



The Use of Tag Question in a Fairy Tale

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of tag questions in fairy tale dialogues, specifically in the story *Why Doesn't the Rabbit Have a Long Tail?*, motivated by the limited research on this linguistic phenomenon in contemporary children's literature. The objectives are to identify the forms of tag questions, analyze their communicative functions in character interactions, and explore their impact on meaning conveyance, character development, and narrative dynamics. Employing a qualitative descriptive method with a library research approach, data were collected from the fairy tale text and supported by relevant academic sources, then analyzed pragmatically and syntactically to gain a comprehensive understanding of tag question usage. Based on the analysis of the fairy tale, it was found that the explicit use of formal tag questions is very limited, appearing only around four to five times. However, reflective questions functioning similarly are more prevalent and play a crucial role in expressing the protagonist's inner conflict, fostering emotional engagement with readers, and reinforcing the moral message of the story. Therefore, tag questions and reflective interrogatives serve as effective linguistic strategies that enrich dialogue, enliven characters, and make the narrative more interactive and meaningful. This provides important contributions to linguistic studies in literature and benefits writers and educators in children's literature.

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INTRODUCTION

Fairy tales are a form of oral and written literature rich in cultural values, morals, and linguistic aesthetics. Beyond serving as a medium for entertainment and moral education, fairy tales incorporate a variety of language structures used by their characters to bring the story to life and develop characterization. One particularly interesting linguistic phenomenon in fairy tales is the use of tag questions. Tag questions combine a declarative statement with a short interrogative phrase at the end of the sentence, typically functioning to confirm information, seek agreement, or attract the listener's attention. In Indonesian, common tag question particles include "kan?", "bukan?", and "ya?". The use of tag questions in fairy tales not only facilitates

interaction between characters but also reflects attitudes, emotions, and social relationships, making it a compelling subject for linguistic analysis. Tag questions play an essential role in building interactions among characters and enhancing rhetorical effects within fairy tale dialogues, which in turn enliven the narrative dynamics and enrich the reader's or listener's experience.

The use of tag questions allows characters in fairy tales to express various communicative functions, such as indicating doubt, seeking confirmation, softening statements, or inviting responses from other characters or the audience. Therefore, tag questions contribute not only to the structural aspects of language but also to its pragmatic dimension how language is used effectively in social communication contexts. Linguistic studies on dialogues in fairy tales provide important insights into the function of language as a medium of storytelling as well as an expression of culture, ideology, and complex social communication strategies. A pragmatic approach is especially relevant for examining how tag questions function in the communication context among characters, while syntactic analysis helps to understand the sentence structure and its influence on the conveyed meaning. The combination of these approaches allows for a comprehensive and in-depth study of tag questions' usage within fairy tale narratives.

Although research on tag questions has been extensively conducted in various communication contexts such as everyday conversation, speeches, or non-literary narratives, studies focusing specifically on the use of tag questions in fairy tales especially modern Indonesian fairy tales remain very limited. Hence, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of the forms, functions, and meanings of tag questions in fairy tale dialogues. In doing so, the research will not only contribute theoretically to the advancement of literary linguistics but also broaden understanding of how language functions within literary works as a reflection of culture and interpersonal communication.

Based on this background, the study focuses on several key questions: First, what are the forms of tag questions that appear in fairy tale dialogues? Second, what communicative functions do tag questions serve in interactions among characters? Third, how does the use of tag questions influence meaning delivery, character development, and narrative dynamics within fairy tales? These questions provide a foundation for exploring tag questions as linguistic elements that are not only structural but also pragmatically significant in constructing lively and meaningful literary discourse.

The objectives of this study are to analyze the forms of tag questions used in fairy tale dialogues, identify their communicative functions in character interactions, and examine how tag questions contribute to meaning conveyance, character building, and narrative development. Through these objectives, the research is expected to provide a

comprehensive and profound understanding of tag questions as a linguistic phenomenon involving pragmatic and syntactic aspects within literary narratives, particularly fairy tales.

