CHILDREN'S RESPONSE TO *THE GREATEST SHOWMAN (2017)* MOVIE: READER RESPONSE ANALYSIS

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ACCEPTANCE

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Herewith, I declare that in this publication article there are no plagiarism of the previous studies or other literary work which has been raised in order to gain bachelor degree, nor there are other masterpiece which has been written or published by other, except those that are reffered in this manuscript and mentioned in the bibliography.

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Surakarta, February 20, 2020

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CHILDREN'S RESPONSE TO *THE GREATEST SHOWMAN (2017)* MOVIE: READER RESPONSE ANALYSIS

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui tanggapan anak-anak terhadap film *The Greatest Showman* yang disutradarai oleh Michael Gracey. Penelitian ini difokuskan pada analisis *teori respon pembaca* yang diterapkan oleh pengulas *The Greatest Showman*. Penelitian ini termasuk penelitian kualitatif. Penelitian ini hanya berfokus pada 73 anak berusia 8 hingga 17 tahun. Sumber data primer adalah tanggapan anak-anak dari situs web *Common Sense Media*; tanggapan diambil dalam format pdf mulaidari 20 Desember 2017 hingga 30 Desember 2018. Sumber data sekunder berasal dari beberapa referensi dan bahan yang terkait untuk penelitian ini. Dalam menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan analisis deskriptif. Teknik pengumpulan data dengan cara pengambilan sampel purposive. Dengan menganalisis teori yang diterapkan, penelitian ini menerapkan *teori respon pembaca* yang disampaikan oleh Richard Beach. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada empat teori respon yang diterapkan oleh pengulas, yaitu (1) strategi respon tekstual, (2) strategi respon pengalaman, (3) strategi respon psikologis, dan (4) strategi respon sosial.

Kata kunci: responanak, richard beach, the greatest showman

Abstract

This research aims to find out children's response to *The Greatest Showman movie* directed by Michael Gracey. The research is focused on analyzing the reader response theory applied by *The Greatest Showman*reviewer's. The research belongs to qualitative research. This research only focus on 73childrens aged 8 until 17 years old. The sources of primary data is the responses of children from *Common Sense Media* website, those responses taken in pdf format start from December 20, 2017 until December 30, 2018. The sources of secondary data are from some reference and material that related to this research. In analyzing the data, the present researcher employs descriptive analysis. The technique of data collecting are purposive sampling.By analyzing the theory applied, this research applied *reader response theory* presented by Richard Beach. The result of the research shows that there are four response theory applied by the reviewers, they are (1) textual response strategy, (2) experiential response strategy, (3) psychological response strategy, and (4) social response strategy.

Keywords:children's response, richard beach, the greatest showman

1. INTRODUCTION

A text is written to be read. Therefore it should have reader who give the text a certain meaning. Reader is hold a big role to direct the author to convey his works. The birth of literary works is inseparable from the expertise of an author in

exploring his idea. The author is the starting point in the existence of the work. This work is accepted by readers or connoisseurs of literature. The position of the reader in literary works is a king, because readers has the freedom to analyze, interpret, comment and even judge the literary works. Each reader has a different understanding and interpretation, because the literary text is a study of interpretation. The reader of literary works, in essence, has acted as a *critic,* because the reader can judge whether the literature that has been read is interesting or not. In addition, the reader is a *judge* in evaluating a work. Imagine, if no one reads a literary work, the function of literature has no role in the work. Literary works not only enjoyed by adults, but also by children. Children generally like literature; those who like when listening to fables or fairy tales. Children prefer to choose stories that can showing the way to see the world on their own.

Children's response to literature is an area of literacy research that has attracted a great deal of attention. In this research, the present researcher want to discussing a variaty of perpectives that can be taken on children's response. One of literary works that the present researcher used as material for children's response is *The Greatest Showman* movie. In 2009, Gracey was announced his first project as a director in *The Greatest Showman* movie. He is the first Autralian filmmaker who making a name in Hollywood. Gracey was born in Melbourne, he started working as an animators and visual effects compositor in Animal Logic (1994-1996) before his directional debut. This is a musical drama based on the life of circus P. T. Barnum, the creator of the Barnum & Bailey Circus. *The Greatest Showman* can be watched by all ages because it is polite spectable for children. Carrying a slightly different genre of film, the modern musical drama with cheerful songs in it.

