An Analyzing The Types of Suspense in 10 Story Narratives of Sunday School Children

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan suspense yang terdapat dalam teks naratif. Spoto (1991) mengatakan bahwa suspense adalah reaksi emosional penonton terhadap suatu karakter yang diakibatkan oleh penundaan atau penahanan informasi dari cerita film. Menurutnya, suspense dapat bekerja dengan melibatkan tokoh protagonis dan lawannya (hlm. 150). Diperkuat oleh Mckee (1997) yang mengatakan bahwa suspense dapat menciptakan rasa penasaran dan perhatian penonton terhadap cerita film. Suspense dapat dilakukan dengan cara menunda informasi. Menurutnya, 90% film menggunakan suspense dalam ceritanya. Hal ini dilakukan oleh penulis skenario karena suspense dapat membuat penonton berempati dengan karakter. Ia melanjutkan bahwa empati dilakukan oleh penonton dengan melakukan eksplorasi sepanjang film untuk mendapatkan informasi yang tertunda. Menurutnya, ketika penonton melakukan hal tersebut, ketegangan dalam cerita akan menimbulkan kecemasan (hlm. 351). Hal ini didukung oleh teori Cowgill (2008) yang mengatakan bahwa suspense adalah kondisi ketika penonton menaruh perhatian pada cerita film. Suspense didasari oleh ketidakpastian perasaan penonton terhadap penyelesaian karakter terhadap situasi sulit yang dihadapinya. Menurutnya, ketidakpastian antara masalah yang dihadapi karakter dengan harapan penonton terhadap penyelesaian cerita akan meningkatkan ketegangan dalam skenario. Sebagaimana hasil dari data cerita, dapat disimpulkan bahwa suspense yang paling dominan adalah suspense kecemasan 26/48% dan ketidakpastian 25/46%, dan yang paling sedikit adalah suspense kurangnya informasi hanya 3/6%. Kunci untuk menciptakan suspense menurut Cowgill adalah dengan menciptakan masalah bagi karakter. Jenis ketegangan yang paling umum di seluruh cerita ini adalah ketidakpastian dan kecemasan, dengan beberapa cerita juga mencerminkan keraguan. Ketegangan ini digunakan untuk menyoroti ketegangan emosional, pergulatan dengan keyakinan, dan tantangan yang dihadapi oleh tokoh-tokoh kunci dalam perjalanan mereka.

Kata kunci: *Ketegangan, Analisis, Narasi*

Abstract

This study aims to explain the suspension contained in narrative texts. Spoto (1991) said that suspense is the audience's emotional reaction to a character that results from delaying or withholding information from the film's story. According to him, suspense can work by involving the protagonist and his opposition (p. 150). Strengthened by Mckee (1997) who said that suspense can create curiosity and attention from the audience to the film's story. Suspense can be done by delaying information. According to him, 90% of films use suspense in their stories. This is done by the screenwriter because suspense can make the audience empathize with the character. He continued that empathy is done by the audience by exploring throughout the film to get delayed information. According to him, when the audience does this, the suspense in the story will cause anxiety (p. 351). This is supported by Cowgill's theory (2008) which says that suspense is a condition when the audience pays attention to the film's story. Suspense is based on the uncertainty of the audience's feelings towards the character's resolution of the difficult situation he faces. According to him, the uncertainty between the problems faced by the character and the audience's hopes for the story's resolution will increase suspense in the scenario. As the results of the data story, it can be concluded that the most dominant suspension is suspension anxiety

26/48% and uncertainty 25/46%, and the least is suspension lack of information only 3/6%. The key to creating suspense according to Cowgill is to create a problem for the character. The most common types of suspense across these stories are uncertainty and anxiety, with some stories also reflecting doubt. These suspensions are used to highlight emotional tensions, struggles with faith, and the challenges faced by key figures in their journeys.

