

## The Battle of Domination between Adults and Children in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Nandy Intan Kurnia \*

English Language Education Department, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Burhan Nurgiyantoro

Indonesian Language and Literature Education Department, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Widyastuti Purbani

English Language Education Department, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Received on: 15-5-2022

Accepted on: 27-10-2022

### Abstract

This research examines the issue of adults' domination of children, and also children empowerment in Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2007). The study framework is developed using Nodelman's orientalism in children's literature (1992), Anshori's children empowerment (2016), and Kurnia et al. (2021) power relations in children's literature. The research data were in the form of multimodal data related to adults' domination of children. Analysis is done with the basis of Halliday's (1978) interpersonal metafunction, in particular the system of Attitude. Analysis of visual interactive meaning by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) is also employed. The research found out that while adults exercise domination over children by controlling, ignoring, oppressing, and threatening, children show refusal to adults' domination and show empowerment through their bravery, knowledge and idea, unselfishness, and empathy. This research also highlights that these issues might not be apparent while being a pervasive issue in children's literature. Therefore, more egalitarian children literary works are needed to make children literature a safe space for its readers and not a ground to exercise power and instill ideology by adults.

**Keywords:** Domination, Children's empowerment, Children's literature, Graphic novel, Power relations.

### 1. Introduction

The depictions of power relations between adults and children can be easily found in various children's literary works, starting from the representation of their relationship within the nuclear family up to the relationship that they have at school, and many others. For example, in "Anecdote for Fathers: Showing How The Art of Lying May Be Taught" by William Wordsworth et al. (1798), the child has to conform his truth and worldview into one which his father or the adult around him would understand and deem sufficient. In an environment where children see the adults as the ones who can provide guidance and support, children are likely to follow and emulate their actions or words more than others. In fact, when children have adults to give them positive examples, they are less likely to be affected by the

---

© 2024 JJMLL Publishers/Yarmouk University. All Rights Reserved,

\* Doi: <https://doi.org/10.47012/jjml.16.1.11>

\* Corresponding Author: [nandy\\_intankurnia@uny.ac.id](mailto:nandy_intankurnia@uny.ac.id)

negative influences they encounter in their environment, especially if this specific adult is part of their immediate or extended family (Bryant and Zimmerman 2003). However, relationships between adults and children are prone to have power imbalances, and in most cases, it is not in favor of the children. The adults, as expressed by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978), behave similar to the colonizer and feel entitled to define, determine, supervise, regulate, and control the children, because they feel they have more knowledge and experience, while the children (in this case seen as the colonized) are considered lacking in said areas. Furthermore, many children's literary texts are written by adults, and those texts are examples of the adult way of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over children (Nodelman 1992).

In literary texts where the imbalance of power between the child character and the adult characters exists, children cannot be stimulated to think critically. Thus, the issue of power between adults and children needs to be openly discussed, to give a chance to children to know and learn about the reality of life (Meehan 2017). One of the ways to discuss this issue is by using children's literary texts.

This study analyses the power relations between adults and children, focusing on adults' domination of children as seen in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and on how children react or even fight against the adults' act of domination. Among children's literature authors, Kinney is one example of an American author who produces children's literary texts that attract not only children but also adults as his loyal readers since at first, he targeted adults as the readers of his series as he wanted to create stories that are funny and full of nostalgic childhood memories (Alter 2015). Through his graphic novel series, Kinney focused his attention on the humor inherent in the misguided choices taken by children, rather than providing moralistic lessons for his readers (Parker-Pope 2009).

The narrator of Kinney's series is the main character himself, a middle school student named Greg Heffley. He uses his journal to portray the struggle of a middle school student to cope with common problems that any child may have to face in their middle school years. Thus, parents need to read the books along with their children and discuss those books with them, so that their children can acquire a realistic idea about life and the struggles that they may encounter whether in middle school or in the daily life (Parker-Pope 2009).

Research in adults-children power relations has, so far, focused on the negative portrayal of adults-children relationships in children's literature (Techachoenrungrueang and Wanchai 2017) On the other hand, Kurnia et al. (2021) found that the power relations between adults and children in *Blubber* have negative and positive variations. Their research revealed that this kind of relationship can take the form of domination and egalitarian relationship.

There are studies conducted on graphic novels, including *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, with various focuses. They ranged from analyzing gendered themes in three graphic novels which was able to show the way those texts construct gender roles, and promoted heteronormative gender roles where boys and girls were portrayed as having traditional femininities and hegemonic masculinities (Taber and Woloshyn 2011), examining the experiences of four members of a book club which was intended to promote critical discussion on the topics of sociocultural gender through the use of Russell's graphic novel entitled *Dork*

## The Battle of Domination between Adults and Children in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

*Diaries: Tales from a Not-So-fabulous life* (Taber et al. 2012), discussing the types of reading the novels asked for and tried to show how they encourage innovative writing experiences (Rickard 2014), exploring the types of requests which were used by children at the age of eleven in peer and family contexts, and investigated the reason why they used those specific strategies (Nisa' and Ariyanti 2014), analyzing graphic novels' role in teaching English as a foreign language (Öz and Efecioglu 2015), and discussing the linguistic formations of an adapted text into a graphic novel format through transitivity (Rajendra 2020).

