

A Case of Typically Developing Children Aged Two to Seven in Reconstructing Stories

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ABSTRACT

Age and narrative structures are two elements which tend to be used by most researchers in studying language skill. However, most tend to analyze it separately and with older participants. In fact, children have developed this skill since very young age. This study aims to analyze the oral narrative structure in typically developing children aged two to seven, as well as the influencing social factors. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method to describe and investigate the research questions. The findings show that the typically developing children aged two to seven are able to tell story structurally. However, from the six elements of narrative (abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda), most of the participating children's narrations consist of three elements namely abstract, orientation, and complication. Among older ages, their stories become more complete. In addition, from the three central parenting methods consisting of children's participation in daily routine, engagement between children and caregivers, and appropriateness of material given, the first aspect seems to play the most visible effect in shaping the children's narrative skills. This study is expected to give contribution in examining narrative skill development, especially in young aged children. Thus, any possibilities of language disorder and impairment in children can be identified and treated earlier.

Keywords: *narrative structure, narrative development, parenting methods, child characteristics*

INTRODUCTION

Narrative is considered as one of the most popular research fields. It is because narrative has a huge aspect of coverage of various studies such as pathology, psychology, linguistics and child development (Liles, 1993, as cited in Hegsted, 2013; Mäkinen, 2014). Thus, it is hardly surprising that narrative has numerous definitions.

In this paper, narrative, according to Labov and Waletzky (1967) refers to a passage which is connected and related to the past events of individual experience. Narrative is also defined as a form of discourse that a story teller uses to tell the listener what happens in certain times (Hegsted, 2013). It is put in a particular order based on the event which occurs. Thus, from the explanation above, it can be concluded that narrative, in this context, is a story of personal experience (recounts) that a person tells about particular events in particular times chronologically.

Narrative is one of the important skills that develop gradually since a young age.

According to Hedberg and Stoel-Gammon (1986), narrative skill begins to develop between the age two to seven. According to Loveland, McEvoy and Tunali (1989), children's narrative is important for its capability to provide valuable information about how children receive and process information. It also gives insight to children's ability to communicate to their listeners, which may be helpful as an early identification of language disorder or delay in children. In addition, Uchikoshi (2005) believes that good narrative ability helps children to gain a better reading skill and literacy growth in the future as they enter school.

Considering the importance of children narrative development, many researchers conducted study on it, including in Indonesia. In Indonesia itself, narrative, and more specifically children narrative has been investigated and developed from various aspects by many researchers such as Hayyu (2008), Hadhi (2013), Budiwiyanto (2015), Pramodhawardhani (2015), and

Rusnalasari (2016). However, generally, there are two related elements that are mostly used in previous studies to analyze the development of narrative in children namely; age and narrative structure.

For instance, Hedberg and Stoel-Gammon (1986) developed a model of children narrative development according to age. They believed that there are five stages of narrative development; which are heaps, sequences, primitive narratives, focused chains, and true narratives. Each stage has its own structure on how children are supposed to be able to tell stories according to their age.

Regarding the structure of narrative, Labov and Waletzky (1967) proposed a theory of oral narrative structure of personal experience. It has become the main reference for those who aim to analyze the structure of narrative in spoken language as well as written language. According to these two scholars, a well-formed narrative, either written or spoken, follows a particular structure, namely abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda.

Even though age and structure are two connected aspects in children's narrative skill development, most researchers tend to conduct studies on this particular topic separately. The theory of narrative stage by Hedberg and Stoel-Gammon is mostly applied in studies which involve children with language disorder and impairment. For example, Loveland et al. (1989), Klecan-Aker and Swank (1987), and Mäkinen (2014) who investigate narrative in children with specific language impairment (SLI) and children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) by comparing the result to typically developing children (refers to normal children). Their studies show similar result saying that children with SLI and ASD suffer more difficulties in producing narrative than the typically developing children.

On the other hand, the narrative structure theory proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967) is mostly used in ordinary people without limitation of age. Budiwiyanto (2015) and Hayyu (2008) are a few examples of researchers who conduct research on

the narrative ability in children, meanwhile Pramodhawardhani (2015), Hadhi (2013) and Rusnalasari (2016) focus on narrative structure produced by adult.

From their studies, it can be concluded that among older children; their stories' structure becomes more complex. There are also some adults who can produce a complete-structured narrative. However, in both cases, there are several parts of narrative structure which are likely to be missing, namely abstract and coda.

Since those previous studies commonly use the theories of stage and structure of narrative development separately, it becomes apparent that there are only a limited number of studies which combine both theories in analyzing the narrative development in children, especially in Indonesia. Therefore, to fill the gap, the present study uses the combination of the two theories in order to analyze the structure of oral narrative in typically developing children aged two to seven as well as the factors influence the narrative structure produced by them

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Narrative

Narrative is a broad term which has numerous definitions based on the particular study fields. The term narrative covers various subjects such as linguistics, psychology, child development, cognitive, even socio-cultural of language use (Hegsted, 2013; Mäkinen, 2014). The most common definition of narrative refers to one of the genres in literary works. Mäkinen (2014) argues that narrative takes form of both spoken and written language. It does not only tell about fiction, but also real-life stories of the storyteller, either retold or self-generated; for example, novels, short stories, poetics and prose epics, films, visual graphics, interviews and histories (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Mäkinen, 2014). Pearson and De Villiers (2006) add that narrative consists of two or more participants, but classically, it is a story produced by one speaker or writer.

Since the definitions of narrative above are still general, it is important to make more specific conception of narrative. In this context, narrative refers to the

passage which is connected and related to the past events or a way of recounting personal experience in chronological order (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). In order to do this, the speaker needs to describe basic information of the story to the reader, such as participants, activity, time and place.

Those common elements which appear in stories are called story grammar. It is a set of rules which is used to describe features in narrative texts (Mandler, 1984). According to Oral Language Supporting Early Literacy (2017), story grammar contains several elements, namely setting, initiating event, internal response, attempt, consequence, formal ending, and theme. Setting includes information about the character(s), location, time, and event that occurs. Initiating event consists of the problem that happens to the main character(s). Then, it is followed by the response of the main character(s) towards the initiating event, which is called internal response. This response is continued by the action of the character to solve the problem, and it is called attempt.

