

A STUDY OF THE FUNCTION OF RHETORICAL QUESTIONS IN THE NOVEL “FIVE ON A TREASURE ISLAND” (A PRAGMATIC APPROACH)

Pathy Yulinda, M.R. Nababan, and Djatmika

Postgraduate Program of Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta, Indonesia

Pathy_yulinda@yahoo.co.id

Abstract

The study reported in this paper is a part of a thesis entitled “A Study of Translation of Rhetorical Question Form in the Novel Entitled Five on a Treasure Island (A Pragmatic Approach)”. It aims to identify and describe the functions of rhetorical questions in the novel “Five on a Treasure Island” and to explain the use of the functions. The methodology used is qualitative descriptive research based on a case study. The data in the form of rhetorical questions are obtained from dialogues in the novel using content analysis method. The results of this research show 174 data employing functions of rhetorical questions. The functions include confirming, suggesting, commanding, requesting, complaining, showing anger, showing surprise, emphasizing a known fact, showing confusion, persuading, showing excitement, beginning a conversation, and reminding. From the results of the functions of rhetorical questions, the intention of using the function of rhetorical question is to show the speaker’s intent in an indirect way to get other effects. The conclusion of the study shows that a particular function of rhetorical question signifies a particular intention of the use in the novel.

Keywords: rhetorical question, the function of rhetorical question, pragmatics

INTRODUCTION

Question is a grammatical form that a speaker uses to get information from the hearer, such as, “what time is it?”, “what did you do last night?”, or “how do you get this book?”. The main function of a question is asking to the hearer information that the speaker does not know about. However, question is not only used for asking information to the hearer. A question can be used for asking someone to do something or even making a statement, for example “can you bring this box?” or “how can you believe him?”. The response of the expression “can you bring this box?” is not “yes, I can” or “no, I can’t”. There are other things that the speaker wants from the hearer. From the example, the speaker uses the question for asking someone to do something; the speaker does not expect an answer from the hearer. Questions that are used not for asking information to the hearer is rhetorical questions (Larson, 1998).

Basically, a rhetorical question is not really different from a real question. It looks like a real question but the intention of rhetorical question is not for asking information. The readers or the hearers can identify whether the question is a rhetorical question or a real question from the context. By knowing the context, the readers can indicate if the question is a rhetorical question or a real question and find out the intention of the question.

Larson (1998) claimed that a rhetorical question has many functions. Every language has a list of rhetorical question functions and specific question forms that are used rhetorically. Larson (1998) also claimed that the functions of rhetorical question in English are:

1. To emphasize a known fact in order to communicate a suggestion or command
2. To indicate doubt or uncertainty
3. To introduce a new topic or new aspect of a topic
4. To show surprise
5. To admonish or exhort
6. To express the speaker’s evaluation

This paper uses a pragmatic approach to help in identifying the intention of rhetorical questions in the novel Five on a Treasure Island. Pragmatics is defined as a study of speaker meaning and it is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker or writer and interpreted by a listener or reader (Yule, 1996).

The focus of this paper is to identify and to describe the functions of rhetorical question in the novel Five on a Treasure Island by Enid Blyton. This paper also explains the use of rhetorical question. By

identifying and describing the functions of this rhetorical question and explaining the use of rhetorical questions, it is expected that this paper will help other researchers or academicians to have better understanding of the functions of rhetorical questions and the use of rhetorical questions in conversations.

METHOD

This paper is a qualitative descriptive research based on case study. In this paper, the data are taken by analyzing a document, in this case a novel titled *Five on a Treasure Island* by Enid Blyton. Analyzing the document is a characteristic of qualitative research (Moleong, 2005). The data of this paper is a word or a sentence which employs a rhetorical question. Using a word or a sentence is one of characteristics of a descriptive research (Sutopo, 2006). The data are taken from analyzing the conversation in all chapters of the novel *Five on A Treasure Island*. There are 17 chapters of the novel *Five on a Treasure Island*. By analyzing the conversations in all chapters of the novel, the researchers expected to find different functions of rhetorical questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the novel *Five on a Treasure Island* by Enid Blyton, some functions of rhetorical questions have been found as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Functions of the Rhetorical Questions in the Novel "Five on a Treasure Island"