The Greatest Showman tells the story of P. T. Barnum who was lay off from his company that will go bankrupt. Barnum also thought of borrowing money from the bank to buy a museum where the museum displayed various kinds of wax statues. Unfortunately, the museum ticket sales are very low. In the midst of quiet museum visitors, Barnum's daughters also gave an idea to show something *alive* for the museum. That is when he began to meet with many

players to be able to join in the circus show. However, many emotion messages that delivered in each conflict that unfortunately were too easily resolved. Therefore, *The Greatest Showman* is not much different with other biographies, but *The Greatest Showman* presents a story in a musical drama, from the beginning to the end, the contents are singing.

The present researcher has found two previous studies that used as references in this research. First, Widodo (2015) conducted a research entitled *Between Fact and Fiction in Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code (2003): Reader Response Analysis.* The difference study between Widodo and the present present researcher is in the source data that used as the object of the study. The present reseacher make limitation those only children as respondents from website *Common Sense Media*, while Widodo's data are reviewer from amazon.com site without age restrictions. Second, Cahyanti (2016) conducted a research entitled *Children's Response to Disney Movie Frozen Based on Reader response Perspective*. The difference study between Cahyanti's research and the present researcher is the theory used. Cahyantiis use reader response perspective proposed by Holland, while the present present researcher is use reader response theory proposed by Richard Beach. Some of the references focused on applying reader response strategies in the study, while the other references focused on children's responses. From the previous study above, the present researcher focuses to analyze what reader response theory applied by *The Greatest Showman*reviewer's.

"Readers response theory theorists recognize that the meaning of responses varies considerably according to differences in specific social, historical, or cultural context" (Beach, 1993, p. 16). It means that people may have different understanding to the text. With this difference in understanding, it can makes literary works increasingly developed. The development of literary works also develops the level of reader's experience. Reader response theory focuses "on the readers and their relationship with the text to generate meaning" (Lobo: 2015). Reader response theory emphasizes the existence of communication between readers and literary works. It tend two-way and allow mutual relations. By reading a text, readers can express their feelings of the text and explain what they understand in the text.

Beach (1993) on a book entitled *A Teacher's Introduction to Reader response Theories* categorized the strategies to analyze reader's response into five categories. They are textual response strategy, experiential response strategy, psychological response strategy, social response strategy and cultural response strategy. These five perspectives are interrelated because the focus of textual reader response and experiential reader response e from the reader through the text, immediately becomes a concern for psychological reader response which is then described in more detailed through social reader response and cultural reader response in give a meaning to literary works.

2. METHOD

In this research, the author used a qualitative research. One of research procedures that produce the descriptive data (utterance or written texts and people behavior that observed) called qualitative research (Bogdan&Biklen, 1992). It is a library research with the data sources that require literary data. There are two data resources, which needed to conduct this research. The sources of primary data is the responses of children from *Common Sense Media* website about *The Greatest Snowman* (2017) movie directed by Michael Gracey, then the sources of secondary data are from some reference and material that related to this research. In collecting data, the present researcher used population sampling and note taking technique. Both the techniques involves the documentation method. The data collected from the reviewers of *The Greatest Showman* movie on website *Common Sense Media*. The data selected from children's responses of *The Greatest Showman* movie were taken on December 9th 2017 until December 30th 2018. In technique of analyzing data uses descriptive analysis. According to Nizar (1988), descriptive analysis is a method in examining an object of the study accurately based on the facts and phenomena investigated. The present researcher here try to make an analysis which concern with the children's responsesbased on the research question *what reader response theory applied in The Greatest Showman movie*. After that, drawing the conclusion based on the data which has been analyzed.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Reader Response Theory Applied By *The Greatest Showman* Reviewer's

The reader response theory that applied by the reviewer are four theory of strategies such as textual response strategy, psychological response strategy, experiential response strategy, and social response strategy.