However, there is a gap in criticism, for, despite having a similar object of study, which is graphic novels, they did not talk about the power relation of adults – children and children empowerment graphic novel series by using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. Moreover, most of those researches are not focused on the intrinsic elements of the graphic novels since they paid more attention to the linguistic elements or the potency of those graphic novels to be used in the classroom setting.

Therefore, this study highlights the issue of adults' domination towards children and how children react, or even fight against the adults' act of domination, in Kinney's graphic novel entitled *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* since this kind of power relations is hidden and cannot easily be seen under the simple and humorous stories manner in which this graphic novel is presented. Related to this, Jumadi (2017) warns that people cannot solely analyze humorous discourse by relying on their understanding of the explicit meaning because the use of certain exposure in this kind of discourse often results in the ambiguity of meaning which can hide the true meaning of the discourse. At the same time, this study limit its analysis to the appraisal of children's attitude towards adults in the scope of the verbal elements, and the interactive meaning in the visual elements of the graphic novel.

Halliday (1978) explains interpersonal metafunction as an element in which the speakers interject themselves into the situation, express their opinions and judgments as well as influence others' attitudes and behavior. Interpersonal meaning is made up of Appraisal, Negotiation, and Involvement (Martin 1997; Martin & White 2005). Further, there are three sub-systems of appraisal, which are: Attitude, Involvement, and Graduation. This research only focused on the system of Attitude, which has three semantic components of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, in the basis that it helps in analyzing power relations behind children's attitudes toward adults (Martin & White 2005; Teo & Zhu 2018). This research also employs Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) analysis of visual interactive meaning, which comprises of: Representational meaning, Interactive meaning, and Compositional meaning.

At the same time, this study focuses on the verbal and visual elements of the object of study, especially the analysis of appraisal of the children's attitude towards adults, and the interactive meanings in the visual elements of the graphic novel. Thus, this study is unlike the previous studies and seeks to understand deeper the power relations between adults and children in terms of domination as seen in Jeff Kinney's work, through the following question:

1. How is adults' domination of children constructed?
2. How do children react to the depicted domination of adults?

## 2. Literature review

### *Adults-children power relations*

Shier (2012) elaborately describes that there is a misleading belief spread in the society where adults are always seen as intrinsically superior to children, and children are positioned as the inferior ones. As stated by Techacharoenrungrueang and Wanchai (2017), this kind of belief develops rapidly because sociologically adults have an advantage over children because they are more knowledgeable, experienced, and powerful. Children, on the other hand, are ostensibly born inferior, subordinate, inexperienced, and powerless. Thus, the children are vulnerable to being victimized by the adults' discriminative acts. In fact, Nodelman (1992) noted some parallels between the adult-child interaction and the relationship between the West and the East, which is connected to Said's *Orientalism*. Adults operate as agents who want to dominate children, and this dynamic is similar to how the West and the East interact. They behave and talk on behalf of children as if they are well aware of their needs and development. Moreover, children are regarded as innocent and thus, they must be educated, led, and steered to become "good" human beings who conform to adult expectations. As a result, adults exploit children's books to exert control and dominance over them.

Therefore, Nodelman (1992) proposed some attributes of disempowerment in children's literature. They are, among others, inherent inferiority, inherent femaleness, inherent adult-centered, and silencing and inherent silence. Based on Nodelman's disempowerment in children's literature, Anshori (2016) developed the concept of children empowerment in children's literature. They are thought empowerment, action empowerment, and feelings empowerment. 1) Thought Empowerment is divided into two parts. (a) Thought empowerment through children's knowledge and idea, related to the fact that children possess their own intelligence which can be seen through their knowledge and idea. (b) Thought empowerment through understanding others' feelings. In this case, children are seen as figures who can sense and see what happens around them, and they may have a greater understanding of the situation than adults. Thus, adults should not see them as innocent, naïve, and weak human beings. Hence, there is no need for adults to avoid giving information about difficult or complex issues to the children because they possess the capability to think, act, and show compassion, which can be classified as a form of children empowerment. 2) Action Empowerment. This type of empowerment is classified into 2, they are: (a) Action empowerment through children's bravery, which focuses on children's willingness to take a risk to follow their desires instead of adult's. (b) Action empowerment through doing favor for others. In this case, children need to know how they must communicate and cooperate with others, and understand that they have to develop mutual assistance in their own surroundings. 3) Feelings Empowerment. This is a type of empowerment that shows children's awareness and sensitivity to deal with any occurrences in life. It can be divided into 2, (a) Feeling empowerment through empathy, which means that children must learn about other people's gestures, expressions, signals, and behaviors in order to understand their true feelings; and (b) feeling empowerment through children's unselfishness. In this case, children show signs of concern for others.

