

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the research, problem identification, scope of the research, statement of the problem, objectives of the research, and significance of the research.

1.1. Research Background

Introducing and teaching children how to treat other genders or different genders has been done from an early age in Indonesia (Nurhafizah and Ardi, 2019: 49). It is the role of parents who have the most important role, because they are the closest and know their children best (Nurhafizah and Ardi, 2019: 50). However, several factors such as the busy work of parents and cultural factors that still consider that knowledge of gender differences is still taboo, can have negative impacts that children may face in the future (Nurhafizah and Ardi, 2019: 50). Thus, children need to be educated so that they have the awareness and knowledge to avoid discrimination against others. In line with the goal of feminism, which is to raise the status of women or obtain gender equality that has the same access as men (Gamble, 2006: 8). To overcome these problems, education is the right channel to introduce children to feminism, by providing appropriate children's literature. Therefore, through education, children can develop an awareness of gender differences and gender equality.

Education is one of the solutions to introduce and promote gender equality to children. According to Koko & Osuji (2018: 209) educational equality will not be easy to achieve if there is no effort from all parties such as the government and society for the implementation process in real life. In addition, education has a

positive role in promoting women's empowerment (Koko & Osuji, 2018: 211). It is further emphasized that education is a powerful medicine to promote women's empowerment and national development (Koko & Osuji, 2018: 211). This is because, when women get education, the community is also affected, but when women are deprived of the right to obtain the same education as men, women's contribution to national development in a country will also be hampered. It is in line with Sahin (2013: 60) that gender equality means equality in education for both men and women. Not only in education, but also in social, cultural, political, and social society. Moreover, if this equality can be achieved, girls and boys can contribute in the future (Sahin, 2013: 60). With this in mind, it can be concluded that it is necessary to build awareness of gender equality as early as possible.

Literature can be a medium for introducing and implementing gender equality. Specifically, children's literature. According to Zixuan (2023: 115) children's literature is a variety of reading for children that is suitable for children to read and enjoy, and conducive to the healthy development of children's body and mind. Not only that, literature also has positive values that can benefit readers such as containing feminism values, character education values, and moral values (Suwastini et al., 2020; Utami et al., 2020; Suwastini, et al., 2021; Senawati et al., 2021). Children's literature also has many types such as fairy tales, fables, picture books, comics, cartoons, novels, and children's songs that have the potential to be enjoyed by most children (Piscitelli & Collazo, 2020; Junaidi & Syahrani, 2019). As for other benefits that can be obtained through children's literature, namely, it can motivate children to learn, master vocabulary, analyze events, and solve problems by means of critical thinking (Senawati et al., 2021: 91). In addition, the

values contained in literature have many positive moral values. Thus, children will have or grow awareness about gender equality.

To overcome the problem of gender inequality, one type of children's literature that contains moral values is the novel. According to Abrams (1999: 252), the name "novel" comes from an Italian novel called "novella", which means "a small literary piece". This literary form is constructed as a short narrative in prose. According to Boulton (2013: 9), the novel is the last fictional literacy in history to develop, even though the novel lives and develops along with human history. Furthermore, a good novel is a novel that is able to provide good knowledge and understanding of how humans deal with events like in real life. In addition, novels can be useful as a learning medium that serves to educate humans to have morals, foster a sense of empathy and sympathy, and create good values that can be emulated by humans (Boulton, 2013: 9). Moreover, novels are not only fictional media to be read or as reading material, but novels are also able to present values regarding character education, feminism values, and moral values for readers (Suwastini, Lasmawan, Artini, and Mahayanti, 2020; Utami, Suwastini, Artini, and Kultsum, 2020; Suwastini, Utami, and Artini, 2021; Senawati et al., 2021). Through intrinsic elements of novels such as characters and characterization, they can serve as examples for readers in making sensible decisions (Boulton, 2013: 6). Novels are also a medium of comfort for those who are lonely, distraction, and injury (Boulton, 2013: 7). Thus, it can be concluded that novels are a suitable medium for educating children or readers and also as a positive entertainment medium.

