

## The Reception Analysis in Ernest Hemingway's Hills Like White Elephants

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### ABSTRACT

*This study is aimed to know the reader response toward "Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway. To limit the scope of the study, the analysis focused on reader's response consist of intellectual aspect and emotional aspect and also moral value toward this short story. The readers are 20 students from English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University. The method used is descriptive quantitative. Readers are given the opportunity to read Ernest's short story, then answer a questionnaire consisting of agree and disagree question about the idea and emotions after reading the story itself. There are 20 respondents from English Department students, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University. The results of this study indicate that, in responding to Hills Like White Elephants short stories, readers can respond from two aspects namely, intellectual and emotional aspect, each of which consists of five aspects. Reader's response to short stories has differences both in terms of intellectual and emotional. The most positive response in intellectual are language 90%, and the most negative response in intellectual aspect are theme 45%. In the other hand the most positive response in emotional aspect are emotion 75% and interest 75%. There are some moral value describes by readers including, thinking before acting, loving yourself, respecting others, life is a choice, a mother's love for all time, and honesty.*

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Hills Like White Elephants;  
Moral Value; Reader's response.

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### 1. Introduction

Literary works and readers are inseparable, and their interactions influence one another. Readers, as consumers, seek to extract meaning and values from literary works, which serve a dual purpose of utility and entertainment (Rahman, 2017; Junaid et al., 2023). Literature serves as a means of communication between authors and readers, providing aesthetic value while reflecting socio-cultural aspects of life (Sinha, 2021; Attridge, 2021; Andini, 2017).

The intention of literature can be entertaining because it can touch all aspects of the reader, presenting aesthetic meaning to literary connoisseurs. On the other hand, literature can also be useful in presenting knowledge, experience, and feelings conveyed by the author to the reader as a reflection on the development of the socio-cultural life of the community (Wijnen et al., 2023; Rahman, 2018). Every issue raised by the author in a literary work often contributes to the work's meaning and value, assuming it is read. The reader's role is critical because the more the reader reads and responds to the work, the higher the quality is perceived.

The concept of literary reception, which focuses on the reader, is introduced. The relative nature of readers' relationships with literary texts is highlighted, emphasizing the uncertainty involved in interpreting these texts. Literary works are recognized as entities that do not have a consistent face or meaning at all times and places.

Reception research is presented as a method that can be applied to any literary text, with an emphasis on analyzing reader responses. The researcher's selection of the short story "Hills Like White Elephants" is justified, given its dense and straightforward nature, which makes it more accessible to readers.

Literature has an important role in the context of interaction between literary works and readers. As a powerful communication medium, literature not only presents stories or ideas, but also summarizes artistic expressions and deep reflections on human life (Kaowiwattanakul, 2021; Junaid et al., 2023; Sahib & Rahman, 2021). Literature not only functions as a means of entertainment, but also provides a forum for conveying the author's messages, knowledge and experiences to readers. In literary works, there is the beauty of language and writing that enriches the reading

experience, triggers the imagination, and deepens the reader's understanding of the world around him (Rahman, 2016; Suma et al., 2023; Nahdhiyah et al., 2022).

In the context of literary reception research, understanding the work "Hills Like White Elephants" becomes more significant (Boudjerida, 2019; Meckley, 2018). The richness of the themes and ambiguous ending provide an extra challenge for readers, encouraging them to reflect and make personal interpretations. As an object of research, literature is not only a forum for exploring readers' interactions with texts, but also opens the door to understanding the role of literature as a cultural and social mirror. Acceptance of literature is not only related to aesthetic aspects, but also includes a deep understanding of the social context and values contained in the work (Kävrestad et al., 2023; Lewisch, & Riefler, 2023; Wilson, 2021; Nielsen et al., 2022). Therefore, it is hoped that this research can provide a valuable contribution in understanding the complexity of the relationship between literature, readers, and the cultural context that surrounds it.

By following the idea this study aims to conduct reception research on the short story "Hills Like White Elephants." The focus is on examining and interpreting readers' responses, reactions, and interpretations of the story. The study aims to understand better how readers interact with the text, particularly given its theme and ambiguous ending, which prompts readers to conclude.