INTRODUCTION

This analysis focuses on the elements of suspense in children's school stories, which are commonly used to teach ethical and religious principles to children in a professional context, as suspense in stories can effectively capture children's attention and convey important messages. This analysis focuses on the elements of suspense in the story of a young student. The story has a tendency to teach ethical and religious principles to children in the context of family life. Tension in storytelling can be an effective tool to capture children's attention and provide important details. Children's storytelling is an activity that involves the oral delivery of stories or narratives to children with the aim of entertaining, educating, and expanding their imagination (Areni, 2019). Stories and storytelling have performed an important part in the growth and development of children since the beginning of time, as stories have been transmitted down through the ages. Basically, storytelling is a rich form of communication, which not only serves as a means of entertainment, but also as a tool to teach moral values, culture, and knowledge (Juhji, 2016). Stories often take children to a world full of wonder and fantasy (Widyastuti, 2019). Effective routines are essential for problem-solving and analytical thinking in the future. Creating content involves concentration as well as curiosity. Children learn to focus on the narrative being told and remember the details of the story, which directly contributes to improving their memory skills (Sopacoly & Lattu, 2020). Telling stories about God's Word is a meaningful and important activity in one's faith life, especially for children (Laua, 2018). This activity not only aims to introduce the teachings of the Bible, but also to instill Christian values that can shape good character and morals (Luni, 2015). Storytelling is an effective way to teach children about God's love, forgiveness, faithfulness, and greatness. Storytelling also encourages children to engage their imaginations and develop their understanding of complex concepts in a simplified manner. According to Rafels (2017), narratives from the Bible, when told engagingly, can captivate a child's interest and make spiritual lessons more relatable and memorable. This process not only strengthens a child's faith but also promotes cognitive and emotional development, as children learn to empathize with characters and scenarios presented in these stories. Moreover, interactive storytelling sessions can foster a sense of community and shared values among young learners, reinforcing the collective identity and faith practices within the Christian community (Johnson & Turner, 2020).

Narration is essentially a story: a structured way of sharing real or imagined events, experiences, or activities. The story is generally organized on a logical sequence that makes sense for readers and listeners. In many cases, important factors such as characters, frameworks, plots, competition, and resolution are included. Narratives can take many forms, including novels, short stories, movies, and even jokes told in conversation. They help us make sense of the world by organizing and interpreting experience in a coherent way. According to Anderson (2003, p.8), a narrative is a piece of text which tells a story and, in doing so, entertains or informs the reader or listener. Accordingly, the purpose of narrative text based on Anderson (2003, p.6) statement above is to present a view of the world that entertains or informs the reader.

Kemertelidze and Manjavidze (2013: 693) define suspense as a state or condition of anxiety and uncertainty or excitement about an outcome of something unknown.' They add that suspense is a state of tension or worry about something that may happen.Lehne (2014:15) defines suspense as an emotional phenomenon that is experienced in a multitude of contexts. He argues that patterns of suspense and resolution contribute to aesthetic emotions evoked by works of art. Reading literature can induce emotions, these emotional experiences are often the main motivator for people to read. Doust (2015:23) argues that suspense is one narrative phenomenon capable of maintaining the attention of viewers or readers over surprising long periods of time.

Csikszentmihalyi (2009: 196) suggests that suspense is the capacity to focus attention; it may strengthen the effects of the emotions that are experienced during the reading of a story. In short, suspense is the feeling of anxiety or anticipation of what will happen in the story. This paper intends, therefore, to show what techniques are used by Luangala in some of his short stories that have been selected for the purposes of this study. Techniques in this study will refer to the way Luangala creates suspense. While the term suspense in this study will mean any narrative phenomenon capable of maintaining the attention of viewers or readers over surprising long periods of time as has been defined by Doust (2015:23).