## The Battle of Domination between Adults and Children in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

This research limits its analysis to the appraisal of children's attitude towards adults in the scope of the verbal elements, and the interactive meaning in the visual elements of the graphic novel. Halliday (1978) explain interpersonal metafunction as an element in which the speakers interject themselves into the situation, express their opinions and judgments as well as influence others' attitudes and behavior. Interpersonal meaning is made up of Appraisal, Negotiation, and Involvement (Martin 1997; Martin and White 2005). Further, there are three sub-systems of appraisal, which are: Attitude, Involvement, and Graduation. This research only focused on the system of Attitude, which has three semantic components of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, in the basis that it helps in analyzing power relations behind children's attitudes toward adults (Martin and White 2005; Teo and Zhu 2018).

This research also employs Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) analysis of visual interactive meaning, which comprises of: Representational meaning, Interactive meaning, and Compositional meaning. Visual meaning is similar to that of verbal meaning, and each type of meaning has different focuses. Representational focuses on the visual creation and circumstances, Interactive focuses on the nature of the relationship, and Composition focuses on the distribution of visual information among the elements (Unsworth 2008).

Kinney's children's characters are not portrayed as naïve figures since they are characterized as having a strong will to fulfill their desire and knowledge, even though it may be against the will of the adults' characters. Similar to the children's characters in *Matilda* and *Blubber* who dare to express their opinions (Martens 2015; Kurnia et.al 2021). Thus, by having such children characters, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* shows that there might be a battle of domination in the power relation between adult and children.

### 3. Method

This study is a qualitative descriptive study, which provided textual descriptions of the phenomena under study because this research focuses on the interpretation of the text instead of calculations or measurements. The objectives of this research were to elaborate inductively on the content of the graphic novel that shows the issue of adults' domination of children by the use of critical content analysis.

The source of data is Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* which was published in 2007 by Amulet Books. The data of the study were in the form of verbal and visual elements related to the topic of adults' domination of children. A total of 175 data were manually collected from the object of the study.

Several steps were followed in conducting this study, namely (1) thoroughly reading and rereading the graphic novel as the primary data source of this study to understand the issues presented in the text; (2) formulating the research questions; (3) collecting the data by writing and typing down the multimodal data from the graphic novel which were relevant to answer the research questions; (4) transferring data from the primary source into the datasheet; (5) the data were validated to check that all data matched the context; and (6) the next step was interpreting the meaning of the data.

In analyzing the object of the study, the writers use Nodelman's orientalism in children's literature (1992), Anshori's children empowerment (2016), and Kurnia, et al. (2021) power relations in children's literature as a guide. The analytical construct can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Analytical Construct

No.	Quotation/ Description	Power Relations Category	Sub-Category	Children Empowerment Category
1.	Children characters are controlled/ oppressed/ ignored/ threatened/ given punishment by adults' characters/ children characters are being dependent on adults help/ permission	Domination	Children are controlled	
Children are oppressed				
Children are ignored				
Children are given punishment				
Children are threatened				
Children are dependent				
2.	Children characters are described as capable of empowering themselves through their knowledge and idea or understanding others' feelings /through their Bravery or doing a favor for others/through empathy or showing unselfishness/ through their flawed characters and three-dimensional characters			Thought Empowerment
			Action Empowerment	
			Feeling Empowerment	
			Characters Empowerment	

#### 4. Results

This section discusses the presentation of adults' domination of children, and children empowerment as their reaction towards adults' domination, as seen in Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. The total occurrences of each type found are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** The emergence of adults' domination of children in Jeff Kinney's graphic novel

Power Relation category and Sub-category		Diary of a Wimpy Kid Occurrence	
<b>Domination</b>	Children are controlled	52	29.71%
	Children are ignored	24	13.71%
	Children are oppressed	16	9.14%
	Children are given punishment	8	4.57%
	Children are threatened	30	17.14%
	Children refuse adult's dominance	28	16.00%
	Children are dependent	17	9.71%
<b>TOTAL</b>		175	100.00%

## The Battle of Domination between Adults and Children in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Based on the analysis, domination is exercised 175 times in Kinney's book. Table 2 shows that concerning adults' domination over children, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2007) category of domination is dominated by the subcategory of children are controlled, with a 52 frequency of occurrence. Whereas the subcategory of children are given punishment is on the lowest level of occurrence, with 8 times of occurrence.