In delving into the concept of literary reception, the focus shifts to the reader, acknowledging the relative nature of their relationships with texts. Literature is recognized as a dynamic entity, devoid of a consistent face or meaning across different times and places. The introduction of reception research as a method highlights its applicability to any literary text. The chosen short story, "Hills Like White Elephants," is justified for its dense yet straightforward nature, enhancing accessibility for readers. The study aims to explore reader responses, reactions, and interpretations of the story, particularly emphasizing the theme and ambiguous ending that prompts readers to engage in a process of conclusion. This research seeks to unravel the intricacies of how readers interact with the text, contributing to a deeper understanding of the interplay between literary works and their audience.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodological design in analyzing Ernest Hemingway's short story Hills Like White Elephant, uses Quantitative descriptive method. The analysis aims to describe and analyze phenomena in a factual, systematic, and accurate method. To identify the aspects being quantified, one must consult the detailed analysis, which is not included in the current story.

The respondents are 20 students of English Department Hasanuddin University. The researcher used one instruments to collect the data. They are the questionnaire which consists of some questions about intellectual and emotional aspects from reader after reading Hills Like White Elephants short story and to know the moral aspects toward the story.

In this study, SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solution) Version 16.0 for Windows was used for data processing due to its high statistical capabilities and user-friendly graphical interface (Sugiyanto et al., 2020). This research utilized Descriptive Analysis Percentage as its analytical method. The percentage descriptive is calculated by dividing frequency by the number of respondents and multiplying by 100%.

## **3. Result and Discussion**

The writer explains reader's response, such as intellectual and emotional aspect, and the acceptances of readers toward moral values in Ernes Hemingway's Hills Like White Elephants.

### **3.1. Reader's response toward Hills Like White Elephants**

In responding to Hills Like White Elephants short stories, readers are able to respond from two aspects, intellectual and emotional, as well as the discussion.

#### **a. Readers' Intellectual**

Intellectual readers' responses toward Hills Like White Elephants by Ernest Hemingway consist of 5 (five) intellectual aspects include of structure, language, characterization, theme, and plot.

- 1) The intellectual readers' responses based on structure aspect

To determine the reader's intellectual in this aspect, the researcher asked a question, This short story presents an easy-to-understand story setting. Following are the results of the analysis:

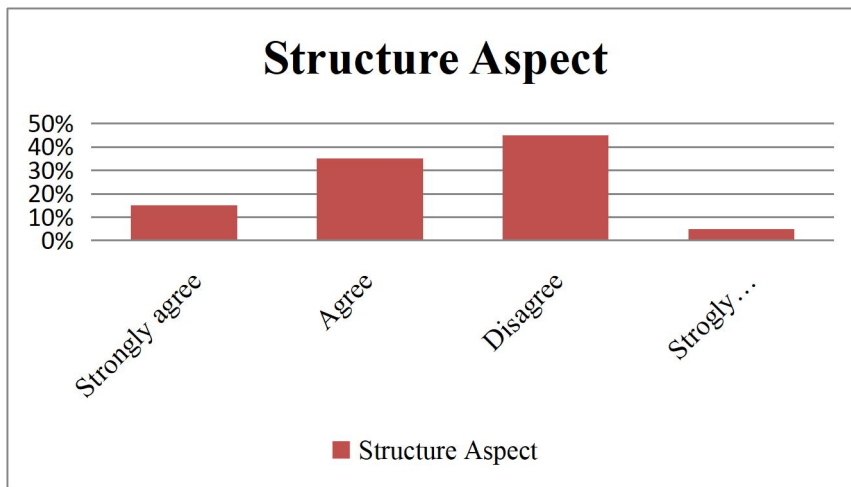


Figure 1. Structure Aspect

Based on data analysis the researcher found that 5% respondent strongly disagree, 45% respondents are disagreed, 35% respondents are agreed, and 15% respondents are strongly agreed. This data proves that each respondent has different views, according to their understanding and reading experience. From the results of the comparison above, it can be seen that the Hills Like White Elephants story still reaps pros and cons about the structure of the story, this is evidenced by the balance of presentation between agreeing and disagreeing 50% respectively.

