

Communication Disorder of the Autistic Character in The “Fly Away” Movie

Nadira Dinda Prastiwi, Rohmani Nur Indah
Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim
Jl. Gajayana No.50, Dinoyo, Kec. Lowokwaru, Kota
Malang, Jawa Timur 65144, Indonesia
prastiwidinda97@gmail.com*, indah@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id
*corresponding author

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the type of communication disorder in comprehending the speech of an autistic character in the “Fly Away” movie named Mandy. In addition, it aimed to describe the occurrence of communication disorders. In this study, the researchers used the theory on the type of communication disorder (Paul, 2008). The result of the analysis on forty-three data shows five types of communication disorders, namely, repetition of words, minimal response, limitation of communication function, use of unusual words, and low frequency. The finding stated that word repetition is a type of disorder often occurred in Mandy's speech. The communication disturbance also appeared in several incidents such as jumping, excessive laughs, rebellion, repeating posture, eyes up, just see the interlocutor and bite the fingers. In general Mandy's response is minimal and performs a low frequency of communication. Besides, the limitation of the communication function is also characterized by echolalia or repetition of words. The utterances also cover the use of unusual words. These things are the expressions that happened to the autistic character when experiencing communication disorders. This finding can be used as a guideline for those interacting with autistic individuals applying both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Keywords: communication disorder, autism, “Fly Away” movie.

Introduction

Communication ability is one of the most important aspects that every human being should be aware of. This ability enables people to be involved in social interaction since childhood. Yet, not everyone can communicate normally. Some individuals experience communication disorders, so they cannot receive and deliver messages. In addition, those who experience communication disorders are affected by different factors that demand social supports (Eadie et al., 2018). When children have a lack or complete system of sense, the central nervous system, adequate mental capacity,



and emotional stability can trigger a variety of communication disorders (Bogdashina, 2005). An autistic individual also has a language disorder that becomes barriers to daily communication, particularly when they have difficulties in expressing their needs (Austriaco et al., 2019).

A communication disorder is a disorder of the ability to receive, transmit, process, and understand the verbal or nonverbal concept. This disorder can occur starting from severe to mild communication disorder that can occur in primary defect sufferer or possibly secondary defect such as what experienced by autistic individuals. Autistic individuals experience communication disorders due to certain factors, one of which is abnormalities occurring in the brain (Huebner & Lane, 2001). 30% of autistic individuals cannot speak for life while 60% of them can speak but experiencing speech delay and they can produce the first word at the age of six years (Lord et al., 2005). It involves a factor of communication disorder so that they cannot communicate and interact with the surroundings. Communication competence is one of the main factors that determined how broadly an autistic person can develop relationships with others and can follow daily activities such as others in common either at school, home or inside the community (Paul & Sutherland, 2005).

A communication disorder is a variety of problems in language, speaking, and hearing. In addition, it is characterized by difficulties in understanding and using language. Most communication disorders occur in autistic individuals because they have mental, speech, auditory, and even visual limitations. They also suffer from minimal sensory processing (Zhang et al., 2019). These limitations make them feel difficult in communicating with the environment. They communicate using body language; sometimes, if they are unable to receive and convey the message, occasionally they express with emotion. This case often occurs with autistic teenagers. Autistic adolescents often showed abnormalities in speech and language (Shea & Mesibov, 2005). They suffer from communication disorders that consist of six types. Firstly, the response is minimal in communication. Secondly, it is difficult to focus on. Third, a low frequency of communication. Fourth, there is a limitation of the communication function. Fifth, echolalia or repetition of words. And the last is the use of unusual words (Paul, 2008).