**Table 3:** The emergence of adults' domination, and children empowerment in *Jeff Kinney's Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

<b>Power Relations Category</b>	<b>Power Relations Sub-Category</b>	<b>Children Empowerment Category</b>	<b>Children Empowerment Sub-Category</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	
<b>Domination</b>	Children refuse adult's dominance	Thought Empowerment	Children's knowledge and idea	14	46.6%
		Action Empowerment	Children's bravery	11	36.6%
		Feeling Empowerment	Children's empathy and unselfishness	5	16.6%

Table 3 shows that although adults try to dominate children, children show their refusal towards the adults' domination by showing three kinds of empowerment, namely thought, action, and feeling empowerment. The highest level of occurrence is reached by children empowerment through thought empowerment by the means of children's knowledge and idea, with 14 times of occurrence.

### 4.1 Adults' domination over children

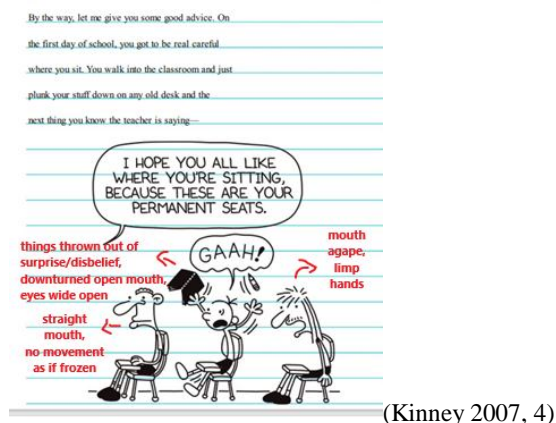
#### a. Children are controlled

In *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (2007), the form of adults' domination over children appears when the adults try to control the children. For example:

Dad said there was no way he was getting me a dollhouse... (Kinney 2007, 117).

Greg made a wish list in which one of the things he wanted was a dollhouse. However, his father strongly object to getting him one because a dollhouse carries a feminine connotation. By forbidding Greg from playing with a typical girl's toys, Greg's dad exercise his control over Greg's gender expression, gender identity, and understanding or perception on gender. This also shows shows that children have no power, at least financially, in the typical adult-child relationship. As explained by Marthens (2015), adults have more advantages, especially in terms of finances. In most cases, children could not manage their finance even when they have their own income as it is regulated by law. Children are restricted in managing aspects of their lives because the adults deemed them incapable of it.

Another example of children being controlled is when Greg and his classmates were not given much option on their seating arrangement in the classroom. Greg was seated between two of his classmates whom he is not fond of: Chris Hosey and Lionel James. This was decided because he puts his stuffs on the table between the two.



The three students were drawn with various unhappy expressions and their displeasure about the permanent seating arrangement is emphasized by Greg's surprised scream of "GAAH!". As shown in the speech bubble, it was the teacher who decided on not only where the children should sit, but presumably other rules in the classroom too. Therefore, the classroom environment is dominated or ruled by the adult figure, the teacher, and the students have to obey the rules for they are the children or the dominated in this relationship. It is also apparent in the phrasing of the teacher's words of "I HOPE YOU ALL LIKE WHERE YOU'RE SITTING, BECAUSE THESE ARE YOUR PERMANENT SEATS" that the teacher leaves no room for argument or complain. The students were expected to comply without having any right to show their displeasure, even though the teacher knows the seating arrangement would cause dissatisfaction among some or all the students. As explained by Martens (2015), Western children are under the shadows of adults, thus they are expected to be passive (Jenks 1996).

#### b. Children are ignored

Another form of domination by adults towards children is the disregard of the opinions or thoughts of children, for the adults might unconsciously or consciously believe that children's opinions are unworthy. The example of this subcategory is:

I had to explain that the only way to get totally bulked up is to get the kind of high-tech machines they have at the gym, **but Mom didn't want to hear it.** (Kinney 2007, 88)

Firstly, as emphasized by the bolded phrase, children are put into an inferior position because they cannot have an income and have to rely on their parents for their needs and wants. This gives the parents control to manage what to get their children, and even disregarding the children's preference over what they want to buy as shown in the example. Indeed, what Greg wanted was something presumably expensive and would not actually help Greg any more than going to the gym. However, rather than saying no and explaining her reasoning to Greg so that he can have perspective, the mother brush Greg aside. Greg was dismissed and disrespected by one of the primary adult figures in his life, his mother, in the way that his opinion or choice is not being considered or deemed important. This kind of action done by



## The Battle of Domination between Adults and Children in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Greg's mother shows that she has done an emotional abuse of her own child which, as elaborated by Carey (2018), can harm the development of children.