2) The intellectual readers' responses based on language aspect

To determine the reader's intellectual in this aspect, the researcher poses a question, This short story presents the use of good and easy to understand language. Following are the results of the analysis:

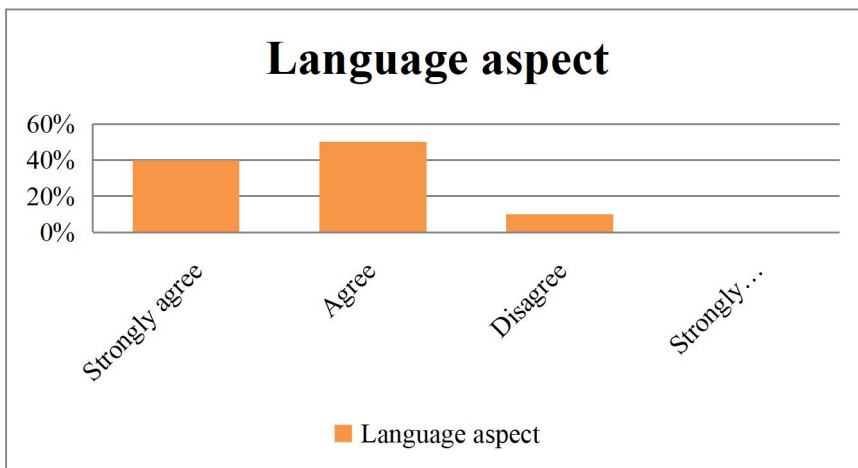
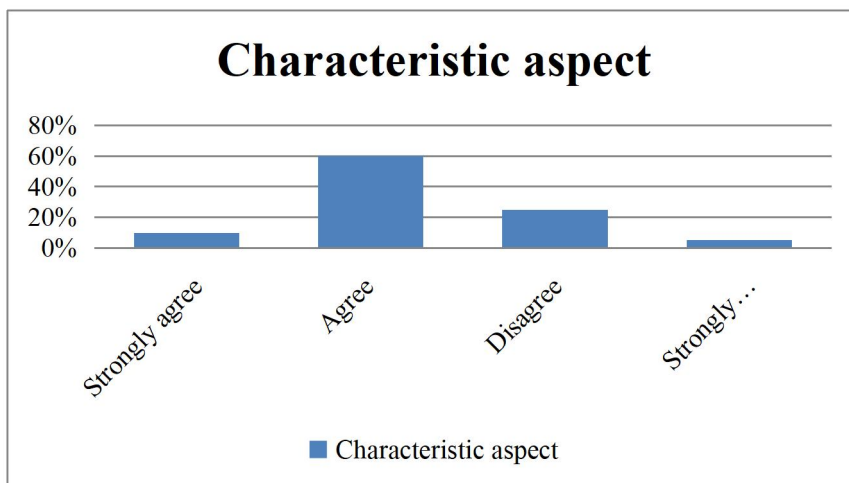


Figure 2. Language Aspect

Based on data analysis the researcher found that there is no respondent strongly disagree, 10% respondents are disagreed, 50% respondents are agreed, and 40% respondents are strongly agreed. From this data, it can be seen that the language set forth in the short stories Hills Like White Elephants presents good language that is easily understood by readers. This can be seen from 90% respondents who agree giving their views.

3) The intellectual readers' responses based on characteristic aspect

To determine the reader's intellectual in this aspect, the researcher poses a question, This short story presents an easily recognizable character description. Following are the results of the analysis:

