's *Matilda* and found that Matilda is an intelligent kid who struggles against the injustice that she got from her family. (Tanusy, 2018) explored female empowerment in Roald Dahl's *Lamb to the Slaughter*. Kaur & Amolak (2021) revealed that the women characters in Roald Dahl's *Lamb to the Slaughter*, *Way Up to Heaven*, and *The Landlady* depicted women who did not behave according to the traditional gender role. Among Roald Dahl's novels, *The Witches* (1983) has been widely studied from a feminist approach, both from the novel (Bird, 1998; Eveline, 2020; Murphy, 2019; Tso, 2012) and film adaptation (Bird, 1998).

Therefore, in this present study, the research will analyze The Grand High Witch's characterization from a liberal feminist perspective. In this novel, The Grand High Witch is portrayed as feminine but extremely horrifying when she puts off her mask (Bird, 1998). This study will use the liberal feminist theory by Tong (2009). According to Tong (2009), liberal feminism focuses on how women can get equal

opportunity and freedom by developing their positive masculinity and positive femininity. The research conducted this study in order to give an understanding of gender and increase public awareness about feminism. Hence, based on the background above, it is interesting to analyze Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983) to see how The Grand High Witch is portrayed as a liberal feminist.

1.2 Problem Identification

Gender inequality that happens in society is a significant issue. The patriarchal system that happens in society makes many women live in oppression. Reading a novel can increase people's awareness of gender equality. The novel is a long and complex imaginative text based on human experience that is told through a series of interconnected events and involves a group of individuals in a particular setting (Desmawati, 2018). One of the famous children's writers, Roald Dahl, conveys his thoughts about feminism in the form of a children's novel. Dahl's works contain a lot of feminist values, which are portrayed through the character presented. *The Witches* (1983) is one of Dahl's works with strong feminist values. Therefore, it is interesting to analyze Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983) to see The Grand High Witch's characterization and her characterization as a liberal feminist.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to describing The Grand High Witch's characterization as the main antagonist character in Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983). The Grand High Witch's characterization will be analyzed to determine The Grand High Witch's characters that reflect liberal feminist characterization. Therefore, this

study focused on describing the characterization of The Grand High Witch and describing the liberal feminism traits portrayed in The Grand High Witch's characterization.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the research background, two research questions are drawn:

- 1) What are the characters of The Grand High Witch in Roald Dahl's *The Witches*?
- 2) What liberal feminist traits are represented in the characters of The Grand High Witch in Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983) which portrays as Liberal feminist in Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983).

1.5 Purpose of the Study

Based on the research problems above, the purposes of the study are:

- 1) To describe the characters of The Grand High Witch in Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983).
- 2) To describe the liberal feminist traits portrayed in characters of The Grand High Witch in Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983).

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

This part contains the definition of liberal feminism, character as fictional personae in narrative, character as traits, characterization, and method of character revelation.

1.6.1 Liberal Feminism

According to Tong, (2009) liberal feminism focuses on achieving gender equality especially for women in the fields of education, politics and public sphere. In this research, liberal feminism was analyzed through The Grand High Witch's characterization which depicted liberal feminism.

1.6.2 Character as Fictional Personae in Narrative

A character refers to an individual in a literary work who has a personality that is formed from their look, the way they talk, behavior, names and ideas inside the head (Gill, 1995, p.127). In this research, The Grand High Witch is the character who would be analyzed.

1.6.3 Character as Traits

Character as traits is a combination of several features such as clothing, ways of speaking, reaction and behavior that express personality (Gill, 1995, p.136). This research would explore The Grand High Witch's characters.

1.6.4 Characterization

Characterization is the process to present a character (Gill, 1995, p.127). The author used direct or indirect characterization to characterize the character through conversation, behavior, appearance, and so forth.

1.6.5 Method of Character Revelation

An author presents the character to the reader in two ways, namely direct characterization and indirect characterization (Gill, 1995).

1.7 The significance of the study

This study has two significances which are theoretical significance and practical significance.

1.7.1 Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to contribute to EFL classes as a learning source, especially for EFL students. Literature can contribute to students' language acquisition, such as communication skills, vocabulary acquisition, cultural understanding, and linguistic knowledge (Baharuddin et al., 2022; Khan & Alasmari, 2018; Krasniqi, 2019). In addition, this research could contribute to peoples' understanding of feminism. Feminism is a social issue often included in literature (Nirwinastu, 2021). Therefore, the analysis of novels in this study can contribute to the literature and people who want to know about feminism.

1.7.2 Practical Significances

The practical significance of this study is for English students, EFL teachers, society and future research.

1.7.2.1 English as Foreign Language Students

This research is expected to support EFL students in learning a language. Students can get direct exposure to the target language and learn it authentically (Khan & Alasmari, 2018; Torkos & Torkos, 2021). Furthermore, the literature contains social issues that happen in society, especially gender roles and feminism issues (Tanusy, 2018). Thus, literature allows students to learn about these issues.

1.7.2.2 EFL Teachers

This research will encourage teachers to use novels as a learning tool. The novel is one of the literary works which can entertain readers and provides much information (Leonardi, 2020). A study conducted by Sasalia and Sari (2020) revealed that implementing novels in EFL classes positively impacted students' reading skills. Therefore, involving novels in the teaching process can motivate children to learn because it can entertain children during the learning activity.

1.7.2.3 Society

As a genre of literary work, a novel depicts what is experienced and witnessed by humans in real life (Putri et al., 2022). In the 200s, freedom of the press led to the emergence of literary works (novels) that raised sexuality issues, such as gender ideology, commonly practiced in society (Yulianesta, 2014). Therefore, this research will be helpful for society because, through this research, society may have a deeper understanding of feminism and encourage women to raise their voices to get equal rights.

1.7.2.4 For Future Research

This research will be helpful for other researchers who will conduct a similar study. The previous study by Gunawati et al. (2021) analyzed liberal feminism in Nicholas Spark's novel entitled *The Notebook* through Noah Calhoun and Allison Nelson's traits. Thus, this research is expected to be used as a source to gain information in analyzing novels through the liberal feminism theory proposed by Tong