### c. Children are oppressed

Children might easily become adults' targets of oppression because when compared to adults, children's age, size, and experience are generally lacking. There are several occasions in the book where it is shown that the children are oppressed by the adults because of the aforementioned reasons. For example, when Greg is forced to join the Gifted reading group by his mother while he wants to join the lower level:

Mom is real **tight with our principal**, so she stepped in and made sure I got put in the Gifted group again. (Kinney 2007, 14)

Just as Greg's mother made most of the decisions at home, so is the principal in school. This is why the closeness of Greg's mother with the principal can benefit her in making a sway in the principal's decision on Greg. They both collaborate on showing their power over Greg by making him do as they please without room for expressing opinions or refusals.

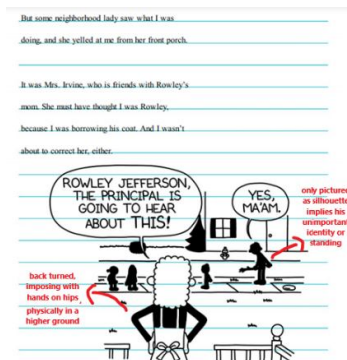
Moreover, Greg is also forced to do sporty activities outdoor by his father and is kicked out of the house.

Every time Dad kicks me out of the house to do something sporty, I just go up to Rowley's and play my video games there. (Kinney 2007, 26)

Greg's father oppressed Greg by forcing him to do something he does not like. It is also inferred that Greg is not given any choice in the matter, for he is kicked out of the house more than once. This means that Greg's father consistently tries to make Greg become sportier or at least do more outdoor activities. To escape this oppression, Greg decided to go to his friend's house and do what he actually wants: to play video games.

### d. Children are threatened

In making the children obey their orders and instructions, adults sometimes use force and threats. Adults may justify this as a means of taking care of children. However, children may feel threatened and unsafe by the adults' actions. This can be seen in the example below:



(Kinney 2007, 181)

Greg was doing a patrol work while wearing Rowley's coat in the neighborhood. However, one of the neighbor, Mrs. Irvine, readily assumed that he is making trouble. She threatened Greg, thinking he was Rowley, by saying that she will report his action to the principal. While Mrs. Irvine was drawn only showing her back, her hands were positioned on her hips. Paired with her exclamation, it can be inferred that she posed a threatening stance and wanted to instill a feeling of fear or unsafety in Greg so he would stop what he was doing. Greg did not even try to correct her because of the inherent inferiority and the power imbalance in the interaction.

**e. Children are dependent**

It is unavoidable that children have to depend on adults in some aspects. This fact is then exploited by some adults to dominate children. For example:

Tonight was the opening night of the Crossland High School haunted house, and **I got Mom to agree to take me and Rowley.** (Kinney 2007, 50)

As shown, Greg needs to ask for his mother's help to go to a haunted house he wants to visit with Rowley. Either because of distance or the time of the occasion, Greg's success to go to Crossland High School haunted house is dependent on the willingness of Greg's mother, the adult, to take them.

**f. Children refuse adult's dominance**

Adults try to take control over children by dominating them. However, sometimes children do not just accept this domination and try to retaliate. In this case, adults' attempt at exercising power over children is considered unsuccessful.

But if she thinks I'm going to write down my "feelings" in here or whatever, she's crazy. (Kinney 2007, 1)

The excerpt from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2007)* above shows that while Greg could only accept the diary bought by his mother, he refuse to conform to his mom's wish for him to write his feelings inside the diary. He wants to emphasize that while he might not have freedom of actions, he can still have freedom of thoughts from the adults around him. This shows his refusal of his mother's domination.

*4.2 Children's reaction toward adults' dominance*

Either intentionally or unintentionally, characters in children's literature are often being used as tools for the adults to show and incorporate their power over the children and influence them through said literature. Through these characters, children are taught to behave well and obey all the adults' orders. However, unlike some literary works, an in-depth study of Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* reveals how the children characters in the story, especially the main character, fight against disempowerment by resisting adults' domination.

**a. Thought empowerment through children's knowledge and idea**

The other thing **I want to clear up right away is that this was mom's idea, not mine.** (Kinney 2007, 1)

## The Battle of Domination between Adults and Children in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

The clause in bold shows Greg's emphasis that he rejected the idea of buying a diary and pointed out that it was his Mom's doing. This case shows Greg's effort to fight against his mother's dominance by having his own thoughts regarding his new diary. He knows that commonly people see diaries as something stereotypically feminine, and thus he refuses his mother's decision of giving him a diary for he has a masculine identity.

On another occasion, Greg one more time tries to rebel against his mother's domination:



(Kinney 2007, 14)

The above scene happens when Greg's mother forces him to join the Advanced reading group. Since Greg knows that he will face a lot more problems in that group, then he decides to find a way to solve this matter by trying to cover up his skills. Greg's determination to join the Easy group and his effort to get what he wants is a form of knowledge and idea to refuse his mom's expectations and wishes.

### **b. Action empowerment through children's bravery**

Greg ignoring his father's wish to follow his desire can also be seen as an example of how children's characters empower themselves through "action empowerment".