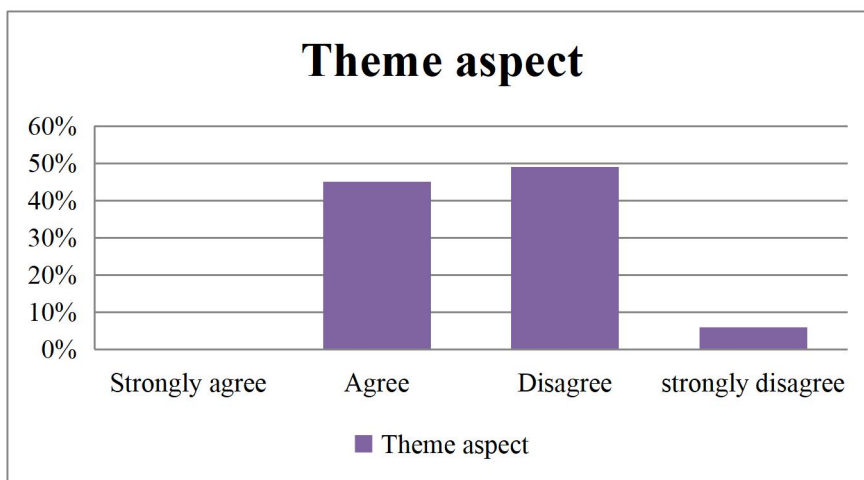


**Figure 3. Characteristic Aspect**

Based on data analysis the researcher found that 5% respondent strongly disagree, 25% respondents are disagreed, 60% respondents are agreed, and 10% respondents are strongly agreed. From the analysis, it can be concluded that the characterization in the short story Hills Like White Elephants is a character that is easy to understand, It can be seen from the percentage of the majority of respondents who agree with this.

4) The intellectual readers' responses based on theme aspect

To determine the reader's intellectual in this aspect, the researcher asked a question, This short story has a clear theme or idea. Following are the results of the analysis:



**Figure 4. Theme Aspect**

Based on data analysis the researcher found that 6% respondent strongly disagree, 49% respondents are disagreed, 45% respondents are agreed, and there is no respondent are strongly agreed. From this data analysis, it can be concluded that the themes or ideas raised in the short stories of Hills Like Elephants have different opinions from respondents, this can be seen from the results of the data presentation which show 10% difference between agreeing and disagreeing with the themes raised by this the short stories.

5) The intellectual readers' responses based on plot aspect

To determine the reader's intellectual in this aspect, the researcher asked a question, This short story presents a sequence of events that are interrelated. Following are the results of the analysis:

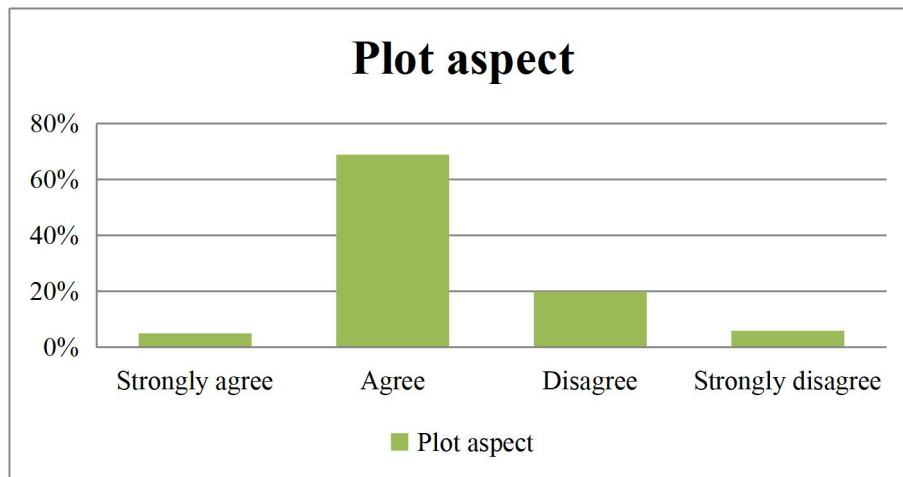


Figure 5. Plot Aspect

Based on data analysis the researcher found that 6% respondent strongly disagree, 20% respondents are disagreed, 69% respondents are agreed, and 5% respondents are strongly agreed. Based on the data analysis above, it can be concluded that the short story Hills Like White Elephants, in general presents a sequence of events that are interrelated, this can be seen from 74% respondents who agree on this.

**b. Emotional readers'**

Emotional readers' responses toward Hills Like White Elephants by Ernest Hemingway consist of 5 (five) emotional aspects include of emotion, interest, authenticity, ability to believe, and joy.