Communication disorder has been investigated in some studies. The autistic character in "My Name is Khan" movie performed various types of language disorder (Suherman, 2016). While the speech of character with cerebral palsy showed several types of speech and language disorders, namely articulation disorder, phonological disorder, voice disorder, and stuttering disorder (Zakiah, 2015). Another study shows that autistic people have difficulties in expressing their feelings, needs, and thoughts (Octavia, 2018). However, in autistic children, sound disturbances and language disability become the barriers they mostly suffered (Nafiah, 2008). In this case, the aided language stimulation method affects the enhancement of autistic child expressive communication (Aprioza & Masitoh, 2019). The movement and touch of autistic students are more dominantly used as a way of communication (Putro, 2017). The improvement of expressive communication in children can be made using the PECS method (Goa & Derung, 2017). Although young autistic communication is far below the chronological age,



the intervention given plays a role in developing communication skills (Wijayaptri, 2015).

The majority of previous studies above have used the film as a research object and they also employ the theory of language impairment (Carroll & Snowling, 2004), while this study uses the theory of communication disorder (Paul, 2008). In addition, the studies chose the subject of autistic children and male adults. In this study, the autistic teenage girl is selected as the subject of research. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to identify the types of communication disorders arise in the comprehension process of the autistic character in the “Fly Away” movie. In addition, it also aimed at describing how communication disorder occurs in her comprehension process.

Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method for analyzing data. This qualitative method was chosen to interpret and outline the data concerned with the current situation. This research uses descriptive qualitative methods to describe communication disorders that focus on the type of communication disorder that occurs in Mandy's speech in the film “Fly Away.” Thus, the data source of this research is “Fly Away” movie in the Stephanie Young’s Youtube channel published on October 26, 2018. The movie takes 1 hour 15 minutes. The data focuses on Mandy's utterance as the main character. The problem analyzed in this study is the type of communication disorder arises in the process of understanding other's speech.

There are several steps to collect the data. First, observing the conversation in the movie several times. Then, identifying the communication disorders in the conversation and data coding. The data are then analyzed by firstly noticing some responses to the types of communication disorder according to the theory of communication disorder (Paul, 2008). It is followed by discussing the context and occurrence of the communication disorders identified in the way the character responding to questions and delivering messages. And the last, drawing conclusion.

Findings and discussion

The data show some kinds of communication disorder that happened to Mandy as the main character in the “Fly Away” movie. The results of the analysis found forty-three data that correspond to the types of communication disorders. The sense of communication disorder, in general, is a collection of psychological disorders characterized by difficulties such as difficulties in understanding and use of language (Bolis & Schilbach, 2018). The communication disorder causes Mandy to have an inability to interact with the environment. In addition, she could not accept, understand, and convey messages according to her thoughts. It is a distraction that inhibits the ability to receive, transmit, process, understand verbal and nonverbal concepts (ASHA, 1993).



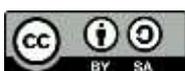
Among the forty-three data found, there are six types of communication disorders found, namely repetition of words, minimal response, limitation of communication function, use of unusual words, and low-frequency words. In general, the type of communication disorder that tends to occur in Mandy's utterance when communicating with other characters is the anomalous meaning and minimal response. Mandy often performs repeated speech communication disorders when communicating with others. She tried to listen carefully so that there are a few words that she remembered and then repeated the words over and over again. In addition to repeated words, in the movie, Mandy also often experienced minimal response. In the film, some of Mandy's scenes show minimal response when someone asked her to make a response. Mandy sometimes does not reply to others and sometimes only sees her listeners, when another person called her name, Mandy did not respond to the greeting.

Mandy's Communication Disorder

The first type of communication disorder found is anomalous meaning. The repetition of the word occurs when someone is talking then the sufferer remembers the words and repeats them repeatedly. Mandy often experienced repeated words in the film. Those occur in the following datum: [2.1] *you can do that you can do that you can you hmm*, [7.1] *stay day schooll about the ice cream, ice cream, ice cream, ice cream, ice cream*, [8.1] *chocolate, chocolate, chocolate, chocolate, chocolate*, [9.1] *let's go, lets go, lets go, lets go, go, go, go, go*, [11.1] *Jammers, jammers, jammers, jammers*, [14.1] *inside, inside, inside, inside*. In this context, Mandy repeated the word many times and the repetition is also followed by repetitive body movements. These may involve arms, hands, fingers, and lower limbs (Purpura et al., 2017).