Every time Dad kicks me out of the house to do something sporty, I just go up to Rowley's and play my video games there (Kinney 2007, 26)

Instead of doing as his father wishes, Greg went to Rowley's house to do what he wants. This indicates that even though his father might become more disappointed in him, because he was kicked out beforehand, Greg prefers to do as he wishes which is to play video games instead of sports and risk himself getting punished if his dad found out. Greg is empowered by his brave choice to be an individual and not submitting to his dad's control.

One more time Greg tries to refuse adults' domination, in this case, his mother:

I told Mom there was no way we were taking Manny with us, because we were going to hit 152 houses in three hours. And plus, we were going to be on Snake Road, which is way too dangerous for a little kid like Manny. (Kinney 2007, 66)

Greg is not only brave to express his right to refuse his mother's request, but also clever in standing his ground with careful maneuvering to not directly upset the adults around him, which are his mother and teacher.

### **c. Feeling empowerment through children's empathy and unselfishness**

In trying to resist adults' dominance, children are not limited by only having their thoughts or actions to display resistance. Children can also show their disagreement with adults' actions or beliefs by taking their own stance in their inner world. Children own their feelings, and having their independence of their feelings is exhibited in children showing feelings, which are not influenced by adults' ideology.

He told me I was grounded from playing video games for two weeks, which is about what I expected. I guess I should be glad that's all he did. (Kinney 2007, 38)

On the data above, it is apparent that Greg knows what he did was deserving of punishment, one that he does not necessarily want, but still expect. However, the second sentence in which he expressed that he should be glad because his punishment are not worse should be scrutinized. This is because he indicated that his father has a lot of power over him, to the point that he cannot have any say and should just accept whatever his father given him. Clearly, there is an imbalance of power between Greg's father and his own child. Nonetheless, Greg adopt an attitude of acceptance and unselfishness by looking at the bright side of the situation, which is that the punishment can be worse.

Of course, it is not right for a children to be grateful receiving punishment from their parents. Even so, by displaying a positive attitude and feeling, Greg seized his independence of feelings and refused to be intimidated or cowered by the power of his father.

## **5-Discussion**

In children's literature, the interaction between adults and children is frequently represented. Starting with a picture that displays a happy connection between the two, to a depiction that portrays a relationship full of inequity, the depiction is quite different. If there is an imbalance of power relations between children and adults, problems might occur because inequality of power relations is a source of injustice. It is clear that children are in a vulnerable position as a result of this. The fragility of children's position in regard to adults' can be observed in the decisions taken concerning children's literature, since children's reading material is largely determined by adults' perceptions of children and their place in society's hierarchy. In fact, many children's literary texts are written by adults. Therefore, as Nodelman (1992) suggests, those sorts of texts are examples of the adult way of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over children. He further explains the mistaken belief of adults regarding the meaning of children and childhood has become their framework in creating children's literature. Their misconception that children are incapable of learning, thinking, and speaking for themselves leads to the inaccurate portrayal of children, and most likely those children characters will be portrayed as inferior to adults to indirectly preach to children about their position in society. In short, those literary texts may be used as a site for the doctrine of ideologies and power relations.

In light of the above case, thus, it is critical to provide children with high-quality literary texts that can serve as "windows of knowledge", allowing them to gain an understanding of their place in human relationships and on a variety of topics such as various types of conditions, images, and human personality types (Botelho and Rudman 2009, 1). At the same time, children need to be exposed to

## The Battle of Domination between Adults and Children in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

children's literature that empowers them, because literary works that exclusively offer an idealized picture of the world are unable to provide readers with a realistic picture of life. Children, in reality, require an empowered child character who can solve problems, advocate for themselves, and achieve success through their own efforts. As a result, adults, particularly parents and educators, must assist children in gaining their freedom and empowerment. For example, by allowing them to select their own literary texts and by providing opportunities for them to explore a variety of issues, including the dark and taboo ones like power imbalance, and by being open to questions and discussions about how power works in various settings such as the classroom, school, and society (Paul 2018).

In the case of Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, some parts of the story need to be read carefully and critically. For example, in some scenes, the main characters are portrayed as dependent, and in another case, they are threatened by the adults' characters without having any chance to defend themselves since they are considered as having a lower standing than those adults. This case can be also categorized as an example of oppression. The oppression itself can be defined as any kind of unfair situation in which one group continuously refuses to acknowledge another group's access to the resources owned by the society, for example in terms of "race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age and ethnicity..." (Collins 2000, 4).

Furthermore, the portrayal of how children are innocent figures who always need other people's help and are powerless in front of adults can be falsely thought of as the best model by children since they are portrayed as the best in a lot of children's literature. Therefore, it is critical to study a wide range of texts in relation to the topic of identities and social worlds (Silvers et al. 2010). Thus, children's empowerment is an important topic to discuss in relation to literature, and adults must allow children to read any literature, including graphic novels. Also, a wider opportunity for children to discuss issues such as "power, race, gender, and class" should be provided in order to prepare children to be able to empower themselves to effect change (Norris et al. 2012). As this study has shown, Kinney's graphic novel gives an opportunity for the children's character to refuse the domination of the adults' character. They use their bravery, knowledge, and idea to fight the domination.