3.1.1. Textual Response Strategy

The first strategy that applied is textual response strategy. In textual response strategy, text influences the way readers read and construct meaning. Rosenblatt (1995) states that readers interact with text during the reading process. For Rosenblatt the reading event is a synergistic (a process that produces a harmonious balance) relationship between reader and text. After reading, the reader responds and interprets with the textual evidence. Iser (1979) added that a text becomes meaningful when the reader is involved. It means that the reader and the text occurs the process of determining the meaning in the text itself. This strategy shows how readers give their responses to the current texts. Even reading must be careful to read closely how a text operates and to get some meaning from the way the text works. In other words, textual perspective focuse on the application of reader knowledge about text to determine meaning.

Beach (1993 p. 18) argues that "the text conventions are *constutive* rather than *regulative*". It means that the text convention is easier to lose the true meanings than regulate it. The reader then starts to used these conventions after reading several times the types of text. After the readers are familiar, Beach (1993 p.18) describing it "as somebody learning to ride a bike may not be able to explain the processs". In the other word, the best way to learn is simply from spending time to reading.

"Response theorists drawing on these fields were interested in how readers' knowledge of language and text/genre conventions influenced their responses to texts" (Beach, 1993 p.17).Interaction between the reader and the text generates the process of interpreting the meaning of the text. As a result, a reader is an active participant in interpretation the text from their point of view (Trisnawati, 2009). It means that the reader delves into the text first before formulating the meaning.

Most of *The Greatest Showman* reviewer's focus on commenting and judgingcontent of the movie based on their views. Content is something (from the mind) that the writer wants to write ("African Literature Reviews", 2013). In commenting on movie content, many reviewers like it. This is because the movie is best movie, inspirational, wonderful, and there are many good comments for this movie. Therefore, it can be seen in some of response below:

RN 37, Sketch YT, 13 years old

This movie is honestly one of the best i've ever seen! The music is awesome!

This response shows that *The Greatest Showman* movie is the best movie, and that is reinforced by additional comments if the music in the movie is awesome. The reviewers only commenting the movie on what is in the movie, then during watching the reviwers get what they need to respond it. On the other hand, there are the reviewers which judging the content like the response below:

RN 30, 12 years old*To much singing. It annoyed me so much. **I hate films that have to much singing.** And there's fighting. One kid is slapped in the face...i thought it was rubbish! Worst movie i've ever seen.*

The response above shows the reviewer dissatisfaction with the movie. The reviewers annoyed even hate the movie, because several thing which has mentioned above. From these two comments show that the reviewers has an assessment of subjectivity and has criteria to assess. In assessment of subjectivity, if the reviwers agree with the content it means a good movie, and vice versa. Then, the criteria itself is established by the reviewers experience, education, and interests.

3.1.2. Psychological Response Strategy

The second strategy that applied is psychological response strategy. Psychological response strategy shaped by readers level of cognitive or intellectual development. Appleyard (2009) states that each phase of development cannot be separated as a basic function for the next phase. Appleyard develop his statement by define five roles of readers, which represents a different developmental phase such as *the*

reader as a player, the reader as a hero and heroine, the reader as thinker, the reader as intepreter, and *the reader as pragmatic user of texts.*

In this research, the role of the reader as an interpreter, because readers "move beyond sense of the text mirroring a real world to perceiving the text as problematic and as inviting multiple, often contradictory meanings" (Beach 1993, p.74).It seems that literary work which contain the events in daily lives build-up the readers' response in psychological responses. The reviewers considers that the text as problematic and then does not consider the story as a direct experience of the imagined world, thus demanding an interpretation (Appleyard, 2009). As a result, reviewers more inclined to the character's perspective because they perceive the text as problematic and as requiring interpretation.