After that, consequence appears; the impact or resolution of the problem done by the character. Since the complication has been solved, the story leads to a suitable formal ending. Thus, from the story, the reader is expected to understand the theme of the story and what can be learned from the story.

Many researchers have developed their theory of narrative along with the story grammar, such as Labov and Waletzky (1967), Hedberg and Stoel-Gammon (1986), and Hasan (1996). Regardless of the different label given by the researcher, narrative has the same main elements of structure required to build an understandable story. Labov and Waletzky (1967), as far as this study concerns, have provided a specific theoretical framework regarding narrative structure. It is provided in the sub section below.

Narrative Structure

In order to build an understandable story, a narrative generally follows a particular structure or story grammar. Labov and Waletzky (1967) provide an influential schema to "define a

minimal characteristic of a well-formed story" (Pearson & de Villiers, 2006, p. 14). There used to be three parts that can be found in a story, namely onset, unfolding, and resolution. In later explanation, however, they formulate a narrative structure which consists of abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda.

There are other experts that put interests in describing narrative elements, and each researcher uses particular and rather different terms. Unlike Labov and Waletzky who use term narrative structure, Hasan (1996, as cited in Agha & Frog, 2015), for instance, prefers to call it Generic Structure Potential (GSP). GSP presents elements that can appear in order to develop a particular genre. It consists of placement, initiating event, sequence event, final event, finale and moral (Agha & Frog, 2015).

Furthermore, the elements in GSP can be divided into two main parts, namely obligatory and optional element. Obligatory elements consist of initiating, sequence, and final event, while optional elements cover

placement, finale, and moral. Hasan (1996) emphasizes that obligatory elements play an important role in building an understandable story, which means without one or more obligatory parts included in a text, it cannot be considered to "belong to particular register" (Agha & Frog, 2015, p. 66). On the other hand, optional elements, such as placement, finale, and moral, may "occur but not register-defining" (Agha & Frog, 2015, p. 66).

Regardless of the various labels to describe narrative structure, this study prefers to use the terms within narrative structure used by Labov and Waletzky (1967), which comprise abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda. These terms are more widely used among researchers in this particular topic and provide more specific definition on the topic

Labov and Waletzky's (1967) Narrative Structure

Before narrating stories, it is common to begin with a brief expression indicating that the speaker is going to tell a particular story. This is called

abstract. According to Labov and Waletzky (1967), an abstract is defined as how someone begins the story. It may contain a brief explanation about the story (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) or simply a title of the story that is going to be told (Uchikoshi, 2005). It refers to the act of the speaker as he or she requests for the floor to get the listener's attention before beginning the story (Rusnalasari, 2016).

For example:

1. *Tiap hari saya melihat petani, saya melihat petani itu kerjanya berat tetapi pendapatannya kecil.* (Soekarwo's speech as he begins to talk about poverty). (Rusnalasari, 2016, p. 79)

(Every day, I see farmers, I think their jobs are difficult, but they earn so little income.)

The example above can be considered as an abstract because it is the first utterance of Soekarwo in his speech about poverty. Furthermore, it functions to get the listeners' attention before he delivers his speech.

The second part is orientation. It is the additional information for audience to understand the story (Rusnalasari, 2016). It includes settings, such as time, place, participant and activity within the story (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Hayyu, 2008; Hadhi, 2013; Budiwiyanto, 2015; Rusnalasari, 2016). Labov (1967) claims that an orientation can either stand-alone after an abstract, or it can be included within the abstract.

For example:

1. *Setelah saya lulus SD, SMP, saya sekolah SMP di Ponorogo. Tujuh belas kilo dari desa saya, SMA saya di Madiun.* (Rusnalasari, 2016, p. 82)

(After I graduated from elementary school and junior high school, my junior high school was in Ponorogo. Seventeen kilometers from my village, I studied at a Senior High School in Madiun)

2. *...waktu itu hari Rabu perginya/ tapi pas Kamisnya pulangnya dijemput sama Omnya/ dibawa ke*

hotel/ kan Mamah nginepnya di hotel. Di bawa hotelnya gak jauh, di dekat Pemda. Pas keluar dekat masakan padang/ terus ya udah hari Jumatnya pulang/ ...papah nyariin ke rumah eyangnya di Puspa/ dicariin terus sampai ke Omnya di Depok (Budiwiyanto, 2015, p. 188)

(...we went on Wednesday/ but on Thursday my uncle took me home/ we went to a hotel/ my mom stayed in the hotel. The hotel was not far, it was near Pemda. There was a Padangnese Restaurant outside of the hotel/ then we went home on Friday/...my dad looked for us to our Grandma's house in Puspa/ he kept looking for us to my uncle's house in Depok)

3. *Kecelakaannya... itu pertama kali kita terbang dari Bandung (Hadhi, 2013, p. 7)*

(The accident... it was the first time we flew from Bandung)

Three examples above provide information of setting of places such as Ponorogo, Madiun, Pemda, Hotel, and Bandung, and time such as *Rabu* (Wednesday), *Kamis* (Thursday), and *Jumat* (Friday). Through providing such information, the examples above are called orientation.

Since narrative is a set of events, it must contain complicating actions as well. Complicating events are considered as the core or the main part of the narrative (Hayyu, 2008; Hadhi, 2013; Budiwiyanto, 2015; Rusnalasari; 2016). It tells about what happens to the main character, where problems are described, gradually reach the highest point, and are then evaluated (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Budiwiyanto, 2015; Rusnalasari; 2016).

For example:

1. *Saya kemudian daftar lewat PDI. Saya menang 22, Pak Cipto 11. Tapi yang direkomendasi Pak Cipto... (Rusnalasari, 2016, p. 84)*

(Then I was assigned via PDI. I won 22, Pak Cipto 11, but Pak Cipto was the one who got the recommendation...)