### **Conclusion**

This research found out that although there are some forms of adults' domination over children in the object of the study, yet the data show that the children characters try to resist the domination of adults, which at the same time shows the existence of children empowerment. The forms of children empowerment are first, thought empowerment through children's knowledge and idea; second, action empowerment through children's bravery; and third, feeling empowerment through children's unselfishness and empathy. Therefore, it is obvious that Kinney is trying to give a chance for his children's characters to express their responses to the adults' domination. This kind of action by child characters is necessary to be depicted in children's literary works so that these characters can no longer be used as tools by the adults to colonize the children.

## الكفاح الهمنوي بين الكبار والأطفال في عمل جيف كيني تحت الموضوع

ناندي إنتان كورنيا

قسم تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة يوغجاكارتا، إندونيسيا

بورهان نور غياننتور

قسم تعليم اللغة الإندونيسيا وأدبها، جامعة يوغجاكارتا، إندونيسيا

ويدياستوتي فورباني

قسم تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة يوغجاكارتا، إندونيسيا

### الملخص

هذا البحث يبحث في قضية هيمنة الكبار على الأطفال، وكذلك تمكين الأطفال في المصورة Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2007) لجيف كيني. وطُورَ إطار البحث باستخدام نظرية الاستشراق لنودلمن في أدب الأطفال (1992)، وتمكين الأطفال من قبل أنصاري (2016)، والمفهوم الذي قدمه كورنيا وأصحابه (2021) حول علاقة القوة في أدب الأطفال. وبيئات البحث تتشكل في بيئات متعددة الوسائط تتعلق يمنة الكبار على الأطفال. أُجْرِيَ التحليل على أساس نظرية interpersonal metafunction لهاليداي (1978)، وبخاصة نظام السلوك، كما وظف البحث نظرية تحليل المعنى المرئي التفاعلي لـ (كريس وفان ليووين) (2006). واكتشف أن الكبار عند القيام بالسيطرة على الأطفال من خلال التحكم والتجاهل والتنمر والتهديد، يظهر الأطفال مقاومة لهيمنة الكبار ويظهرون التمكين من خلال الشجاعة والمعرفة والأفكار ونكران الذات والتعاطف. ويسلط هذا البحث الضوء أيضاً على أن هذه القضايا قد لا تكون واضحة للعيان على الرغم من أن هذه القضايا تنتشر انتشاراً كبيراً في أدب الأطفال. لذلك، هناك حاجة إلى أدب الأطفال الأكثر مساواة لجعل أدب الأطفال مكاناً آمناً للقراء وليس مكاناً للكبار لممارسة علاقات القوة والغرس الأيديولوجي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهيمنة، تمكين الأطفال، أدب الأطفال، الروايات المصورة، علاقة القوة.

## References

- Aiello, Giorgia. 2006. Theoretical Advances in Critical Visual Analysis: Perception, Ideology, Mythologies and Social Semiotics. *Journal of Visual Literacy* 26 (2): 89-102.
- Alter, Alexandra. 2015, May 22. The bookstore built by Jeff Kinney, the 'wimpy kid'. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/business/media/the-bookstore-built-by-jeff-kinney-the-wimpy-kid.html#:~:text=Over%20the%20last%20eight%20years,in%20print%2C%20in%2045%20languages>. (accessed March 31, 2022).
- Anshori, Adam. 2016. The Empowerment of Children in Edith Nesbit's *The Railway Children*. English Review: *Journal of English Education* 4 (2): 243-254.
- Bezemer, Jeff, and Kate Cowan. 2020. Exploring Reading in Social Semiotics: Theory and Methods. *Education 3-13 - International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education* 49: 107-118. DOI: 10.1080/03004279.2020.1824706
- Botelho, Maria José and Masha Kabakow Rudman. 2009. *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature: Mirrors, Windows, and Doors*. New York: Routledge.
- Bryant, Alison, and Marc Zimmerman. 2003. Role Models and Psychosocial Outcomes among African American Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research* 18 (1): 36-67.
- Carey, Elea. 2018. Child Emotional and Psychological Abuse. *Healthline*. <https://www.healthline.com/health/child-neglect-and-psychological-abuse> (accessed December 5, 2021).
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Halliday, Michael Alexander Kirkwood. 1978. *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. Baltimore: University Park Press.
- Jenks, Chris. 2005. *Childhood: Critical Concepts in Sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Jumadi. 2017. *Wacana, Kekuasaan, dan Pendidikan bahasa*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Kinney, Jeff. 2007. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. New York: Amulet Books-ABRAMS.
- Kress, Gunther, and Theo van Leeuwen. 2006. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kurnia, Nandy Intan, Widyastuti Purbani, and Tri Sugiarto. 2021. Adults - Children Power Relations in Judy Blume's *Blubber*. *Diksi* 29 (2): 113-125. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21831/diksi.v29i2>
- Martens, A. 2015. Ideology in children's literature: Critical discourse analysis of the adult-child power relation in Roald Dahl's *Matilda*. Bachelor Thesis. University of Amsterdam.
- Martin, James Robert. 1997. Analyzing genre: Functional parameters. *Genre and Institutions: Social Processes in the Workplace and School*, F. Christie and J. R. Martin (Eds.), 3-39. London: Cassell.
- Martin, James Robert, and Peter Robert Rupert White. 2005. *The language of evaluation: appraisal in English*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Meehan, Sophie. 2017. Too much too soon? Dark themes in children's books. *Tales for Tadpoles*. <https://talesfortadpoles.ie/blogs/news/too-much-too-soon-dark-themes-in-childrens-books>. (accessed January 11, 2021).