| No. | Functions of Rhetorical Questions | Amount | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| 1. | To confirm | 71 | 40 |
| 2. | To show surprise | 35 | 20 |
| 3. | To emphasize a known fact | 13 | 7 |
| 4. | To suggest | 11 | 6 |
| 5. | To persuade | 10 | 6 |
| 6. | To show amazement | 8 | 5 |
| 7. | To show doubt or uncertainty | 8 | 5 |
| 8. | To command | 6 | 3 |
| 9. | To request | 4 | 2 |
| 10. | To show anger | 3 | 2 |
| 11. | To show confusion | 3 | 2 |
| 12. | To introduce a new topic | 2 | 1 |
| 13. | To complain | 2 | 1 |
| 14. | To admonish | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 177 | 100 |

Table 1 shows 14 functions of rhetorical questions found in the novel *Five on a Treasure Island* by Enid Blyton, which are described in the following.

a. To confirm

The rhetorical questions with the function 'to confirm' are used most frequently in the novel. By using a rhetorical question the speaker wants to verify or confirm the information that s/he gets from the hearer. Here is an example of a dialogue containing a rhetorical question with the function 'to confirm' in the novel:

Daddy : "Cheer up, I dare say we'll find somewhere else just as good for you. And anyway, Mother and I won't be able to go with you this year. Has Mother told you?"

Anne : "No! Oh, Mother—**is it true? Can't you really come with us on our holidays?** You always do."

Mother : "Well, this time Daddy wants me to go to Scotland with him."

Context of situations:

Mother told the children that they cannot go on a holiday to Polseath and she does not know of any alternative places for their holiday. Hearing that the children cannot go on a holiday to Polseath, Daddy tried to cheer them up. He used the opportunity to tell the children that this time Daddy and Mother will go to Scotland, so the children will go on a holiday all by themselves. One of their children, Anne shocked and tried to confirm Daddy's statement to her mother.

b. To show surprise

The function 'to show surprise' is used to show the expression of the speaker after hearing the information from the hearer.

The example of the function 'to show surprise':

George's mother : "What are you going to do this afternoon?"

Anne : "George is going to take us out in a boat to see the wreck on the other side of the island"

George's mother : "George is going to take you! **Why George— what's come over you?** You've never taken a single person before, though I've asked you to dozens of times!"

George's mother : "Well, George, I must say I'm pleased that you want to try and do what your father said"

Context of situations:

Aunt Fanny or George's mother asked to Julian, Dick, and Anne about what they would do in the afternoon. Anne said that George would take them to see the wreck on the other side of the island. Aunt Fanny expressed her surprise because George had never invited someone to walk around the Kirrin Island and Aunt Fanny felt pleased with what George did to her cousins.

c. To emphasize a known fact

The function 'to emphasize a known fact' is used when the speaker gives a statement of fact.

The example of the function 'to emphasize a known fact':

George's father : "Any more noise like that and I shall keep you all in bed tomorrow! Georgina, keep your cousins quiet."

Julian : "**Your father's awfully fierce, isn't he?** I'm sorry I made that row. I didn't think."

George : "We'd better do something really quiet. Or he'll keep his word— and we'll find ourselves in bed tomorrow just when we want to explore the wreck."

Context of situations:

George, Julian, Dick, and Anne tried a simulation in their room as they would explore the wreck the next day, but they did not realize that they made a lot of noise and suddenly George's father came in to their room and told Georgina to keep her cousins quiet. Julian, Dick, and Anne already know that George's father has a bad temperament and Julian emphasizes the fact.

d. To suggest

The function 'to suggest' is used when the speaker gives the hearer a recommendation of something. The function is usually characterized by the speaker's using 'what about' in the beginning of the rhetorical question.

The example of the function 'to suggest':

George : "We can't wade out to the rocks, if that's what you mean. We might get there by boat— but we couldn't possibly risk it now, while the waves are so big. They won't go down today, that's certain. The wind is still too strong."

Julian : "**Well, what about tomorrow morning, early?** Before anyone has got to know about it? I bet if only we can get into the ship first, we can find anything there is to find!"