1) The emotional readers' responses based on an emotion aspect

To determine the reader's emotional in this aspect, the researcher asked a question, This short story has an impact on my emotions. Following are the results of the analysis:

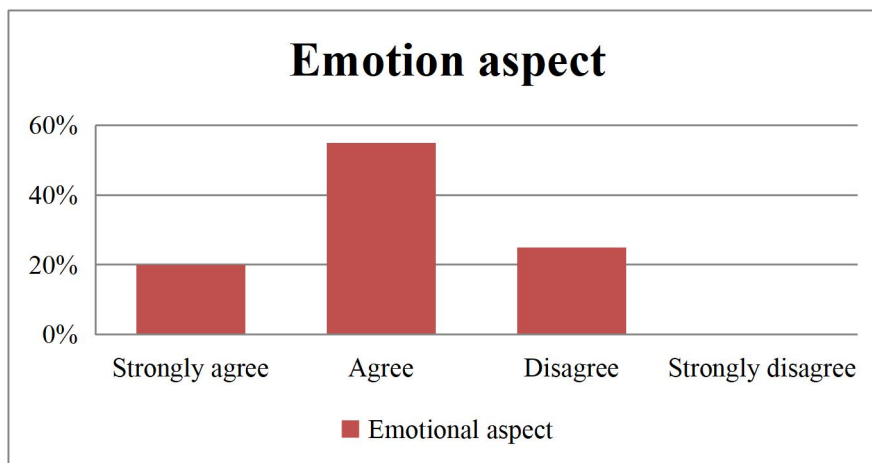


Figure 6. Emotion Aspect

Based on data analysis the researcher found that 20% respondent strongly agree, 55% respondents are agreed, 25% respondents are disagreed, and there is no respondents strongly disagreed. Based on the data above, it can be concluded that Hills Like White Elephants short stories have quite an impact on the emotions of the readers, this is evidenced by 75% respondents who agree on this.

2) The emotional readers' responses based on interest aspect

To determine the reader's emotional in this aspect, the researcher poses a question, This short story provides a new perspective on me. Following are the results of the analysis:

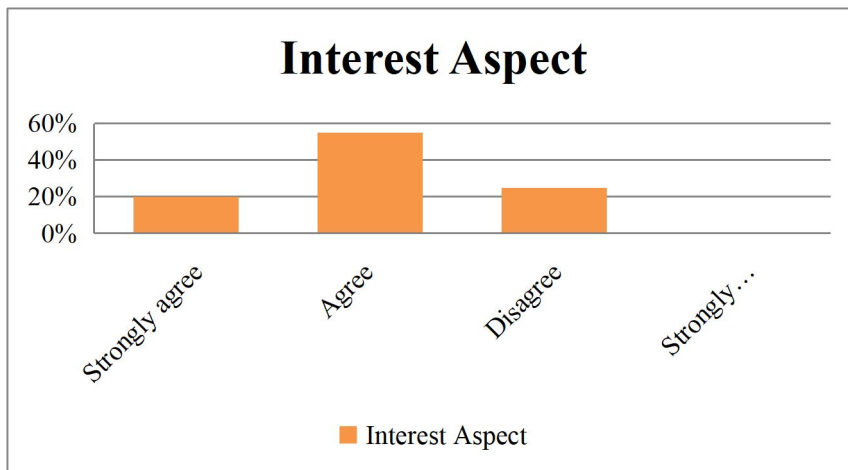


Figure 7. Interest Aspect

Based on data analysis the researcher found that 20% respondent strongly agree, 55% respondents are agreed, 25% respondents are disagreed, and there is no respondents strongly disagreed. From the data above, it can be concluded that Hills Like White Elephants short stories are quite interesting for readers, this is evidenced by the fact that many respondents agree that this short story is quite interesting.