- Nabifar, Nesa, and Mir Saeid Baghermousavi. 2015. Social Semiotics Evaluation of *English One* by Gender. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 2 (2): 74-86.
- Nisa', Agustina Alida Khoirotnun, and Lisetyo Ariyanti. 2014. Request Strategies of Children Character in *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid*. *Language Horizon* 2 (1): 0-216
- Nodelman, Perry. 1992. The other: Orientalism, Colonialism, and Children's Literature. *A Collection of Journals on Children's Literature: Project Muse*. The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Norris, Katherine, Lisa Lucas, and Catherine Prudhoe. 2012. Examining Critical Literacy: Preparing Preservice Teachers to Use Critical Literacy in the Early Childhood Classroom. *Multicultural Education* 19 (2): 59-62
- Öz, Huseyin, and Emine Efecioglu. 2015. Graphic Novels: An Alternative Approach to Teach English as a Foreign Language. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* 11 (1): 75-90.
- Parker-pope, Tara. 2009. Behind the 'Wimpy Kid' Phenomenon. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/13/health/13well.html?searchResultPosition=10> (accessed June 26, 2021).
- Paul, M. C. M. 2018. *Critical literacy pedagogy: Establishing the factors of critical literacy instruction through a mixed methods approach*. Raleigh: North Carolina State University.
- Rajendra, Thusha Rani. 2020. Transitivity Choices in an Abridged Text: The Case of a Graphic Novel. *Studies in English Language and Education* 7 (2): 544-557.
- Rickard, R. L. 2014. Wimps, dorks, and reluctant readers; redefining literacy in multimodal middle grade diary books. MA's theses and PhD diss., *Eastern Michigan University*. <http://commons.emich.edu/theses/569>. (accessed January 11, 2022).
- Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon.
- Shier, Harry. 2012. What does "equality" mean for children in relation to adults? <https://www.worldwewant2015.org/pt-br/node/284010> (accessed April 2, 2021).
- Silvers, Penny, Mary Shorey, and Linda Crafton. 2010. Critical Literacy in a Primary Multiliteracies Classroom: The Hurricane Group. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* 10(4) 379-409. Sage Publication. Doi: 10.1177/1468798410382354
- Taber, Nancy, and Vera Woloshyn. 2011. Dumb dorky Girls and Wimpy Boys: Gendered Themes in Diary Cartoon Novels. *Children's Literature in Education* 42: 226-242. DOI 10.1007/s10583-011-9131-6
- Taber, Nancy, Vera Woloshyn and Laura Lane. 2012. Food Chains, Frenemies, and Revenge Fantasies: Relating to Life in a Girl's Book Club. *Brock Education* 22 (1): 41-55
- Techacharoenrungrueang, Suparak, and Mesathida Wancha. 2017. Power relations between adults and children in Thai children literature: The critical discourse analysis revisited. *The 10<sup>th</sup> International Conference of HUSOC Academic research 2017*. Chiang Rai Rajabhat University.
- Teo, Peter, and Jianbin Zhu. 2018. A Multimodal Analysis of Affect and Attitude Education in China's English Textbooks. Stockholm University Library. DOI: 10.1515/mc-2017-0014



The Battle of Domination between Adults and Children in Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

Unsworth, Len. 2008. Multiliteracies and metalanguage: Describing image/text relations as a resource for negotiating multimodal texts. In D. Leu, J. Corio, M. Knobel, & C. Lankshear (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on New Literacies*. New Jersey: Erlbaum.

Wordsworth, William., Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Edward Dowden. 1889. "Anecdote for fathers showing how the art of lying may be taught". *Lyrical Ballads: Reprinted from The First Edition of 1789*. London: Duckworth and Co.