It shows the problem happening to the speaker, which in narrative structure is usually called as a complicating event. This part shows the disappointment of the speaker towards the decision made by his party members. Even though he wins the election, he is not recommended.

The next structure is called evaluation. It is a form of personal commentaries and justification of the storyteller towards the story which the storyteller considers important. Furthermore, the speaker can also add personal commentaries by raising questions to the listeners (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Rusnalasari, 2016). For example:

1. *Sedih ngelilatnya karena kasian/ mungkin orang tuanya belum tau* (Budiwiyanto, 2015, p. 189)

(It was so sad, I pity him/her/ maybe his/her parents have not known it yet)

2. *Langsung kita buka pintu darurat yang disebelah kiri, kebetulan saya duduk pas di sebelah kabin yang sebelah kiri dekat pintu*

sama temen saya/ udah semua pokoknya panik semua di dalem itu (Hadhi, 2013, p. 9)

(We opened the emergency door on our left, my friend and I sat right to the left cabin near the door/ everyone inside the plane panicked)

The word *sedih* (sad) and *panik* (panic) in example 1 and 2 indicate the speaker's feelings towards the story. It is one way to get the listener's attention before the speaker comes up with events that s/he considers important. Those are contained in the evaluation part of a narrative structure.

Even though evaluative events can appear in every part of the story, it mostly comes up before resolution or when the problems are solved (Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Rusnalasari, 2016). However, Rusnalasari (2016) adds that evaluation can also entangle with resolution.

For example:

1. *Jadi dari sekian perjalanan itu, saya sangat... kehidupan petani*

yang miskin, yang kekurangan keterampilan, itu yang terus mengusik terus saya...
(Rusnalasari, 2016, p. 84)

(So, from those journeys, I was very... the life of those poor farmers, who lack of soft-skills, that was the thing that continued to bother me)

2. *Cuma kita udah... udah langsung di... di sayapnya itu... udah langsung saya diselametin sama, eh... yang surfing disitu. Dia kebetulan bawa perahu karet*
(Hadhi, 2013, p. 10)

(We were... directly on... on the wings...I was saved by, eh... the surfer there. Fortunately, s/he brought an inflatable boat at that moment)

The two examples above show how the complicating events are solved. This can be called as resolution. In example 1, the speaker says what he can get from his life journey. Meanwhile, in example 2, the speaker ends his story by

explaining how the victims are rescued by the surfer.

However, a narrative is not simply ended by how the story ends, but by the so-called coda. Labov & Waletzky (1967) say that coda is a statement used as a sign that a story is over. According to Hadhi (2013), coda refers to an ending which returns to how the story begins (Labov & Waletzky, 1967).

For example:

1. *Saya pernah bercita-cita dan sampai sekarang pun, saya masih jadi guru, jadi dosen.*
(Rusnalasari, 2016, p. 85)

(I have aspired to be, and even until now, I am still a teacher, a lecturer.)

2. *Itu langsung kita diselametin itu. Kurang lebih kalo gak salah lima belas... sepuluh menit kalo gak salah. Sepuluh menit itu langsung dari situ dia.* (Hadhi, 2013, p. 11)

(We were saved. It took about fifteen... ten minutes if I was not mistaken. Ten minutes, he saved us)

The statements in example 1 and 2 return the setting of the stories to present time. It can be seen in the first and second example as the speakers reflect what happened in the past and return to their present time as what coda is defined.

In relation to this study, the theory of narrative structure is used to analyze the data collected from the participants, which are typically developing children aged two to seven. All the participating children are asked to retell their previous activity, which in this case is watching *Frozen Fever* movie. Their narratives are then labeled as abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and/or coda based on what they include in their stories. To an extent, some participants may include or exclude some parts, or they even may be able to produce a complete-structured narrative.

This expectation appears because narrative as a skill does not grow overnight. Rather, it develops gradually since young age. Further explanations about narrative skill development in children based on

their age are provided in the subsection below.

Narrative Stage

Hedberg and Stoel-Gammon (1986) divide children narrative development into five stages based on age, namely heaps, sequence, primitive narrative, focused chain, and true narrative.

The first stage of children narrative development is called heaps. This stage firstly appears at the age of around two. It is marked by the ability of children to mention several ideas or events even though the topic switches frequently.

For example:

1. The baby is sleeping.
2. Mother is cooking chocolate cookies.
3. My cat is jumping on to the sofa.
4. She is singing a song.
5. He is going to school today.
6. And that's all.

(Hedberg & Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 62)

As children grow up, they begin to be able to link the story arbitrarily between characters, events

or setting. This stage is called sequence, and it is the second stage of narrative development in children which occurs at the age of around three (Hedberg & Stoel-Gammon, 1986). However, there is no plot yet in this stage. Children may also add personal feelings or comments regarding the event or story.

For example:

1. She lives with her dad.
 2. She lives with her mom.
 3. Grandma and Grandpa live together.
 4. And these three children live with their grandma.
 5. And these two animals live with them.
 6. And that's all
- (Hedberg & Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 62)

The third stage of children narrative development is called primitive narrative. It develops when they reach the age of around four. In this stage, children can tell the story as well as the paralinguistic aspects, such as the gestures and expressions of the main character.

For example:

1. My dad, he went up to go to work.
 2. My mom stayed and sleep in.
 3. My two brothers, they went to go play with the toys.
 4. My dog, she went outside.
 5. My kitty cat came up.
 6. And he tickled me and came up and started to meow.
 7. And then I started to cry because he bit me.
 8. And my brothers came running in
 9. And Mike said, "What happened?"
 10. They said, "What happened?"
 11. "My kitty cat just bit me."
 12. So, mom comes running in
 13. And she said, "What happened?"
 14. Oh, the kitty cat bit you.
 15. O. K.
- (Hedberg & Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 62)

At the age of around four to five, children can tell the events in a story based on the chronological order. However, the listeners are required to have additional knowledge about how the story ends. This is called focused chain, which is the fourth stage of narrative skill development in children.