According to Gamble (2006: 39) feminism is a form of expression of women who are treated unfairly in a society that is organized only to prioritize the male

point of view. Furthermore, women are forced to accept the patriarchal paradigm that means men have everything that women do not have. Furthermore, this perspective results in women being considered weak while men are strong, men are always rational while women are emotional, men are always active while women are passive and so on. This has resulted in negative impacts on women, with women not having equal access to social life (Gamble, 2006: 39). Not only are women disadvantaged, children are also affected by this feminist issue. Women do not have control over their own children in terms of parenting, education, and in the event of a divorce, the custody of children is the responsibility of the father (Gamble, 2006: 4). Children raised by patriarchal fathers will allow their children to grow up without proper moral standards, which will result in violence against women and can lead to female homicide (Gamble, 2006: 123). Considering this phenomenon, to anticipate misconceptions about feminism and increase awareness of gender equality, it is better if teaching about gender equality is taught from an early age. According to Vandergrift (1993: 374) in multicultural literature for children and adolescents, the perspective of feminism becomes very useful for children to see the other side of feminism such as, encouraging children to accept, care, and celebrate differences followed by efforts to reconstruct the world to be more respectful and nurturing for all people. Moreover, with feminism children can avoid sexual violence which feminists have found that the involvement of fathers, male relatives, and other male acquaintances are the main culprits for the sexual abuse of children (Angelides, 2004: 141). Thus, feminism should be introduced and taught to children.

Matilda is a type of children's literature that contains feminism and gender equality values that are suitable to be taught to children (Turcin, 2021; Þórðardóttir, 2019). In addition, *Matilda* has won many awards. *Matilda* topped the Bookseller's bestseller list in January 1990 (Dennison, 2022: 9). In September 2021, *Matilda* became one of Roald Dahl's works that was adapted into a film on Netflix (Dennison, 2022: 16). According to (Þórðardóttir, 2019: 8) *Matilda* the novel won the Children's Book Award when it was published and was well received by the public in the same year. Since then, *Matilda* has been translated into more than forty languages. *Matilda's* story was also adapted into an equally successful musical drama (Þórðardóttir, 2019: 8). To this day, *Matilda's* story is still very popular as it entertains and provides moral lessons for readers of all ages (Þórðardóttir, 2019: 8). As a novel that has received many awards in the children's literature category. *Matilda* novel has been discussed from various perspectives or approaches.

Based on several studies that analyzed *Matilda*, Pope & Round (2015), examined how *Matilda's* character presented as a child who had heroic values, perseverance, persistence, and *Matilda's* strength in facing the injustice she felt and experienced. Putri & Retnaningdyah (2018) examined literacy practices that can have a good impact on readers related to the novel *Matilda*. Meanwhile, Kadidaze & Karaz (2021), Thunes (2019), Yeni & Ariska (2019), Suwastini, Mahendrayani et al. (2023), Lenak, Moge & Kamagi (2024), examined how the relationship between parents and children and how the role of parents should be needed by children regardless of gender in *Matilda* novel. Other studies specifically examined *Matilda* using the feminism approach. Anggraeni (2016), Dickinson (2017), Hunt (2023), Þórðardóttir (2019), Quraishi & Jani (2020), Suwastini, Utami, Pramestika,

Wahyuni & Rusnalasari (2021), Turcin (2024) and Van der Heijden (2020), examined the gender stereotypes contained in *Matilda* and the marginalization experienced by the main character, Matilda. Based on the above studies, the approach used is liberal feminism which focuses more on the marginalized role of women and the role of men who are always prioritized in a patriarchal society. Liberal feminism requires women to retain positive feminine traits such as compassion and tolerance and adopt positive masculine traits such as logic and strength. In the liberal feminism approach, women are also required to eliminate negative feminine traits such as emotional and fussy and reject negative masculine traits such as aggressive and indifferent. But none of the studies used a radical feminism perspective in examining *Matilda's* novel. Through a different feminist approach to researching the novel *Matilda*, which focuses on Mrs. Wormwood, it is expected to make a valuable contribution to the field of literature.