George : "Yes, I expect we could. I told you divers had been down and explored the ship as thoroughly as they could— but of course it is difficult to do that properly under water. We might find something they've missed. Oh, this is like a dream. I can't believe it's true that my old wreck has come up from the bottom of the sea like that! "

Context of situations:

Julian wants to see the wreck, but George suggests not today because the waves are so big. Julian proposes to see the wreck tomorrow morning and George agrees with Julian's suggestion.

e. To persuade

The function 'to persuade' is used when the speaker wants the hearer to do something together.

The example of the function 'to persuade':

George : "Well— we might perhaps go this afternoon when the tide is right down. The water is so calm and clear today. We could see a bit of it."

Anne : "Oh, how wonderful! I do so want to see a real live wreck!"

Dick : "Well, it won't be very alive. **I say, George— what about a bathe?**"

George : "I must go and get Timothy first"

Context of situations:

Julian, Dick, and Anne are very excited to see the wreck. George suggests that if they want to see the wreck, they can see it in the afternoon when the tide is right down. Dick is interested to swim because George said that the water is calm and clear and he persuades George to swim together, but George refuses it because he wants to get Timothy first.

f. To show amazement

The function 'to show amazement' is used when the speaker gives a comment on something that is really wonderful.

The example of the function 'to show amazement':

Julian : "There it is— that must be Kirrin Bay. Look, Dick— **isn't it lovely and blue?**"

Dick : "And look at the rocky little island guarding the entrance of the bay. I'd like to visit that."

Context of situations:

In their way to the Quentin's house at the Kirrin Island, Julian and Dick saw the Kirrin Bay. Julian expressed how great the landscape of Kirrin Bay was.

g. To show doubt or uncertainty

The function 'to show doubt or uncertainty' is used when the speaker feels uncertain with what the hearer wants to do or says.

The example of the function 'to show doubt or uncertainty':

Julian : "It's just as well it's there. No one can see it yet. Only when a boat goes out to fish will it be seen. And we shall be there as early as any boat goes out! I vote we get up at dawn."

George : "Well, that's pretty early. **Can you wake up?** I'm often out at dawn, but you're not used to it."

Julian : "Of course we can wake up. Well— here we are back at the beach again— and I'm jolly glad. My arms are awfully tired and I'm so hungry I could eat a whole larderful of things."

Context of situations:

Julian suggests if they wanted to see the wreck, it might be better that they went in early morning. George agreed with Julian's idea, but she felt uncertain that her three cousins could wake up in early morning.

h. To command

The function 'to command' is used when the speaker wants the hearer to do something for the speaker.

The example of the function 'to command':

- Julian** : "It's a bit on one side. Poor old ship. How it must hate lying there, gradually falling to pieces. George, I wish I could dive down and get a closer look at it."
- George** : "**Well, why don't you?** You've got your swimming trunks on. I've often dived down. I'll come with you, if you like, if Dick can keep the boat round about here. There's a current that is trying to take it out to sea. Dick, you'll have to keep working a bit with this oar to keep the boat in one spot."

Context of situations:

Julian said he wanted to dive down to see the wreck. George saw that Julian already wore his swimming trunks then George commanded him to dive down.

i. To request

The function 'to request' is used when the speaker wants the hearer to get what the speaker needs.

The example of the function 'to request':

- Julian** : "Of course! There are plenty of sticks on the ground below the tower! You know— where the jackdaws nest. They've dropped lots of sticks there."
- George** : "Good. We'll be able to make a nice fire with those. **Anyone got any paper to start it— or matches?**"
- Julian** : "I've got some matches. But nobody's got paper."
- Anne** : "Yes. The sandwiches are wrapped in paper. Let's undo them, and then we can use the paper for the fire."

Context of situations:

George looked for paper and matches to make a fire. She asked to her cousins to get paper and matches.

j. To show anger

The function 'to show anger' is used when the speaker feels angry with what the hearer does.