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich linguistic research, particularly in pragmatics and syntax, by expanding knowledge about the use of tag questions in literary texts, especially in fairy tales. It also aims to broaden understanding of language functions in literary discourse, particularly regarding the role of tag questions in character interaction and complex narrative structures. Practically, the findings may serve as an important reference for educators, literary scholars, and critics in understanding linguistic strategies used in fairy tales and their effects on readers' experience. Moreover, this research could inspire writers and storytellers to use tag questions effectively to enhance dialogue realism and capture the attention of readers or listeners, making fairy tales more vivid and engaging.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with a library research approach. This method was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of the use of tag questions in Indonesian-language fairy tale dialogues. The primary data were collected from written modern fairy tales, while supporting data came from various academic sources such as books, journal articles, theses, and reliable online materials. Data collection involved carefully reading the texts and noting all tag questions found in character dialogues. Data recording sheets were used to document the forms and functions of tag questions, and transcription tools helped convert verbal data into text for easier analysis. Tag questions were classified based on forms such as "*kan?*", "*ya?*", and "*tidak?*", as well as their communicative functions, including seeking confirmation, persuasion, or softening statements. This approach was supported by a literature review to strengthen the theoretical framework and to compare findings with previous studies, resulting in a comprehensive and valid analysis. The study also examined the context of tag question usage within fairy tales to understand how they contribute to character development, the flow of dialogue, and the narrative meaning, with brief discussions on semantic and sociolinguistic aspects to support the understanding of the pragmatic functions of tag questions in children's literature.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, triangulation techniques were used by comparing data from various sources and consulting language and literature experts. This aimed to guarantee that the analysis accurately and deeply reflects the phenomenon of tag question usage in modern Indonesian fairy tales. By combining empirical data with literature review, this study not only provides a clear description of the forms and functions of tag questions but also makes an important contribution to linguistics, especially in pragmatics and syntax within literary contexts. The results are

expected to benefit educators, researchers, literary critics, and language practitioners interested in exploring language dynamics in children's literary works, particularly in enhancing understanding of communication strategies used in fairy tale character dialogues.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Fairy tales are a popular form of storytelling for children, often used to convey moral values in engaging and memorable ways. This paper focuses on a single story titled *Why Doesn't the Rabbit Have a Long Tail?*, available on Amazon Kindle. The story is analyzed through its use of reflective questions that reveal the rabbit's inner conflict, while also inviting readers to emotionally connect and think critically about the character's journey.

In the story, the rabbit who once had a long and beautiful tail feels jealous of other animals such as deer and monkeys. He wonders, "Why can't I be like them?" and "Am I not good enough?" (these reflective questions can be found in Chapter 2, early section). These questions reveal his dissatisfaction and growing self-doubt. The rabbit's tail was once his pride, making him feel special compared to other animals in the forest. However, as he starts to compare himself with others, his confidence fades. He watches the deer effortlessly eating fruit from tall branches and the monkey nimbly jumping from tree to tree. Envy clouds his view of his own strengths, like his speed and sharp hearing. Instead, he only sees what he lacks compared to others.

Driven by the desire to prove himself, the rabbit attempts to change by climbing a tree using his tail something unnatural for him. Enthusiastically, he ties his tail to a branch and tries to pull himself up. But his body is too heavy, and his tail is not strong enough to support him. Suddenly, the tail snaps off, and he falls to the ground. This painful experience affects him physically and emotionally. He questions himself again, "Why did this happen to me? Was I foolish to try?" Tag-like questions such as "I'm too heavy, aren't I?" or "My tail isn't strong enough, is it?" appear during this moment (found in Chapter 3, middle paragraph), adding depth to the character and encouraging silent responses from readers. This failure becomes a turning point in his life.

From this painful lesson, the rabbit learns that not everything possessed by others suits him, and trying to be like someone else without recognizing his own strengths can cause harm. The tail, once a symbol of pride, is now a short stub. Yet, this loss helps him understand self-acceptance. He realizes every creature has unique qualities and strengths, and that constant comparison only brings sadness. From then on, the rabbit changes his perspective. Instead of asking, "Why am I not like them?" he asks, "What can I do well as myself?" His short tail becomes a symbol of an important life lesson: knowing, loving, and appreciating oneself is the first step toward true happiness. The story teaches both animals and humans that self-reflection matters more than the

obsession with being someone else (Mark, J. J., 2024; this moral lesson is explained in the final section).

The use of questions in this story, including those resembling tag questions, serves not only to express the rabbit's feelings and thoughts but also to engage readers actively in the narrative. These questions create a dialogic atmosphere, making the story feel more alive and personal. The questioning technique strengthens the delivery of the moral message and builds an emotional connection between the character and the reader. Reflective questions such as "Why can't I be like them?" or "Am I not good enough?" reveal the rabbit's internal struggle and invite readers to contemplate the meaning behind his actions. Tag-like questions such as "I'm too heavy, aren't I?" or "My tail isn't strong enough, is it?" add depth to the character and encourage silent responses from readers (further discussion about the function of tag questions in emotional engagement can be found in Chapter 4, reflection section).

These questions also function as pragmatic tools to seek confirmation and stimulate reader participation, rather than simply delivering information in a one-way manner. Their inviting tone opens up space for mental engagement, making the story interactive and emotionally resonant. Through this questioning strategy, *Why Doesn't the Rabbit Have a Long Tail?* not only clearly delivers its moral message but also invites readers to join in the reflection and learning process. Readers are treated as active participants in understanding values such as self-acceptance, honesty, and the consequences of envy. Overall, the use of questioning techniques in this fairy tale is an effective way to convey moral lessons while creating a deeper and more meaningful reading experience.