Mrs. Wormwood is one of the antagonists and minor characters in *Matilda* (1988) by Roald Dahl. Several studies reveal that Mrs. Wormwood is a woman who does not perform her duties well as a mother. According to Turcin (2021: 19), Mrs. Wormwood is only concerned with her appearance rather than taking care of her children, especially Matilda. Moreover, Mrs. Wormwood is a patriarchal woman, as she views men as more important than women.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Wormwood's view that women should be perfect with the appearance expected by society, indicates that Mrs. Wormwood is a woman who upholds high standards and prioritises appearance above all else (Þórðardóttir, 2019: 7). Another indication that Mrs. Wormwood is a patriarchal woman is shown by Mrs. Wormwood's indifference towards Matilda's extraordinary abilities.

However, for Mrs. Wormwood education for women is not important (Suwastini et al., 2021: 199). According to Dickinson (2017: 56) compares Mrs. Wormwood and Miss Honey in terms of appearance, where Mrs. Wormwood prioritises appearance by colouring her hair, wearing heavy make-up, and doing all of the stuff related to feminine. Considering some of these studies, they focused on Mrs. Wormwood as a feminine, patriarchal, and bad mother. However, there is no research that examines Mrs. Wormwood's character through the lens of radical-cultural feminism. The radical-cultural feminism approach focuses on women's feminine traits that they can use as weapons in achieving equality between men and women. Thus, this study focuses on Mrs. Wormwood's positive-femininity and negative-femininity feminine traits in accordance with the radical-cultural feminism approach (Tong & Botts, 2018).

In this research, the approach used is radical-cultural feminism, which does not support androgyny as a feminist ideal to achieve gender equality. Radical-cultural feminists believe that women naturally have feminine traits within themselves, so women do not need to adapt masculinity traits from men just to achieve gender equality (Tong & Botts, 2018). By using a feminist theory that is different from previous studies, it would certainly make a fresh contribution to the world of children's literature, especially *Matilda* novels.

1.2.Problem Identification

One social issue that is often disputed and debated is feminism. Feminism is a social issue that attracts people's attention because it involves the struggle for gender equality and gender awareness. Indonesia itself has a lack of understanding about feminism, gender equality and equity. This has resulted in a negative impact on

society regarding the perception of feminism from a male perspective. Not only that, these problems will lead to a patriarchal cultural system in the midst of socio-cultural life in society. The patriarchal system will produce a patriarchal society as well. So, there needs to be a solution that can eradicate these problems. Educating children from an early age about feminism can have a positive impact. The positive impact that can be generated is respecting gender differences. To teach children the awareness and importance of respecting gender differences can be done by using children's literature, namely, novels. Novels, which are categorized as children's literature and easy to obtain, can be a tool to eradicate gender inequality.

Every child should receive an education that aims for gender awareness and equality. This is in line with feminism, which aims to achieve gender equality and fight for women's rights in a patriarchal society. Novels can be useful for children's learning and can instil moral values of life that can be implemented in everyday life. One of the novels that can be used in this case is *Matilda* novel. *Matilda* novel is one of the works created by Roald Dahl in 1988. *Matilda* novel contains many feminist values that promote gender equality that are suitable for children. In the novel, there are several characters who represent women who show the ideology of feminism, especially radical feminism. This study investigates radical feminism as reflected by the character of Mrs. Wormwood character in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988).

1.3.Problem Limitation

Based on the identification of the problems above, this research has a limited scope, which only focuses on the analysis of Mrs. Wormwood as a minor character in the novel *Matilda* by Roald Dahl (1988), by paying attention to the emphasis on

the study of the character's representation with the ideology of radical feminism. This research also explores several novel elements such as character, characterization, and character revelation. By exploring these elements, it can reveal the nature of Mrs. Wormwood's character and how she embodies the principles of radical feminism in *Matilda* (1988). However, it should be underlined that due to research limitations, this study is limited to a specific character, Mrs. Wormwood, and her representation of radical feminist traits.

1.4.Statement of the Research Question

Based on the background of the study and the problem identification above, the research question can be determined as follows:

- 1) What are the characters of Mrs. Wormwood in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988)?
- 2) What radical-cultural feminist traits are represented in the characters of Mrs. Wormwood in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988)?