In psychological response strategy seems that the reviewers interprets about their understanding on a phenomenon in process of analyzing. Interpretation can be explain as a way to explain everything about what in the text according to everyone understands (Gracia, 1995). The goals of interpretation is to fulfill psychological needs and desires.

The reviewers here interprets their understanding of the authenticity of the story and part of the story. In the authenticity of the story, reviewers connects the movie and the history in real life, it can be shown in the response below:

> **RN 68, Mrs. Understood, 13 years old***Yes, Pt. Barnum was not at all nice and sold his "friends" as freaks in real life, this movie was downright amazing! Fun for the whole family! I wanted to go back and see it again and again!*

From the response above it shows that in real life, Barnum is not nice at all and he is famous for his exploitations of the oddities. Even the movie shows inaccurate history, but still this movie is good movie. The most reviewers did not really discusses deeply about the linkages of the story in the movie with the original story. In part of the story, most of reviewers discussed about character's action or little explanation of a scene that might be frightening to some reviewers, it can be show by the response below:

> **RN 63, Astraea Black, 14 years old***The Greatest Showman is an excellent movie that stresses the importance of love, loyalty,*

> *and kindness. The main character,* **Barnum, is kissed by a**
> **woman he goes on tour with, though it's unreciprocated***...*

This responseseems like Barnum cheats on his wife but in reality is not like that. Nevertheless, this movie still tells Barnum's good side of loyalty and kindness. When reading literary works indirectly readers re-create the world of the text in their mind. In literary interpretation readers may or not to reveal the meaning of the text. The reason why the psychological dimension is not easy to see because of the unconscious in conveying it. Therefore, in interpreting, it is important to break through psychological barriers that separate themselves from others.

3.1.3. Experiential Response Strategy

The third strategy that applied is experiential response strategy. In experiential response strategy Rosenblatt (as cited in Beach, 1993) delineate a number of specific response process such as (1) *engaging*with the text involves a range of different subective experiences–emotional reactions and associations, involvement, emphaty, identification, (2) *constructing* the text consists of a set of instructions explaining how, in the transaction with the text, to construct an imaged text world, (3) *imaging* meanscreating visual mental images in response to text of characters, places, actions are intimately related to readers' emotional experiences with texts and their understanding of text, (4) *connecting* related to autobiographical experiences, te more readers elaborate on those experieneces, the more they can use those experieneces to interpret stories, and (5) *evaluating/ reflecting,* readers may also assess or judge the quality or one's exprience with a text.

Experiential response relates to anything that concerns the reviewer's experience. If applying Rosenblatt's process, the reviewers is use the process of connecting. Most of the reviewers connect *The Gratest Showman* movie with other movie, as follows:

> **RN 199, no name 12 years old***If you're expecting a musical*
> *with songs like La la land, Les misérables or the sound of music.*
> *These songs are like pop songs. Also the story is very boring and*
> *nothing much happens.*

This response shows *The Gratest Showman* movie tend to present pop songs compared to that *La La Land, Les Misérables,* and *The Sound of Music* movie. *The Gratest Showman* movie also shows boring movie. It can happen because reviewer's experience itself. The experience of the reviewers can be obtained from anywhere, like what the reader face in real life and from what they read before which had connection with the text they read.For example, readers identify with characters, visualize images, relate personal experiences to the text, or construct the world of the text.

Readers "usually engage in the text and connect" (Beach 1993, p.49).The reader engages with several things such as feelings, imagination, experience, and self-assessment in literary works against readers' expectations. In line with the above, those "...process relies on a reader's past experience to work in concert with current expectations of text to create an interpretation of what is being read" (Soiferman& Straw 2016, p. 5).

Stanley Fish (1998) proposed the term called affective stylistics, it is reader's experience during reading. Fish also defines it in three process:

1. *Readers surrender themselves to the text, letting the text wash over them;in fact, at this stage, readers should not be concerned with trying to understand what the work is about.*

2. *Readers next concentrate on their reading responses while reading, seeing how each word, each sentence, each paragraph elicits a response.*

3. *Finally, readers should describe the reading experience by structuring their reading responses, which may be in conflict with the common interpretation of a work.*

When reading, the reader associates their experience (personal life) with the text that has been read. Readers transact with the text by bringing in their past life experiences to help interpret the text. Reading is a subjective process, which the reader tries to understand the ways to analyze the response subjectivelly as well. Subjective process itself is define as a process based on personal views or feelings about a matter.