A fairy tale is an imaginative form of storytelling that often features magical elements and fantastical settings. While it may include characters like fairies, dwarfs, or talking animals, what distinguishes a fairy tale is not merely the presence of magical creatures, but also its purpose and tone typically aimed at conveying moral lessons in an engaging and easy-to-understand way. Fairy tales help children develop imagination while offering a simple yet effective way to distinguish between right and wrong.

The tale *Why Does the Rabbit No Longer Have a Long Tail?* delivers an important moral message through its narrative and choice of language. It tells the story of a rabbit who once had a long, beautiful tail but grew envious of other animals like deer and monkeys. This jealousy drove the rabbit to act irrationally, ultimately leading to the loss of its tail. The loss serves as a lifelong symbol of the consequences of envy and impatience.

One of the important features in this story is the use of reflective questions that closely resemble tag questions. These questions are not only narrative tools but also reflect the rabbit's internal conflict and self-doubt. Phrases like "Why can't I be like them?" or "Am I not strong enough?" invite readers to emotionally connect with the

character, creating empathy and deeper engagement. Although not always in formal tag question form, such reflective questions function similarly by prompting readers to mentally respond or reflect on the character's decisions.

Linguistically, a tag question is a short question added at the end of a statement, typically used to seek confirmation, express doubt, or maintain politeness in conversation (Subkhi et al., 2020; Avery & Ehrlich, 2015). In narrative contexts like this fairy tale, similar question forms can serve as powerful storytelling tools. For instance, when the rabbit says, "My tail isn't strong enough, is it?", the reader is subtly encouraged to think about the answer making the narrative feel more vivid and emotional.

According to Tottie & Hoffmann (2006) and Tottie (2009), tag questions serve various pragmatic functions, including seeking information, asserting certainty, expressing opinions, challenging, maintaining listener engagement, and marking discourse structure. In *Why Does the Rabbit No Longer Have a Long Tail?*, reflective questions serve these roles by revealing the rabbit's internal struggles and encouraging the reader to contemplate the moral values embedded in the story. Interestingly, although this tale contains a limited number of explicit tag questions (about four to five), most of the questions in the story still function like tag questions by encouraging emotional and interpretive engagement from the reader.

In the study conducted by Anggini et al. (2023) regarding students' perceptions of presentation activities in learning phonology, it was found that presentations help students better understand intonation, pronunciation, and phonological awareness. Although the study does not specifically address tag questions, the interactive nature of presentation such as when a presenter says, "This is correct, right?" shows that tag-like question structures also appear in spoken contexts to build a connection with the audience. This highlights a similarity in function between fairy tales and language learning activities: both use reflective, participatory language that stimulates the audience to think or respond, emotionally or intellectually. Therefore, in language education contexts, whether in stories or oral practices like presentations, tag-like questions play a key role in enhancing interaction and comprehension. Although Anggini et al.'s (2023) study does not directly discuss tag questions, their emphasis on interactivity supports the idea that such expressions positively affect communication. Thus, in both fairy tales and language learning, the expressive and participatory quality of language matters more than formal structure. Narrative techniques like tag-like questions enrich storytelling and deepen the moral message, thereby improving the reading experience for young readers.

Based on the analysis of *Why Does the Rabbit No Longer Have a Long Tail?*, it can be concluded that explicit tag questions are limited, appearing only around four to five times. However, reflective questions that resemble tag questions still play an essential

role in expressing the character's inner conflict and inviting the reader to engage both emotionally and reflectively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the fairy tale *Why Does the Rabbit No Longer Have a Long Tail?*, it was found that the explicit use of formal tag questions is very limited, appearing only around four to five times. However, reflective questions resembling tag questions are far more prominent and play a crucial role in shaping the narrative structure and character development. These questions illustrate the internal conflict of the rabbit character while also establishing an emotional connection between the reader and the story. Therefore, although formal tag questions are minimal, the pragmatic functions of these reflective questions effectively support the narrative communication within the tale.

This finding answers the research question regarding the role of tag questions and similar interrogative forms in the story, demonstrating that even with limited formal tag questions, functionally equivalent reflective questions significantly contribute to conveying moral messages, strengthening characterization, and enhancing the reader's emotional engagement. The implication of this study suggests that reflective questioning can serve as an effective narrative strategy in children's literature to foster interaction between characters and readers. Future research is recommended to explore the use of other question structures across various types of children's narrative texts to deepen the understanding of pragmatic and syntactic functions in story development and cultural value transmission.

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