Another remarkable thing that happens in this phase is the tendency of children to focus more on relationship between cause-effect. Thus, conjunctions like 'but', 'and', and 'because' will be frequently used. For example:

1. This man is walking.
 2. He saw a dog and a cat.
 3. And he saw a girl, too, with the cat and the dog.
 4. He said, "Hello."
 5. He walked back.
 6. And he said, "Brother, come here."
 7. So, his grandmother walked up to her and said, "You wanna go dancing?"
 8. They went dancing.
 9. And so, it was a slow dance.
 10. And then they went back.
 11. And then these two children came.
 12. And the first he said, "I'm not."
 13. And then he said, "What?"
 14. "I wanna go out to eat."
 15. So, they went out to eat.
- (Hedberg & Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p.

63)

The last stage of children narrative development is named true narrative. It is said to occur at the age of around five to seven. However, further development of this phase can still continuously happen until adolescence. Thus, it is the longest phase of children in developing their narrative ability.

In this stage, children can provide a true plot of the story, which consists of orientation, complication, and resolution. Those events are put in order along with the character's development throughout the story, including the motivation and the goals of the character.

For example:

1. Once upon a time there was a mother named Christie.
2. And she had a husband named Tom.
3. And they had some children named Heather and Christie.
4. And then they had a boy named Ronnie.
5. And the mother told the boy to go outside to play.

6. And then the boy came in and said, "Mother, mother, our dog's outside and he's barking."
 7. "I will go see."
 8. "What are you barking at?"
 9. "I don't know what he was barking at, Tommie, Ronnie, Ronnie."
 10. I don't know what he was barking at.
 11. You go out there and see."
 12. "He wants in."
 13. "I'll go let him in."
 14. "There, I let him in."
- (Hedberg & Stoel-Gammon, 1986, p. 63)

In relation to the present study, narrative stage theory is used as a theoretical framework for further discussions on the participants' narrative structure that has been analyzed previously. By using this theory, the researcher examines whether or not children's narrative development suits their age with regards to the theory.

By paying attention to nowadays condition, such as technology advancement and communication easiness, these

children may develop a more advanced ability than what the theory mentions. For example, the narrative structure of participant A in this study (female, age 3) consists of abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation and resolution. This means she can cover almost all the narrative elements of the story. In this case, this theory can be used to identify the result of the current study.

Parenting Aspects

Language as a skill is believed to grow differently in every person, especially in young children. Lot of factors, both internal and external, contributes to the development of narrative ability in children. Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez (2009) mention three central aspects affecting the narrative development in young children, which are "(1) the frequency of children's participation in routine learning activity (e.g. shared book reading, storytelling), (2) the quality of caregiver-child engagements (parent's cognitive stimulation and sensitivity/responsiveness), (3) the provision of age-appropriate learning

materials (books and toys)" (p. 22). For example, parents can ask their children about their opinions regarding the movie they are currently watching together, or they can give their children toys, books, or videos which appropriate to their ages in order to support their language growth.

Children's participation in daily routine such as playing games, reading books, or sharing story through conversation can help them to develop their awareness of their surroundings. They can learn how to interpret others' action and utterances, anticipate the sequencing events, and make meaning of new experience (Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez, 2009). Besides routine participation of children in daily activities, Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez (2009) say that it is important to pay attention to the relation between the caregiver and the children. A close relation or engagements between them can "expand children's vocabulary and conceptual knowledge" (p. 22). Activities such as reading books and sharing story orally can facilitate

"vocabulary growth, phonemic skill, print concept knowledge and positive attitudes toward literacy" (Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 23). In addition, gap between the caregiver and children can lead to disadvantage of children's narrative development as they do not really engage in the activity.

This engagement can be caused by the style of language that the caregivers use when they talk to the children. It benefits the children as adult speech is varied and rich in information regarding objects and events (Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez, 2009). The more various languages the caregivers use, the better language exposure the children receive. Furthermore, these two experts argue that the use of appropriate toys and books for children can support their narrative development. Those materials serve as a "vehicle for communication exchanges" regarding particular shared topic between the caregiver and the children (p. 23). Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez (2009) add that by making the children familiar with storybooks, parents can lead to

the development of children's vocabulary growth. Their words tend to be more "receptive and expressive" than the children who do not read books (p. 23).

Parents and Children Characteristics

Besides parenting aspects, the characteristics of both children and parents are believed to affect the narrative language development in young children. Those parenting aspects cannot be separated from the background of the parents themselves. Basically, there are four characteristics of parents which contribute to language development in young children namely, age, education, income, and ethnicity. According to Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez (2009), young mothers tend to have lower "verbal stimulation and involvement, while higher level of intrusiveness" in comparison to the older parents (p. 23). They talk in a simpler form and lesser variation of language to their children which result in the low linguistic exposure received by the children.

Education level might be affecting the language style of less

various and simpler maternal speech. Parents with fewer years of education tend to read less frequently to their children, which clearly affects the quantity and quality of daily verbal interaction. In fact, the verbal environment is strongly believed to influence the language development of young children. Johnston (2010) argues that from very young age, children who grow in rich linguistic exposure families can learn three times as many words per week compared to those who come from low verbal interaction families. This environment, either rich or poor exposure in linguistic, is also associated with income level of the family. It is suggested that "poverty and persistent poverty are strongly associated with less stimulating home environments" (Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 23). Like poverty, particular race or ethnicity disadvantageously influence the development of the language in children, especially for minority such as refugees and migrants. Besides minority's status is linked to various social demographic disadvantages, it

also risks the cognitive, academic, and social emotional of the children.

Unlike parents, children characteristics which can influence the narrative language development only consist of two aspects namely gender and birth order. Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez (2009) say that in terms of vocabulary development, girls tend to have a slight advantage than boys. It may be caused by the tendency of family members to spend more time with their daughters in daily "literacy-related activities" (p. 23). However, including gender as one of the factors contributing to the young children narrative development is still debatable among experts. For example, the study conducted by Medrano (1986) shows no significant differences in vocabulary development between school-aged girls and boys, while Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, and Goldenberg (2000) get the contradictory result (Uchikoshi, 2005).