Suspense is the intense feeling that an audience goes through while waiting for the outcome of certain events. It basically leaves the reader holding their breath and wanting more information. In a suspense narrative, on the other hand, the protagonist gradually becomes aware of the peril and dangers, which readers already know. Suspense is created by withholding something – whether it be critical plot turns and twists or information about a character's motives or actions done by a character that nobody knows about until the end of the story. Mood and suspense go together. It is all up to the author whether he or she wants to create a certain mood in their story.

Narration Theory (Narrative)

Narrative is a fundamental aspect of storytelling, whether in written, oral, or visual forms, serving as the framework through which a story is revealed. A narrative not only conveys events but also involves the interaction between showings and telling, where the narrator plays a crucial role in guiding the emotional and intellectual engagement of the audience with the plot, characters, and themes (Bal, 2009). Narrative is not just about what happens, but also how the events are presented, involving the choice of point of view, pacing, and the timing of information disclosure to maximize its impact on the audience.

An effective narrative keeps the audience engaged by ensuring clarity, emotional connection, and thematic coherence throughout the story. A narrative must be able to emotionally bind the audience, creating a relationship between the characters and the viewers, while ensuring that the elements of the story are seamlessly interwoven. The effectiveness of a narrative is often determined by the narrator's ability to manage tension and reveal information strategically, thus enhancing the overall experience of the story. Revealing information too quickly can diminish tension, while revealing it too slowly can cause the audience to lose interest. Therefore, the narrator must carefully design how information is disclosed to ensure that anticipation and curiosity remain alive throughout the narrative.

Furthermore, narrative plays a crucial role in creating the flow and structure of the story. The narrator has the responsibility of determining not only what is revealed but also when and how the information is disclosed, allowing the narrator to manipulate the audience's sense of anticipation and uncertainty. This often involves tension management, which keeps the audience engaged by creating critical moments where they cannot predict what will happen next. This tension can also be combined with emotional modulation, enabling the audience to experience the emotional ups and downs along with the characters.

A well-structured narrative also allows the audience to gain deeper insights into the characters' motivations, underlying themes, and the broader messages of the story. Through these information management techniques, the narrator can provide layered insights into the characters or events that may not be immediately apparent. An effective narrator employs storytelling techniques such as flashbacks, dramatic irony, or varying points of view to enrich the layers of the story, offering the audience new or deeper perspectives on the story's development.

Thus, narrative not only functions as a way to tell a story but also as a tool to create deeper connections between the story and the audience, building tension, evoking emotions, and ensuring the audience remains engaged from beginning to end. A good narrative harmoniously manages these elements to create a captivating and satisfying experience for the audience, whether in the form of writing, film, theater, or other media.

Suspense

Suspense is a state of mental uncertainty that often arises when someone is waiting for an important outcome or decision, usually accompanied by fear or anxiety. In the context of narrative,

the term suspense is often used to describe a situation where the reader or audience feels tension due to uncertainty about what will happen next. Suspense arises when readers know that something uncertain or risky is happening to a character, so they are compelled to continue following the storyline to find out the character's fate. Suspense is one of the most effective narrative tools used to generate tension, uncertainty, and anticipation, especially through the technique of delaying the resolution of conflicts or the answers to key questions raised in the story.

According to Peter Vorderer (2004), tension arises when the audience is faced with two or more possible outcomes, where they tend to expect one particular outcome to occur. The audience's desire to see the desired outcome creates an emotional dynamic, where the hope for a positive outcome is then mixed with the fear that the outcome will be negative. The longer the resolution of the story is delayed, the greater the suspense built up which strengthens the audience's emotional attachment to the characters and plot. This suspense creates space for the audience to feel anxiety and anticipation simultaneously, which ultimately enriches the overall narrative experience.

Furthermore, suspense serves as a mechanism to maintain audience engagement with the story. Smart storytellers are able to utilize suspense to manipulate the pacing and structure of the story, creating a rhythm that emotionally engages the audience in the unfolding events. This management of suspense allows the narrator to convey deep insights into character motivations, enriching the relationship between the reader or audience and the complex elements of the story.