3) The emotional readers' responses based on authenticity aspect

To determine the reader's emotional in this aspect, the researcher poses a question, This short story makes me feel like I am in the story. Following are the results of the analysis:

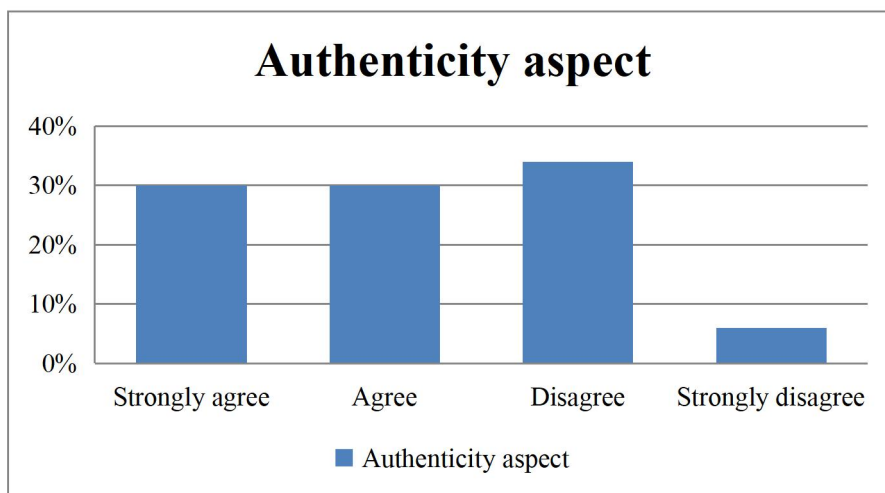


Figure 8. Authenticity Aspect

Based on data analysis the researcher found that 30% respondent are strongly agree, 30% respondents are agreed, 34% respondents are disagreed, and 6% respondents strongly disagreed. From this analysis it can be concluded that the short stories Hills Like White Elephants have different opinions from readers regarding their authenticity. This was proven by the presence of imbalance in the presentation which show 20% difference between agreeing and disagreeing with the respondents regarding this matter.

4) The emotional readers' responses based on ability to believe aspect

To determine the reader's emotional in this aspect, the researcher poses a question, I can trust this short story. Following are the results of the analysis:

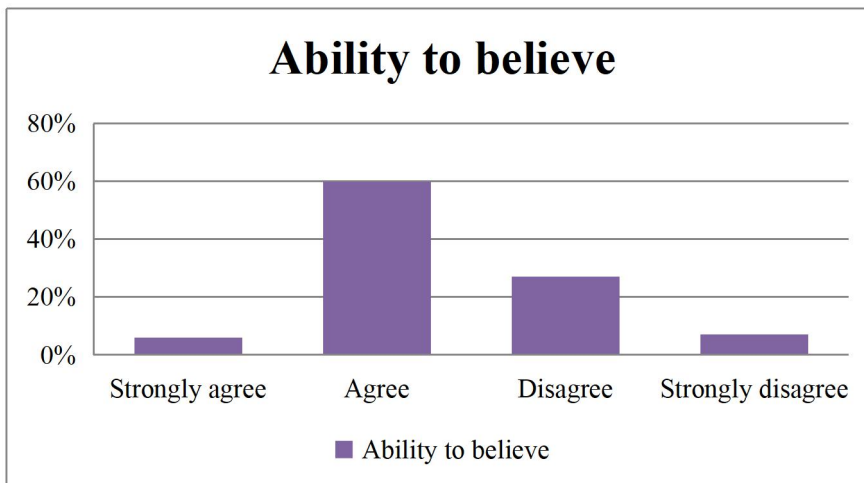


Figure 9. Ability to Believe

Based on data analysis the researcher found that 6% respondent strongly agree, 60% respondents are agreed, 27% respondents are disagreed, and 7% respondents are strongly disagreed. From this data, it can be concluded that Hills Like White Elephants 'short stories Probably reliable, based on the results of respondents' presentations which show that 66% respondents agree, compared with 34% respondents who disagree with this.

5) The emotional readers' responses based on joy aspect

To determine the reader's emotional in this aspect, the researcher asked a question, The ending of this short story is in accordance with my expectations. Following are the results of the analysis:

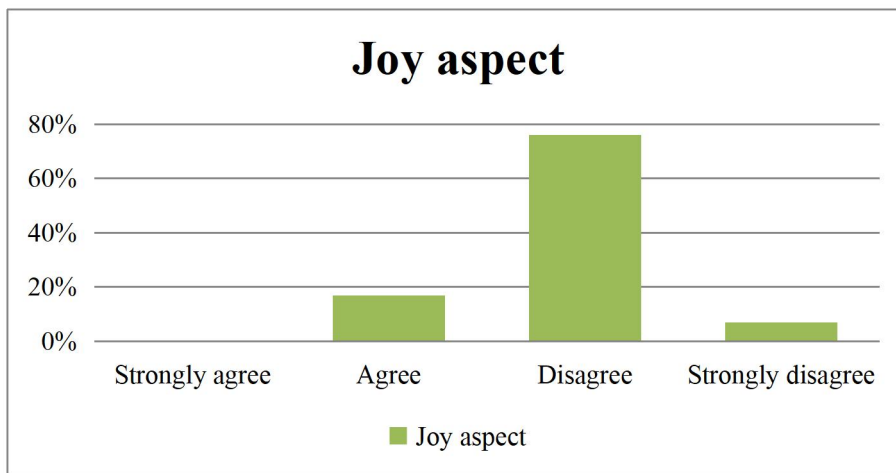


Figure 10. Joy Aspect

Based on data analysis the researcher found that there is no respondent strongly agree, 17% respondents are agreed, 76% respondents are disagreed, and 7% respondents are strongly disagreed. From the data analysis above, it can be concluded that the ending of the short story Hills Like White Elephants is quite disappointing for readers. This can be seen from the percentage of readers who disagree about this.

3.2. The acceptance of readers toward moral values in Hills Like White Elephants

The moral value that accepted by reader toward short story have a different perspective, as follows :

a. Think before act, a moment's pleasure will be bad forever

From the above moral values, there are five respondents who say they think before act. Because if something is not thought well before making a decision, it will definitely have a bad impact afterward, because regret always comes to the end, therefore think before acting. Meanwhile, from the short story Hills Like White Elephants which says :

### **Data 1**

They just let the air in and then it's all perfectly natural."

"Then what will we do afterward?" "We'll be fine afterward. Just like we were before."

"What makes you think so?" "That's the only thing that bothers us. It's the only thing that's made us unhappy."

The girl looked at the bead curtain, put her hand out and took hold of two of the strings of beads. "And you think then we'll be all right and be happy." "I know we will. You don't have to be afraid. I've known lots of people that have done it."

"So have I," said the girl. "And afterward they were all so happy."

"Well," the man said, "if you don't want to you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do it if you didn't want to. But I know it's perfectly simple." "And you really want to?" (Hemingway, 1928: 36-37)

The quote above tells that the man persuaded the woman to do the operation, saying that after the operation everything would be fine, with the consideration of seeing all the people who have done this, even though everyone is not necessarily happy with his decision. It can also be seen from the word "that's the only thing that makes us unhappy" with the intention that the fetus makes them unhappy. Here it is also proven that they didn't think this would happen before, that's the risk they get when they do something reckless.

### **b. Love and respect yourself first, not someone else**

From the above moral values, there are five respondents who said the same thing, to love, appreciate, and help ourselves are the main things that must be done before we love others. Because a person loves and values himself before anyone else, they will know what they really need, and want for themselves. being featured in the short Hills Like White Elephants, states that:

### **Data 2**

"If I do it you won't ever worry?"

"I won't worry about that because it's perfectly simple."

"Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't care about me."

"Well, I care about you."

"Oh, yes. But I don't care about me. And I'll do it and then everything will be fine."

"I don't want you to do it if you feel that way."

The girl stood up and walked to the end of the station.

(Hemingway. 1928:37)

From the quote above, it can be concluded that the woman wants to carry out the operation because she doesn't care and loves herself, this proves that actually a woman doesn't know what is best for her to do, so she hangs up on her decisions on the people she loves, although sometimes this is not good for her.

### **c. Respect a partner, consider each other's opinion is important, mutual understanding**

From the above moral values, there are two respondents who have the same thoughts about respecting, understanding the situation, and listening to other people's opinions. Because maybe by listening and understanding each other, they will feel better. Meanwhile, the Hills Like White Elephants story says that:

### **Data 3**

"I think it's the best thing to do. But I don't want you to do it if you don't really want to."



"And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?"

" I love you now. You know I love you."

" I know. But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?"

"I'll love it. I love it now but I just can't think about it. You know how I get when I worry."