Furthermore, birth order is also considered affecting children's narrative language development. On average, firstborns tend to have more

vocabulary repertoire as they are more responsive to the language learning activities than the later born children. In addition, Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez (2009) argue that mothers tend to differentiate their language and engagement towards their children; they are likely to "input favoring firstborns" (p. 23).

However, since the social factors contribute to the children narrative language development are quite many, this research limits the analysis only to the three parenting aspects and children characteristics as have been explained previously. Meanwhile the parents' characteristics are applied prior to the determination of choosing the participants. All parents of the participants have quite similar backgrounds; they are under 40 years old, middle to upper social class, come from majority races in Bandung (Sundanese and Javanese), and are well-educated. Other than the parents' characteristic, social factors such as parenting aspects and children characteristics may be found in this research.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method to describe and investigate the oral narrative structure of children aged two to seven as well as the social factors that influence the narrative structure spoken by these children. Qualitative research basically is one of types of scientific research which are designed to help answer questions. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach which tends to focus on exploring meaning of a particular social issue. It is interested in explaining phenomena from particular perspective by giving attention to the particular people involved.

There are some more common characteristics of qualitative research agreed by experts. One of them, which is the most known, is the differences data form of qualitative research which mostly uses words such as field notes, audio, video, recording, and transcripts, instead of numbers (quantitative). However, it is not the only aspect of determining qualitative design. Creswell (2014) mentions that the data in qualitative

research are collected by the researchers themselves, thus it is unnecessary for them to rely on particular questionnaires or instrument from other researchers. In addition, they are taken mostly by using these three common methods, namely participant observation, in-depth interview, and focus group multiply (Creswell, 2014; Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005).

Furthermore, qualitative research design requires the data taken in the "field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 234). In addition, Walliman (2011) emphasis that a qualitative approach is relevant to the research that focuses on examining and investigating a social phenomenon in its natural event. It is especially "effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations" (Mack, et al., 2005, p.1).

In conclusion, a descriptive qualitative design suits the present research the most because not only it fits the purpose of this research, but

also provides a better opportunity to interpret data. In addition, the method is also chosen because the data are in a form of utterances spoken by children, instead of numerical data.

Respondents

The data in this paper are the transcripts of children's utterances which are obtained from ten children, aged two to seven, to represent the five stages of narrative development theory by Hedberg and Stoel-Gammon (1986). Each stage has two participants, which consist of one male and one female (n= 10; m=5; f=5) along with the detail of their birth order. It is intended to see if gender and birth order affects the development of narrative structure in children. Thus, ten children, comprising male and female evenly, are considered the most appropriate number of participants involved in this study.

Instruments

This research uses short movie entitled *Frozen Fever*. It is an eight minutes running-timed movie with 3D animation, serving as the short sequel of the famous Disney movie, *Frozen*.

It tells about Queen Elsa's attempts to give Princess Anna a birthday party. Unfortunately, Queen Elsa gets cold, and every time she sneezes several little snowmen appears without her notice.

This movie is chosen because of its short running time and single event presentation, which can help the children stay focus in watching the movie and become more engaged with the story. In addition, *Frozen Fever* appears to be a musical-based film, where the story is built through songs which are sung by the characters. It also has a quite small amount of dialogues, which is intended to prevent the participants from duplicating what the characters say and make up the story by using their own words. Furthermore, even though the previous movie is very popular among children, this sequel is not really known. This is because *Frozen Fever* is not released in Box Office theaters. Thus, it hopefully can challenge the children to tell a story that is quite new for them.

Procedures

The participants are asked to watch a movie entitled *Frozen Fever* prior to the interview. This step is intended to

give a context to the participants to recount their experiences of watching the movie. After that, the participants are interviewed using Bahasa Indonesia to avoid misunderstanding. If it is necessary, the examiner asks a short question in Bahasa Indonesia such as "*apa yang kamu lakukan barusan?*" ("What did you do previously?") to begin the interview. During the interview, questions such as "*apa yang terjadi selanjutnya?*" ("What happens next?") and "*lalu apa lagi?*" ("Tell me more") are asked to facilitate the children's narration. The narration is then recorded and transcribed, except for the questions raised by the interviewee. After the data are transcribed, they are then reconstructed grammatically and structurally. This step is performed to provide the researcher with the materials needed for later analyses. Due to the nature of the research, they are also translated from Bahasa Indonesia to English.

Data analysis

The first step of analyzing the data are labeling the narration of the children based on the narrative structure theory proposed by Labov and

Waletzky (1967). It aims to see how many narrative elements the children can provide. For example, the participant can either provide merely the orientation, complication, and evaluation or can produce a complete narrative consisting of abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution and coda. The result of this step is categorized based on the completeness of the structure. In addition, labeling the children's narrative can facilitate the next step of the analysis, which is analyzing the narrative development based on their age.

After that, the data are analyzed by using the narrative stages theory by Hedberg and Stoel-Gammon (1986) to correlate the children's ability in retelling previous experiences with their age in order to see if the theory applies to the participants or not. For example, the five-year-old participant can provide a complete-structured narrative, which according to the theory; it is actually supposed to happen at the age of six to seven. Thus, the theory is not fully applicable to the children participants in this study.

Lastly, to identify the social factors which influence the narrative structure of these children, the result of the interview with the parents is analyzed. It is conducted by comparing the most salient differences between children with the most and the least complete structure when it comes to their activities at home.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Structure

All of the participating children begin their narrations by giving a brief statement regarding the activity of watching movie entitled *Frozen Fever*. This can be considered as the abstract of their stories, because they give a sign to the listeners about the topic that they are going to tell, in this case is the movie. However, they only say “Frozen”, which is the title of the first movie about Princess Ana and Queen Elsa, instead of “Frozen Fever”, the short sequel of *Frozen* which is used in this research. It might be caused *Frozen* is more popular than its following short sequel, *Frozen Fever*. Therefore, the children tend to label it as *Frozen*.