3.1.4. Social Response Strategy

The fourth strategy that applied is social response strategy. This strategy focuses on influence of the social context on the reader or the text. Reader's responses is often driven by the social needs to share those response with others. Fish (as cited in Beach, 1993) concentrates on the reader within a socio-cultural context. Fish introduces the concept of *interpretive communities* it is the notion that the meaning of responses is relative to the shared conventions, attitudes, and discourse practices of a particular community. For Fish, the meaning of any reader or text transaction is a function of the interpretive strategies and conventions that adopted by readers as members of a particular interpretive community. With interpretive strategies, a text will have a range of stable meanings. The meanings itelf is a product of readers' reading strategies operating in specific social context. Fish's concept means that communities influences what, how and why its members read and create meaning, and in this sense every interpretive community have interpretive power.

Social response strategy may respond to build a social relationship through sharing responses, or clarify their attitudes. Dasenbrock (as cited in Beach: 1993, p. 107) "readers adjust and alter their theories to fit particular social situations...". In adjusting and revising their theories the reader defines self in social contexts as a social being through their use of various response or social strategies. Therefore, reality-oriented responses deal with expressing readers personal opinions on moral and social issues, rather than focusing on personal experiences (Lobo, 2015).

Every situation affects the way that reader argues through a social perspective. This strategy caused by the variety of meaning of the reader that focused on the social affect. Social values can connected to the text like moral lesson. Moral lesson is the basic ideas of writing the literary work as supporting messages (Nurgiyanto, 2007). Through stories, readers are expect to take wisdom from the moral lesson delivered. *The Greatest Showman* movie contains many moral lessons for everyone, especially in terms of equality like response below:

> **RN 8, The Best Rater, 13 years old***"This movie is one of the best I've seen so far! A highly meaning message too!* ***The meaning of this story is to follow your dreams and heart no matter how hard it might be. But don't get to carried away***

once you are in power. It also teaches you that us humans are all equal and that no matter what skin tone you are..."
"Overall this a highly meaningful story. It teaches you to have acceptance to the different people in the world and not be shallow..."

From the response above, not only equality that discusses but also to reaching out a dream, eventhoughits harder. Then, it reminds that do not be arrogant when have power. Although people are different in terms of skin color or anything, the response above teaches to accept that difference. As a member of social life, reviewers give the response from the point of view the role they takes. Reviewers takes certain social roles in group that entail certain ways of responding. This roles entail different purposes for responding to the texts.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research, it comes to the following conclusions. The reader response theory that applied by reviewers are four strategy. There are textual response strategy, experiential response strategy, psychological response strategy, and social response strategy. For cultural response strategy, the present researcher did not found the response from thereviewers that suite with this response of strategy. Therefore, almost of all the reader response theory applied by the reviewers and only one strategy does not applied. The present researcher analyze what reader response theory applied by the reviewers in *The Greatest Showman* movie. In *textual response strategy* interaction between the reader and the text generates the process of interpreting the meaning of the text, the reviewers focuses on what the text shown about. In *psychological response strategy*, reviewers actually performs a role in the text they readas an interpreter, reviewers more inclined to the character's perspective because they are perceive the text as problematic and as requiring interpretation. In *experiential response strategy*, experience of the reviewers can come or be obtained from anywhere, like what the reader face in real life for example, and from what they read before which had connection with the text they read. In *social response* strategy, every situation affects the way that reader argues through a social perspective, this strategy caused by the

variety of meaning of the reader that focuses on the social affect.Each of this strategy is limited by the fact that it iluminates only particular facet of the reader or text transaction. All the same time, they are all focusing on the same process how readers create the meaning.

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