The next type found is a minimal response. The minimal response is limited attention at the time of the speech, which one fails to respond to people's talks or ignore when asked to communicate. Based on the analysis, Mandy often experienced minimal response as she got difficulty in understanding other's speech. Thus, she ignores the greeting, questions, command or affirmative sentences such as the following: [2.2] *Mandy daddy's here*, [3.1] *Mandy do you have to apologize to Daddy*, [4.1] *Mandy look at a time watch*, [5.1] *Mandy look how cute you see the little chihuahua*, [6.1] *see you Mandy*, [7.1] *Good job*, [8.1] *Mandy get some shoes we're gonna take Ross*, [9.2] *Hey Mandy Mandy*, [10.1] *Then after we lock the oven we'll call grandma's I'm going to go is grocery stores, okay and then we come home*, [11.1] *it's not funny young lady it's not funny at all*, [12.1] *Mandy do you like dances?*, [13.1] *Mandy would you like to take a walk around the grounds hmm how about it?* In this case, Mandy did not respond as she focused on something else in her mind. It refers to the restricted interest of autistic individuals (Flax et al., 2019). In addition, the failure to respond to the implicit meaning of others showed that autistic individuals experience social pragmatic communication disorder (Baird & Norbury, 2016).

Another type found is the limitation of the communication function. It is a type of communication disorder in autism where communication only serves to request and refuse a message. It happens as they cannot digest and convey the message well.



They can not convey a message with a long sentence just enough with a word or two words. Based on the finding, Mandy often experienced restrictions on the communication function in the conversation. The following data represented the limitation of communication function: [1.1] *my computer my computer* , [2.1] *huaaaaa....haaaa...no...no... huuuuu buy the ice cream*, [3.1] *I hate you..I hate you...I hate you...*, [4.1] *Berrrrr.....*, [5.1] *huaaa.....haaaa....haaa...huaaaa...* Mandy had difficulty expressing her need to have the thing she wanted. She represented the intended phrases with repeated speech or paralinguistic cues. In this case, autistic individuals tend to produce less sophisticated language than they can comprehend (Gernsbacher et al., 2016).

The next type of communication disorder is the use of unusual words or vague words that make people cannot understand Mandy's speech. The vague words do not conform to context. For instance: [4.1] *dogs and birds fly away*. Mandy insisted through her unusual words to convey the message that she had in mind that dogs also can fly. This suggests that her using unusual words is not directly related to the context; therefore the listeners find it difficult to understand. In addition, the pronunciation is also not clear.

The low frequency of communication occurs when autistic people are not able to express what is in their minds because there is interference with hearing and speech, causing the low frequency of communication. Based on the results of the analysis, three data show that Mandy had a low frequency of communication: [1.1] *everyone Boeing 747 best is playing sky.*, [2.1] *no dog bark*, [3.1] *funny, it's so funny*. In this context, Mandy was unable to express what was in her mind. When she had repetitive speech, it does not relate to the social function. In other words, the use of phrases does not always relate to social responsiveness (Gladfelter & VanZuiden, 2020).

The Communication Disorder Arise in Comprehending Other's Speech

After conducting the analysis, it is found that there is one type of communication disorder that does not occur in the main character in the movie "Fly Away", namely difficult to focus on the speech of others. Table 1 is a summary of the results of the analysis.