In the orientation part, the majority of participants mostly mention the main characters such as Ana and Elsa, and include the main event that happen in the movie which is Ana’s birthday celebration just like the participant D1 presents in her narration. However, there is a child whose only give information about the main characters (participant D2), and a participant who completely misses the orientation (participant C2).

After the orientation, the participants continue their stories to the complication part. The complication consists of two main events which are when Elsa catches cold, and the little snowmen who appear as she sneezes without her notice. Unfortunately, only three participants (C2, E1, and E2) out of ten who can narrate the complicating events completely. On the other hand, five children (A2, B1, B2, C1, and D1) focus more on Elsa who is sick, and two children (A1 and D2) concern only the appearance of the little snowmen.

Next, theoretically the evaluation part mostly appears after complicating events. However, since

it is the personal feelings of or commentaries from the speaker, evaluation can appear in between any parts or even entangle to a particular part of the narrative structure. From ten participants, only three of them who give their opinions regarding the movie they have watched. These participants are all female and two of them comes from the older age (around five to six years old), and a child who is around two years old. The two older participants attach their comments prior to the orientation part, while the younger participant's opinion regarding the movie comes after the complicating event.

Resolution is considered as one of the main components of narrative to make a well-formed story. It is hardly surprising that the complicating event in the story is expected to be solved. However, the study shows that the resolution seems to be the hardest part of the narrative, as only two out of ten participants who bring the story to its anti-climax. These participants are categorized as the oldest since they are around six years old.

Last but not least, coda. It is a part where the speaker signs that the

story is over and return the temporal setting to the present time. Coda is one of the narrative structures which is likely to be missing, regardless of the age of the participants. In this present study, only two participants who give signs of the ending of the story, even though just a very brief statement such as "*tamat*" (the end).

From the data above, it can be concluded that children at their very young age, have developed the skill of telling well-structured stories. Abstract, orientation, and complication are the three elements that mostly appear in their narratives. However, among older ages, others elements such as evaluation, resolution, and coda can also be found. Furthermore, the development of the participating children's narrative skill is described in the sub section below.

Narrative Stage

Theoretically, a well-formed narrative is built by six elements put chronologically, which are abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda. However, since telling story is a skill, it develops gradually. Based on the research,

children have developed structured stories since very young age, at around two years old. Generally, their stories consist of abstract, orientation, and complication. Among older ages, their narratives become more complex; they can tell how the problem in the story is solved (resolution), speak up their personal thoughts regarding the story (evaluation), and end their stories clearly (coda).

These developments tend to be more advance than the model of narrative stage is expected. In younger participants, this skill grows significantly, and become more stable as they reach the age of around four to six. However, there is a participant whose development is considered delayed or does not fit the criteria of the narrative development according to his age.

The model of narrative stage proposed by Hedberg and Stoel-Gammon (1986) provides five stages on how narrative develop in children aged two to seven. They are labeled as heaps, sequence, primitive narrative, focused chain, and true narrative. Each stage has specific criteria on how children supposed to

be able to tell stories based on their mental age.

Heaps is the first stage of narrative development in young children which occurs at the age of around two years old. This stage is marked by the ability of the children to mention several events with frequent topic switches. In this research, the participants of around two years old do not list events anymore. The male participant in this category can provide abstract, orientation, and complication, while the female participant adds evaluation to her narrative.

The second stage of children narrative development is called sequence. In this stage, children at the age of around three are expected to be able to link the story arbitrarily between the character and event or setting. However, at this stage, the plot has not been found, but children usually add personal feelings or thoughts.

Based on their age, the participants (B1 and B2) are classified in sequence stage. However, they are able to tell how the story begins and what the problem happens to the main character, even

though the commentary or personal feelings are not found. In addition, since they are more focus on the gesture, as they imitate the main character who sneezes, their narrative development approximately equals to children aged of around four.

The next stage is called primitive narrative. This stage occurs as the children reach the age of around four. It is marked by the ability of the children telling story chronologically as well as giving details information regarding the gesture or expression of the main character.

Here, the participant C1 is able to tell the story from the beginning, and continues to the orientation, complication, and gives a brief statement indicating the story is end (coda). Even though she does not mention any specific gestures or expressions of the main character, her narrative skill grows slightly more advance than what the theory is expected. In addition, she adds another information about other characters who are supposed to be included in the orientation part. This might be caused by her intention to end the story, but still wants to give

more detailed information about the characters.

Unlike the female participant who is at the same age to him, the male participant (C2) misses the orientation part. He is aware of the appearance of the characters involved in the movie, but chooses not to give information about it. Furthermore, his narration is quite brief; it only consists of abstract and complication. However, even though he does not mention any characters or events in his narration, his narrative development fits his mental age; the story is put in chronological order.

In the stage called focused chain, children at the age of around five can tell events chronologically. They also tend to be more focus on the cause-effect relationship, thus conjunctions such as 'but', 'and', and 'because' are possibly frequently found in this stage.

In this research, participant D1 is capable of telling the story not only chronologically, but also consisting of almost all the elements of the narrative. She even produces story without using too many conjunctive words, in which indicating the narrative skill of her

grows more advance than her mental age, even though she has not reached the true narrative stage as the resolution has not found in her story. On the other hand, the male participant (participant D2) tends to have a briefer narration. He includes abstract, orientation, and an incomplete complication.

Here, the participant (D2) is expected to have a well-formed story consisting of at least the beginning and complicating event. However, his story only includes very brief information about the problem occurs in the movie. In the full version, the complicating event begins as Elsa catches cold; she gets fever and sneezes. The appearance of the little snowmen like what the participant mention is only the effect of Elsa's sickness. Thus, his narrative development is quite delayed or does not match to the criteria of the narrative stage theory proposes.

The last stage of narrative development according to the narrative stage model is called true narrative. It occurs when children reach the age of around five to seven. However, this stage can still develop until adulthood. In this stage,

children's narratives consist of a true plot including the orientation, complication and resolution.