" I f I do it you won't ever worry?"

" I won't worry about that because it's perfectly simple."

"Then I'll do it. Because I don't care about me."

"What do you mean?" (Hemingway, 1928:37)

The quote above tells that the man persuaded the woman to do the operation, without seeing the anxiety or fear of the woman to do the operation, the man said "it's perfectly simple" because he was not the one who had to do the operation, so it can be concluded that the man did not understand the situation. and the condition of the woman who was worried about the operation.

**d. people must make a decision between two choices. Because life has to choose. So, think deeply if you want to make a decisions**

From the above moral values, there are four respondents who say the same thing, that in life people will definitely be faced with two choices, therefore, be careful in making decisions for your life, because each choice must have its own consequences. In the short story Hills Like White Elephants says that:

**Data 4**

The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees.

"And we could have all this," she said. "And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible."

"What did you say?"

" I said we could have everything."

"We can have everything."

"No, we can't."

"We can have the whole world."

"No, we can't."

"We can go everywhere."

"No, we can't. It isn't ours any more."

"It's ours."

"No, it isn't. And once they take it away, you never get it back."

"But they haven't taken it away."

"We'll wait and see." (Hemingway, 1928:37)

The quote above explains that the man said that they could have everything after doing the surgery, but the woman is actually not sure about the decision she made. This can be seen from the way he says "It isn't ours any more. And once they take it away, you never get it back." This is one of the consequences that must be accepted if they really decide to have an abortion.

#### **e. Mother's love for her child throughout the ages**

From the above moral values, there are two respondents who have the same thoughts, where the child is everything to a mother, even though it is still in the womb. Meanwhile, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, it is said that:

##### **Data 5**

I'm perfectly willing to go through with it if it means anything to you."

"Doesn't it mean anything to you? We could get along."

"Of course it does. But I don't want anybody but you. I don't want anyone else. And I know it's perfectly simple."

"Yes, you know it's perfectly simple."

"It's all right for you to say that, but I do know it."

"Would you do something for me now?"

"I'd do anything for you."

"Would you please please please please please please stop talking?" (Hemingway, 1928:38)

The quote above explains that the woman is hesitant to have an abortion, because she thinks that something she will give up is valuable, while the man doesn't value or want the fetus, therefore the man always reassures her that abortion is just something simple to do, however in the end the woman just told the man to be quiet. This shows that the love of the woman for the janinn in her stomach is not fully the love of a mother.

#### **f. Honesty**

From the above moral values, there is one respondent who says this, where we must be honest in every situation, tell the truth even though it is sometimes painful for those who listen. From the short story *Hills Like White Elephants* says that:

##### **Data 6**

The girl was looking off at the line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry.

"They look like white elephants," she said.

"I've never seen one," the man drank his beer.

"No, you wouldn't have."

"I might have," the man said. "Just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything." (Hemingway, 1928:35)

From the quote above it can be seen that the woman said that the hill looks like a white elephant, but the man did not agree with what the woman said and he said even though the woman explained it many times it could not prove anything. It can be seen that the man was telling the truth that he did not think the same thing as the woman who said that the hill was like a white elephant.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In responding to *Hills Like White Elephants* short stories, readers are able to respond from two aspects, intellectual and emotional. Intellectual readers' responses toward *Hills Like White Elephants* by Ernest Hemingway consist of 5 (five) intellectual aspects include of structure, language, characterization, theme, and plot. Furthermore Emotional readers' responses toward *Hills Like White Elephants* by Ernest Hemingway consist of 5 (five) emotional aspects include of emotion, interest, authenticity, ability to believe, and joy. The most positive response in intellectual are language 90%, and characteristic 70%, and the most negative response in intellectual aspect are theme 45% and plot 74%. In other hand the most positive response in emotional aspect are emotion 75% and interest 75%. Meanwhile, the

most positive response by respondents between intellectual and emotional is the emotional aspect which has 4 (four) positive responses from 5 (five) aspects. The moral value that accepted by reader toward short story have a different perspective, the writer classifies it into several moral values, including, thinking before acting, loving yourself, respecting others, life is a choice, a mother's love for all time, and honesty.

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