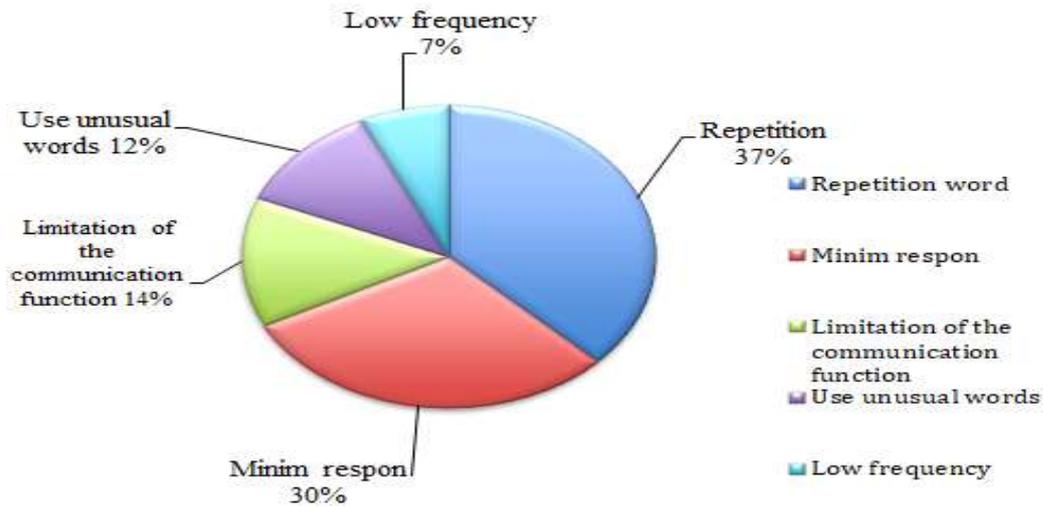


Figure 1. Types of Communication Disorder

The results of the study stated that the interruption of communication of Mandy as the main character in the "Fly Away" movie occurs due to several difficulties. Sometimes when she communicates and generates types of communication disorders, the responses are followed by several paralinguistic cues. These cues involved jumping, excessive laughs, rebellion, repeating the posture of the fore and aft, eyes up, just see the interlocutor and talking while biting a finger. They belong to an expression that happened to Mandy when communicating with others. It also becomes an indication of emotional change while conversing with others (Rofiah et al., 2018).

In this research, it was found that communication disorders of an individual female autistic arise in the process of understanding other's speech. The results of this study support the findings from previous research that autistic individuals experience expressive and receptive communication disorders in general. It arises in the process of understanding the message conveyed by other people (Suherman, 2016). The communication disorder is shown by the autistic character also refers to what is later known as social pragmatic communication disorder (Brukner-Wertman et al., 2016). It also relates to a deficit in using communication for social purposes, following rules of conversation, and understanding implicit message (Yuan & Dollaghan, 2018).

Conclusion

This study explores the types of communication disorders and communication disorders that occur in the autistic character. The communication disorder found covers five types. Firstly, the response is minimal in communicating. Secondly, a low frequency of communication. Third, there is a limitation of the communication function. Fourth, echolalia or repetition of words. And the last is the use of unusual words. In this case, the repetition word is a type of communication disorder that often occurs in the autistic female character in the "Fly Away" movie. Mandy, the main character, does not experience any communication disorder that is difficult to focus or pay attention to others.



In addition to examining the types of communication disorders, the occurrence of communication disorders on the autistic character in the movie also varied. It is related to disturbance to Mandy when she communicates and produces types of communication disorders, it is followed by paralinguistic cues. They are in the form of jumping, excessive laughs, rebellion, repeating posture fore and behind, eyes up, just see the interlocutor, and bite the fingers. These things are an expression that happened to Mandy when experiencing communication disorders.

This study found that the repetition of words is the most common type in the autistic individual and there is often a rebellion when he or she wants to refuse or be unable to receive a message. Therefore, this research results can be used as guidelines for people interacting with the autistic individuals, so that they can understand their character better. In addition, they can apply nonverbal communication to help autistic individuals understand any intended message. Verbal communication is not enough for autistic individuals. In this movie, Mandy needs help with the prompt in the form of gestures by the interlocutor.

Future researchers on language disorder who have an interest in researching communication disorders on autistic individuals can continue the investigation with different objectives and to different objects. The implications of communication disorder research results are expected to be used as a reference and benchmark for further research.

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