In this research, both female and male participants aged around six (E1 and E2) can provide the true plot well. Female participant (participant E1) is able to produce a complete-structured narrative consisting of the six elements mentioned previously (abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda), while the male participant (participant E2) misses the evaluation and coda.

To sum up, as well as to answer the first research question which is about the narrative structure in typically developing children aged two to seven, this research has found that all the participating children have structure contained in their narratives. These structures mostly consist of the orientation and complication, but among older ages their narrative structures become more complete. It indicates that the development of narrative skill in children grow gradually. Furthermore, this development does not fully fit the theory of narrative stage, since the majority of participants develop their

skills more advance than their mental age.

Factors Influencing the Narrative Structure

Parenting methods

Parenting methods consist of three main aspects namely children's participation in daily activity, engagement between children and caregiver, and appropriateness of the materials given to the children. It results in that participation of the children plays the crucial role in shaping children's narrative skill. The others two factors are not really analyzable since most of the participants spend their time playing with their gadgets or other people than their parents or caregivers such as friends and siblings. In term of the material factors, all of the participants receive appropriate material given to them, for example, they watch cartoon such as *Tayo*, *High 5*, and children video logs on YouTube which all are aimed for children's entertainment.

From ten children participating in this research, three children are taken to be analyzed further as they provide remarkable structure of

narratives compared to other participants; they are participant C2 (4.6 years old, male), D2 (5.2 years old, male), and C1 (4.2 years old, female). Participant C2 is chosen because he misses the orientation part, and to make comparison, participant C1 is involved in this analysis. Meanwhile participant D2 is chosen because his narrative development is categorized slower than the theory is expected.

According to his mother, participant D2 (5.2 years old, male) usually plays by himself. It is indicated as the interviewee says that, "*biasa aja, dia sukanya main tab, atau main mainannya, atau main kucing*" (He likes playing tablet, or playing with his toys or his cat). It can be concluded that, even though he is usually accompanied at home by his mother or his grandmother, the participation in his daily routine is quite less frequently. He spends his time mostly by himself surrounded by gadgets and pet, which gives him very minimum verbal exposure.

On the other hand, even though participant D2 (5.2 years old, male) misses the orientation part in his narration, his narrative skill

development suits his age. At home, he mostly plays with his older brother. It is indicated by the interviewee as she answers the second question asking if the participant is accompanied when he plays at home or not. The interviewee says, "*iya, seringnya sih main sendiri mereka* (refers to participant C2 and his older brother)" (yes, they do. They usually play by themselves). Since he plays with his older brother, he might receive more frequent verbal interaction than participant D1.

In comparison, participant C1 (4.2 years old, female) provides a more complete structured narration among the two participants. It turns out that she spends her time mostly with her siblings (cousins, nephews and nieces), "*...karena dia lebih sering di rumah neneknya, dia main sama saudara-saudaranya. Kaya misalnya ngegambar, terus nonton TV, main tablet, gadget*" (...since she spends most of her time in her grandmother's house, she plays with her siblings, like drawing, watching TV, playing tablet and gadgets). She plays and interacts with more people, which mean she receives more

linguistic exposure than participant C2 and D2.

Based on the explanation above, children participation in daily routine plays major role in their narrative skills development. This participation can be in a form of verbal interaction between the participants and their caregivers or friends. This study shows that children, who interact with more people, tend to have a more complete structured narrative in which signs advancement in their narrative development. Thus, the more linguistic exposure they receive, the more advance their narrative skills grow.

Child Characteristics

Observation shows that unlike parenting methods, child characteristics such as gender and birth order do not seem to give very significant influence to their narrative development. In terms of narrative structure, both female and male participants can provide narration with approximately equal level of development. The difference is that female participants tend to add more detail information and personal

commentary to their stories; they tend to be more evaluative than male participants. Thus, their stories sound longer and more complex than the opposite gender's.

From ten participants, only three children (participant A1, D1, and E1) who include evaluation in their narration, and all of them are female. For example, both participant A1 (2.10 years old, female) and A2 (2.11 years old, male) are categorized in heaps stage, but in fact, their narrative development equal to children aged around four. Their narrations consist of abstract, orientation, and complication, but the female participant (A1) gives her opinion regarding the movie and the character involved in it.

Furthermore, birth order does not seem affect children's narrative development significantly, because basically children develop differently. It is long believed that firstborns are more skillful in language than the later born children, however the study shows that if first children are good in grammar and sentences, the following children are more skillful in conversation. In addition, it is said that parents who just have one child

can be more focus to give attention to their child. So, the firstborns experience more interaction, especially verbally, with their parents, in which affects beneficially to the children's linguistic development. The truth is, later born children also have a highly chance of experiencing the more various linguistic exposure than the firstborns, since they are not only interacting with their parents, but also with their siblings.

Participant D2 (5.2 years old, male) is the only child in his family, which theoretically, his narrative skill is expected to be more advance than what the theory has mentioned, since he has all the attention of the family member only to him. Unfortunately, based on the research, his narrative development seems to be slower than his mental age. On the other hand, participant C2 (4.6 years old, male) is the second child and has a baby brother, yet his narrative development grows approximately equal to his age. In addition, participant C1 (4.2 years old, female) is the only child, and her narrative skill develops slightly more advance than what the theory is expected. Thus, in this research, birth order does not seem to give

significant effect on the participating children's narrative skills.

Narrative plays a major role in human daily activity; it is a tool used to share information and thoughts. In order to make the story understandable, a narrative must contain particular elements which are put in particular order chronologically called story grammar. Labeled by using different terms, Labov and Waletzky (1967) believe that a narrative contains six elements namely abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda.

As a language skill, narrative does not grow overnight. It takes time to develop the ability of telling an understandable story. Although this ability still develops until adolescence, the process of developing narrative skill can be seen since a very young age, which is at the ages of two to seven. More specifically, Hedberg and Stoel-Gammon (1986) propose a model on how children develop their narrative skills since young age which are called heaps, sequence, primitive narrative, focused chain, and true narrative.