1.5.Objectives of the Research

Based on the research question above, the objectives of the study as follow:

- 1) To describe the characters of Mrs. Wormwood in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988).
- 2) To elaborate radical-cultural feminism ideologies are represented in the characters of Mrs. Wormwood character in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988).

1.6.Definition of Key Terms

This subchapter provides the brief information of every part of the conceptual definition.

1.6.1. Radical Feminism

The term 'radical feminism' is a form of women's resistance to gain equality in a patriarchal society (Tong & Botts, 2018: 37). Radical feminism is a feminist perspective that holds that the patriarchal system is the main cause of women's oppression (Gamble, 2006: 282). According to Tong & Botts (2018: 12) there are two groups of radical feminism, namely, radical- libertarian feminists and cultural radical feminists. Radical-libertarian feminists believe that encouraging the emergence of androgynous women who have both masculine and feminine aspects will help end the oppression of women (Tong & Botts, 2018: 37-38). Meanwhile, radical-cultural feminists priorities women's natural feminine traits as a way to break free from patriarchal culture (Tong & Botts, 2018: 40-41).

1.6.2. Character and Characterization

Characters are representations of real life that have certain traits and beliefs created by the author (Gill, 1995; Kennedy and Gioia, 1995; Gamble and Yates, 2008: 81). Meanwhile, according to Gill (1995: 127) characterization is a method and character is the product. Furthermore, characterization can be described in both direct and indirect ways. In characterization produces two characters, namely, flat and round characters.

1.6.3. Novel

According to Kennedy and Gioia (1995: 264) define the novel as a lengthy fictional narrative, typically longer than a short story, which delves deeply into characters, plot, themes, and settings. According to Abrams (1999: 252) the name "novel" comes from an Italian novel called "novella", which means "a small literary piece." This literary form is constructed as a short narrative in prose.

1.7. Significance of the Research

The research significance describes the characterization of Mrs. Wormwood's characters in Roald Dahl's novel *Matilda* from a feminist perspective, especially radical feminism. This description contributes theoretically and practically to provide readers with valuable information in the relationship between the novel and real life. The significance of this study has been divided into two namely, the theoretical significance and the practical significance.

1.7.1. Theoretical Significance

According to Kataja (2018: 56) there are several theoretical significances related to this research including: for literature learning, language learning, and feminist ideology. The following explanation below:

1.7.1.1. Literature Learning

Literature-based learning can provide several positive benefits to students' ability to learn languages, real-life context, and critical thinking skills. Students become familiar with various features related to written language, substantial and contextualized texts. Thus, learners can relate and develop syntactic functions, discourse with their ideas or skills which is called, language enrichment (Hismanoglu, 2005: 55). Some examples of authentic materials that take the context of real-life stories are: pamphlets, cartoons, adverts, magazines, and so on. Thus, learners can learn language through literature and also learn about real life which is called, valuable authentic materials (Hismanoglu, 2005: 54). Through learning literature can foster other abilities such as critical thinking skills. This is because students have to understand the content of the story through different points of view (Kataja, 2018: 6).

1.7.1.2. Language Learning

Through learning literature to master a language, especially English and learn a certain culture. Through literature, students or children can have a positive impact on listening, writing, reading, and speaking skills (Babee and Yahya, 2014: 81). In addition, novels as a type of literature can provide students with in-depth knowledge related to a culture, social life, traditions, and all aspects of it that can make students use their creativity, critical, and their imagination in viewing social issues within the context (Babee and Yahya, 2014: 83).