Smith (2005) also highlights the importance of dramatic suspense, which occurs when the audience knows more than the characters in the story, a concept known as dramatic irony. In this situation, the audience is aware of hidden dangers or conflicts that the characters are not yet aware of, and the suspense builds as the audience waits for the characters to realize what they already know. The interplay between the information the audience has, the speed of the reveal, and the character's awareness is a key element in creating effective suspense, whether in literature, film, or theater. For example, in a scene where a character is approaching a danger that the audience already knows about but the character is unaware of, the audience is emotionally involved and feels tense, hoping that the character will soon realize the threat that lies ahead of them.

Effective suspense can be combined with other techniques such as the use of measured dialog, anxiety-provoking visual settings, or even sound plays in the film to build a threatening atmosphere. Delays in disclosure, the use of subtle danger signs, and the management of audience expectations all work together to create an immersive and evocative experience. Ultimately, suspense in a narrative not only entertains but also stimulates the audience's thinking, encouraging them to engage more deeply with the themes, characters, and conflicts in the story.

Types of Suspense

Suspense is an essential narrative element that engages the audience by creating tension and anticipation. Various types of suspense can be identified based on their mechanisms and emotional impacts. Understanding these types can enhance storytelling across different genres.

1. **Uncertainty Suspense**

   This type of suspense centers on the audience's uncertainty about the outcome of a situation, creating suspense through ambiguity. The audience stays engaged because they anticipate an uncertain outcome, unsure of where the story will go. This uncertainty increases emotional investment, as the audience is anxious about the fate of the characters and the resolution of the plot (Hoffman, 2012). Suspense is created when the audience is in a state of anticipation, waiting for what will happen next. This uncertainty can arise from a variety of factors, such as unresolved conflicts, the fate of characters, or the impact of certain actions. For example, a character may face a dangerous situation with an unpredictable outcome, leaving the audience to speculate on the possible resolution. Or, a mystery could be introduced that prompts both the character and the audience to search for answers. This shared experience of uncertainty increases emotional engagement, as the audience looks forward to the resolution and the revelation of the hidden truth.

2. Anxiety

What is the emotion of suspense? Compared to fear and anxiety, there has been very little research on suspense However, psychologists quoted in Paradox of Suspense (Carroll, 1996) provide this definition of suspense: "…a Fear emotion coupled with the cognitive state of uncertainty". Which is similar to the definition of anxiety but with more emphasis on specific stimuli that are associated with fear. Thus, we conclude that suspense is the intersection or overlap of fear and anxiety. Suspense can be viewed as fear of imminent threat that is likely to occur, but has not appeared, and/or a state of high anxiety due to an impending dangerous situation.

3. Lack of information

In writing, a lack of information can hurt suspense in a story. Suspense is a state of mental uncertainty or excitement, usually accompanied by apprehension or anxiety. In a story, suspense can be created by withholding key details from the reader, and then releasing them strategically. The timing of these revelations is important, as revealing too much too soon can dissipate suspense, while delaying too long can frustrate the reader.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative design. According to Moleong (2017:6) qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomena of what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions and others holistically and by means of description in the form of words and language, in a specific natural context by utilizing various natural methods. Qualitative research according to Hendryadi, et. al, (2019:218) is a naturalistic investigation process that seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena naturally. So, in this study to analyze the behavior of a group of students and the underlying reasons; how and why a group of students use aspects of suspense in their narratives to convey their stories or experiences. In this way, researchers can develop a focus on aspects of the research problem by collecting and analyzing data from documents inductively. This research is based on documents, and this research was conducted by students who researched narrative texts used in Sunday school stories. This study aims to reveal how cultural values and beliefs of society are reflected in the use of suspense techniques in Nusantara folklore, especially horror stories. Through a comparative analysis of stories from various regions, this study will identify patterns of the use of suspense that are typical and related to the cultural context of each region.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of analyzing this suspense is to find out the elements that refer to mental and physical events carried out by the characters to anticipate an uncertainty that may occur based on information on the abilities of the characters that are known or unknown in overcoming subsequent problems, such as danger, horror, anxiety so that the possibility of the story can develop in one desired direction, but not in another unwanted direction. In this suspense, it can be seen from the form of:

1. *Emotion* of mental event of intention and bodily event
2. *Anticipation* of what happens next
3. *Sense* of present danger and anxiety
4. *Wander* of what will happen next which affects horror
5. *Uncertainty* of an outcome dealing with the degree of probability with which the story can develop in one or another direction which can be calculated

Story 1. 16 anxieties, 5 Uncertainty

Anxieties:

1. People complained about the heat, anxious about whether they would survive the desert conditions.
2. Hunger created anxiety about whether they would find enough food.
3. Uncertainty about their destination ("Where are we going?") created anxiety about the direction of their journey

4. Exhaustion from the long journey added physical and mental stress
5. Thirst heightened fear of dehydration.
6. They felt lost, creating uncertainty and fear.
7. Doubts about whether they should have stayed in Egypt created anxiety about their decision.
8. Moses had to plead with God, anxious about whether God would listen.
9. Uncertainty about whether water from the rock would be enough for everyone.
10. Tension over whether the quail and manna would be sufficient to provide food.
11. Constant criticism and complaints increased dissatisfaction among them.
12. Anxiety about whether God would be angry at their complaints.
13. Anxiety about whether they would survive the dangerous journey.
14. Tension from uncertainty about when the journey would end ("Are we there yet?").
15. Anxiety about whether they would truly reach the Promised Land.
16. Anxiety about whether Moses was capable of leading them out of the difficult situation

Uncertainty:
1. They doubted whether God would continue to perform miracles.
2. Uncertainty about whether this journey was worthwhile
3. Uncertainty about whether they should have left Egypt.
4. Uncertainty about Moses' decision to lead them.
5. Uncertainty about whether God's promise would be fulfilled.

Story 2. 5 Uncertainty
Uncertainty:
1. Sarah doubted God's promise regarding their offspring.
2. Uncertainty about whether they would actually reach the Promised Land.
3. Uncertainty about whether God would protect them throughout the journey.
4. Abraham's Uncertainty about Sarah's acceptance of God's promise.
5. Uncertainty about the journey to an unknown land.

Story 3. No suspense
This story does not show significant suspense as there are no elements that create anxiety, or uncertainty in the plot.

Story 4. No suspense
There is no tension or suspense in this story, which focuses more on the concept of God's love and the invitation to love one another.

Story 5. No suspense
This story describes the attitude of doing good and being humble without significant suspense, focusing more on teaching humility

Story 6. 1 anxiety, 10 Uncertainty, 3 lack of Information
Anxiety:
1. Tension from the constant complaints of the Israelites during the journey.

Uncertainty:
1. Uncertainty t about whether they would get water.
2. Uncertainty about whether the manna would be enough.
3. Uncertainty about whether God's promise would actually be fulfilled.
4. Uncertainty about whether they were lost.
5. Uncertainty about whether they would reach the Promised Land.
6. Moses' Uncertainty about whether he could continue leading.
7. Uncertainty about whether God would continue to perform miracles.
8. Uncertainty about whether they would survive all the challenges.
9. Uncertainty about whether they should have left Egypt.

2. 10.Uncertainty about whether they could stop complaining and appreciate God's goodness.

Lack of Information:
1. Lack of Information about when they would arrive.
2. Lack of Information about whether God would provide further miracles.
3. Lack of Information about how they would survive in the desert.

Story 7. 9 anxieties, 5 uncertainty
Anxieties:
1. Jacob felt anxious about meeting Esau after a long separation.
2. Worry about whether Esau still held a grudge.
3. Anxiety as Jacob sent a messenger to Esau with gifts.
4. Tension when hearing Esau was coming with 400 men.
5. Jacob's fear for the safety of his family.
6. Jacob's worry as he bowed before Esau.
7. Tension about what would happen when Esau arrived.
8. Tension about whether Esau would forgive Jacob.
9. Jacob's anxiety while waiting for Esau's reaction.