The result of present study shows that all participating children began their stories by giving information regarding what the story is about or the so called abstract. In this case, they began by telling the listeners about the title of the movie they have watched previously, even though they only mentioned *Frozen*, instead of *Frozen Fever*. Then, they continued by mentioning characters involved and events which occur in the movie (orientation); some children are able to tell both, while others just explain either the characters or the event. After that, the children described the complicating events. It is a part which is mostly incomplete or unclear in some participants' narration. Furthermore, evaluation, resolution, and coda are the three elements that tend to appear in older children's stories. Out of ten participants, only three female participants gave personal commentaries regarding the movie, while only the two eldest mentioned the resolution, and only two participating children ended the story by including the coda.

This development can be caused by various factors, either

external such as social factors and environment or internal like brain activity in processing language, and may be even both. Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez (2009) believe that the three parenting methods namely children participation in daily routine, engagement between children and caregivers, and appropriateness of material given to the children, as well as the children characteristics such as gender and birth order, affect the growth of young children's narrative skill.

More specifically, from the three parenting methods which has been mentioned previously, the first aspect which is children's participation in daily routine, especially verbal activity, has the most visible impact on the participating children's language development. Hoff (2009) argues that in order to acquire language, children only need to experience interaction or conversation. She believes that with enough conversational experiences, children can maximize their language skill. It means that, the more children interact with people verbally, the better their narrative skills are. It is because by interacting with many

people; children can learn how to communicate, as it provides richer linguistic exposure for them.

On the other hand, child characteristic, such as gender and birth order does not seem give significant effect to their narrative skills. Even though some studies show that there are differences between men and women in language skill growth, it is still debatable since different studies reveal contradictory result. For example, a study conducted by Uchikoshi (2005) shows that in some cases, gender influences the development of narrative, while Budiwiyanto (2015) finds out that there are no significant differences between genders. Several previous studies conducted by some researchers such as Bornstein, Haynes, and Painter (1998), Gambell and Hunter (1999), and Karmiloff and Karmiloff-Smith (2001) reveal that girls have higher literacy skills than boys (Uchikoshi, 2005). In addition, Tamis-LeMonda and Rodriguez (2009) agree that in term of language skill, girls tend to be more advance than boys.

It is proved that age influences the development of these

participating children's narrative skills; the younger children tend to include less elements in their narrations compare to the older participants. However, the overall results are quite different from the studies conducted before. Based on the investigation conducted by Hayyu (2008), children tend to miss orientation and evaluation, while Budiwiyanto (2015) argues that abstract is the one which likely to be missing. In contrary, the participating children in this study are mostly missing the resolution, as it only appears in the two eldest children's stories. Abstract, on the other hand, can be found in all the participating children's narration.

In accordance with the narrative stage theory, the development of the participating children can be considered more advance than what the theory expects. It can even clearly be seen in the younger participants where their development is more remarkable than the older children's. This result is similar with the study conducted by Mäkinen (2014) who finds out that typically developing children develop their language skill up to four to five

years old faster than their mental age. It also can be caused by the golden age phase: when children's brains are like sponges; they can absorb information and learn new things very quickly. This is supported by the development of their brains, as babies were born with about 100 billion brain cells, and they continue to develop by connecting each cell after receive stimuli. In addition, according to McCain and Mustard (1999), at the age of three, the activity of their brains is twice as active as those of adults. Unfortunately, this activity level of brain drops during adolescence (UNICEF, n.d.). So, it is hardly surprising that early children have rapid growth of language skill.

A different result is shown in the study conducted by Uchikoshi (2005), she does not only find out that gender both affects and does not affect children narrative skills, but also boys are more advance than girls. She states that "boys display better English narrative skills than girls" even though there is no difference in their narrative growth rate (p. 464). In addition, she claims that "boys started with and maintained higher English narrative scores than girls" (p. 474).

On the other hand, her study also shows that for Spanish vocabulary, there is no difference between genders.

This current research finds out that gender does not affect the development of narrative skill in term of the structure elements. The differences are only located in the advancement of the ability of the female participants to produce more various vocabularies. Thus, they are able to give more detailed stories and add personal thoughts or feelings regarding the story. According to Uchikoshi (2005) gender can be one of the affecting factors on children's language skill or not, might also depend on other elements, such as "the age of acquisition, the age of testing, as well as on the skill being assessed" (p. 474).

Furthermore, birth order does not seem to give any remarkable influence in narrative skill development of the participating children. Although it is long believed that later-born children tend to receive lesser attention from their parents compare to the firstborns, which caused them to be considered slower in developing language skills,

however several studies show that language develops differently in children based on their birth order (Lowry, 2016). Therefore, it seems unacceptable to label that firstborns have better language skills than their siblings, and to mark that later-born children are delayed. Lowry (2016) states that first-borns reach 50-words earlier than the later-born children, luckily this condition are not lasting too long as the second child can learn quickly. If the first children are good at vocabulary and grammar, the following children are better in using pronouns such as my, mine, you, and yours.

In addition, environment can be beneficial for later-born children as it provides richer linguistic exposure and greater variety of conversation for them. For example, if first-borns mostly interact with their parents and/or caregivers, the second children can overhear the conversation between their siblings with other people without being directly participating in it. It gives them advantages in developing their conversational skills. Thus, the statement saying that language develops better in first-borns are not

truly correct, because children develop different skills in language, and these differences between first and later-born children disappear quickly (Lowry, 2016).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, based on the research, since a very young age, children are able to tell structured stories orally. From six elements of the narrative structure (abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda) proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1968), most of the participating children are capable of telling stories from abstract to complication. Among older ages, the structure of their stories become more complete.

As for the second question, few of social factors that can be connected to the children's narrative structure is parenting methods and child characteristics. In terms of parenting methods, the frequency of children's participation in daily routine plays a major role in shaping their narrative skills than the engagement between children and caregiver, and appropriateness material given to the children.

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