1.7.2. Feminists Ideologies

This research is about the representation of radical feminism that examines the character of Mrs. Wormwood in the novel *Matilda* (1988) by Roald Dahl. *Matilda* novel has a striking theoretical value because it contains depictions of gender dynamics and feminist ideals in children's literature. By using feminist theory to analyze Mrs. Wormwood's character, this study hopes to reveal themes of gender equality, agency, and female empowerment, as well as critique traditional gender norms and stereotypes in the novel. In addition, this research is expected to inspire and mobilize young readers, especially women, by presenting strong female characters who challenge societal expectations as the goal of radical feminist ideologies that women are androgynous to eradicate the oppression of women (Gamble, 2006; Tong & Botts, 2018). Through this analysis, this study contributes to promoting diverse and inclusive narratives in children's literature and reinforces the relevance of feminist discourse in literary criticism. Through the exploration of Mrs. Wormwood's character, this research enriches people's

understanding of feminist narratives and the resulting impact on people's thoughts, perspectives and fosters a greater sense of appreciation in fighting for gender equality, social justice, culture and politics of women in literary representation.

1.7.3. Practical Significance

According to Babee and Yahya (2014: 83) there are several practical significances of incorporating the study of gender equality, particularly through literature which are divided into five parts namely: for students, teachers, parents, society, and other researchers. These are the following explanation:

1.7.3.1. For EFL Students

This research might have an impact on student's gender awareness. Through literature learning, students are able to distinguish between good and bad characters to be imitated and applied. Teachers can introduce students to certain characters through storytelling. In *Matilda*, the novel can strengthen students' gender awareness because it contains stories of feminism, character education, and as a medium of entertainment while learning (Putri & Retnaningdyah, 2018: 189). More importantly, as students they can distinguish between right and wrong even though they are younger than adults (Yeni & Ariska, 2019: 170). All of these moral values can be found in *Matilda*, a novel by Roald Dahl (1988).

1.7.3.2. For Teachers

This research can be useful for teachers who want to introduce and teach the importance of gender awareness to students through literature learning. The role of teachers is very important for students after the role of parents in appreciating gender differences. Teachers can be a medium for connecting texts

and student learning by providing examples of daily life, teachers as explainers of awareness of cultural differences, training students to empathise, providing opportunities for students to share, and fostering interest in reading and learning (Senawati et al., 2021: 92). In addition, the role of teachers can foster students' mindset about gender differences and how to respect these gender differences without having to oppose the government (Blangsinga et al., 2020: 136).

1.7.3.3. For Parents

This research is expected to be able to provide information that reading novels is not only aimed at education but can give indirect benefit to their children. The information contains moral values, character values, and social values especially in the novel *Matilda* (1988). Parents can suggest to their children to read the novel at home during holiday or leisure time. *Matilda* provides an example to parents of how to treat their children fairly regardless of gender differences, support children's positive abilities or interests, and not set bad examples or intimidate children (Beauvais, 2015: 22-23). In addition, parents can make their children aware of gender differences and how to respect the differences that exist in society.

1.7.3.4. For Society

This research might have an impact on society, since this research discusses social issues, namely, feminism. It is hoped that society will become more open-minded by not treating others based on gender, age, social status, and others. In addition, the existence of women in society is expected to be able to do everything without pressure, but rather freedom. A number of studies that examined narrative texts as one of the student reading texts found that narrative

texts are able to entertain students and function to preserve local wisdom, build cross-cultural awareness, and develop students' overall character that can have an impact on society (Blangsinga et al., 2020: 136). The representation of Roald Dahl's texts uses the strong position of women in a patriarchal society (Dickinson, 2017: 6). Dahl as a citizen used his writing skills to influence other sections of the population into more sympathetic mindsets (Dickinson, 2017: 11). It should be underlined that the application of literature is not one of domination and influence. As such, literature is influenced by various components in society, whether consciously or unconsciously. Literature can be used as a space to safely express different opinions (Dickinson, 2017: 13).

1.7.3.5. For Other Researchers

This research is expected to provide benefits for those who conduct similar research. The results of this study can be used as an empirical review. Not only that, this study can be used as an example or guide for other researchers in conducting research that focuses on analyzing novels, especially using a feminist perspective. Other researchers can use appropriate feminist sources, namely, Rosemarie Tong & Tina Fernandes Botts (2018), Sarah Gamble (2006), Daly (1990), Bressler (1994), and so on in collecting feminist theories. Furthermore, this study can also be an example for other researchers who conduct qualitative research with text analysis.