Uncertainty:
1. Jacob doubted whether Esau would accept his apology.
2. Uncertainty about whether the gifts would be enough to appease Esau.
3. Uncertainty about whether this meeting would end peacefully.
1. 4 Uncertainty about whether Esau was still angry.
4. Uncertainty about whether Jacob's fear was excessive or not.

Story 8. No suspense
This story portrays Abraham's obedience without significant tension. The focus is on faith and belief.

Story 9. 1 Uncertainty
Uncertainty :
Uncertainty about whether Joseph would be able to survive as a slave in Egypt, separated from his family.

Story 10. No suspense
The story of Noah's Ark does not show significant suspense, as the focus is on Noah's obedience and God's salvation.

Finding
From the findings of the analysis data regarding the suspense in the 10 stories above, the author can discuss and understand that not all stories have the same suspense. There are several differences between the ten stories.

Types of Suspense
- 6% — Lack of Information Suspense
- 48% — Anxiety Suspense
- 46% — Uncertainty Suspense
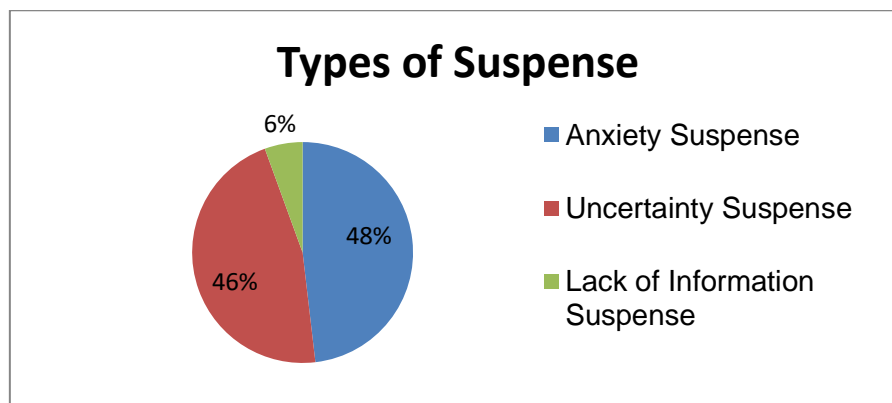
Data 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10 do not have very specific suspensions like data 1, 2, 6, 7, and 9. However, the suspensions found in data stories 3, 4, 5, 9, 10 are in the form of general explanations that the form of suspension contained in the story data can still be managed. The most dominant suspension that appears in the text is uncertainty, anxiety, and lack of information, which is the type that is least found. From all the data/story results, it can be concluded that the most dominant suspension is suspension anxiety 26 / 48% and uncertainty 25 / 46%, and the least is suspension lack of information only 3/6%.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this text is that in the analysis of ten stories related to suspense, not all stories show significant suspense. Some stories display strong suspense, especially related to anxiety, doubt, and uncertainty, while others focus more on teachings or concepts such as faith, kindness, and humility without highlighting emotional tension.

The stories that stand out most in terms of suspense are the story of the Israelites' journey in the desert (Story 1) and the tension experienced by Jacob when meeting Esau (Story 7). Both of these stories contain a lot of anxiety and doubt, including concerns about safety, survival, and whether God's promises will be fulfilled. In addition, other stories, such as the story of Abraham and Sarah (Story 2) and Joseph (Story 9), also show doubt and uncertainty, although not as strong as those found in the more suspenseful stories.

Overall, the most dominant suspension is found in the form of uncertainty, anxiety, and lack of information, which often create tension in the narrative. While not all stories feature intense suspense, this type of suspense has a huge impact on character development and plot, creating interest and anticipation for the reader.

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