The example of the function 'to show anger':

- Anne** : "Oh yes!" said Anne, eagerly, anxious to stick up for her strange cousin. "We do like George, and we like Ti ..."
- She was just about to say that they liked Timothy too, when she got such a kick on her ankle that she cried out in pain and the tears came into her eyes.
- George's mother** : "George? **Why did you kick Anne like that when she was saying nice things about you?** Leave the table at once. I won't have such behavior."
- Anne** : "Oh, please call George back! She didn't mean to kick me. It was an accident."
- George's mother** : "Finish your meal. I expect George will go into the sulks now. Dear, dear, she is such a difficult child!"

Context of situations:

Aunt Fanny or George's mother asked Julian, Dick, and Anne how George treated them. Anne told Aunt Fanny that George treated them well and she almost told Aunt Fanny about Timothy, but George kicked Anne's ankle and she cried out in pain. Then Aunt Fanny showed her anger to George because Anne was saying nice things but George kicked her ankle.

k. To show confusion

The function 'to show confusion' is used when the speaker feels that both the speaker and the hearer do not know of something.

The example of the function 'to show confusion':

- Julian** : "There she is. Poor old wreck! I guess she's a bit more battered now. What a noise she made when she went crashing on to those rocks yesterday!"
- Anne** : "**How do we get to her?**" asked Anne, looking at the mass of ugly, sharp rocks all around.

Context of situations:

George, Julian, Dick, and Anne arrived at the wreck. The children looked at the wreck from their boat. Looking at the wreck, Anne expressed that she did not have an idea how they get into the wreck.

l. To introduce a new topic

The function 'to introduce a new topic' is used when the speaker wants to begin a conversation with the hearer.

The example of the function 'to introduce a new topic':

Alf, the fisher-boy, was surprised to see George so early. He was about to go with his father, fishing. He grinned at George.

Alf, the fisher-boy : "You going fishing, too? My, wasn't that a storm yesterday! I thought you'd be caught in it."

George : "We were," said George. "Come on, Tim! Come on!"

Context of situations:

George, Julian, Dick, and Anne were getting ready to see the wreck. At the beach they saw Alf who was about to go fishing with his father. Alf felt surprised to see George and he began a conversation with him.

m. To complain

The function 'to complain' is used when the speaker gives a negative comment on something.

The example of the function 'to complain':

George pulled the boat high up on the sand.

Julian : "Why so far up? The tide's almost in, isn't it? Surely it won't come as high as this."

George : "I told you I thought a storm was coming. If one does, the waves simply tear up this inlet and we don't want to lose our boat, do we?"

Context of situations:

George, Julian, Dick, and Anne arrived in the Kirrin Island. George pulled the boat far from the edge of the beach. Seeing George pulled the boat, Julian felt that George did not need to pull the boat high up on the sand because the tide was almost in.

n. To admonish

The function 'to admonish' is used when the speaker gives a critical statement on something.

The example of the function 'to admonish':

Anne : "How lovely it will be to wear shorts again. I'm tired of wearing school tunics. I want to wear shorts, or a bathing suit, and go bathing and climbing with the boys."

Mother : "Well, you'll soon be doing it. **Remember to put ready any toys or books you want, won't you?** Not many please, because there won't be a great deal of room."

Context of situations:

Anne feels really excited because she and her two brothers will go to Kirrin Island. She talks to herself what she and her brothers will do in Kirrin Island while preparing her stuff. Her mother heard what Anne said and she makes a critical comment to Anne that she should not bring many toys or books.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In the novel *Five on a Treasure Island*, there are nine new functions of rhetorical questions found, i.e. to confirm, to suggest, to persuade, to show amazement, to command, to request, to show anger, to show confusion, and to complain. There is one function of rhetorical question from Larson's theory that is not found in the conversations of the novel *Five on a Treasure Island*, that is, to express the speaker's evaluation. This paper reveals that the function of rhetorical question signifies the

intention of the use in the novel *Five on a Treasure Island* by Enid Blyton. Since this study uses a children novel, it is recommended that other researchers explore about the functions of rhetorical questions regarding face threatening act theory.

REFERENCES

- Larson, M. L. (1998). *Meaning –based translation: a guide to cross-language equivalent (2nd edition)*. New York: University Press of America.
- Moleong, L. J. (2005). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif*. Jakarta: Remaja Karya.
- Sutopo, H. B. (2006). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif*. Surakarta: UNS Press.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.