

Thematic Realization in University Students' Narrative Text: Systemic Functional Perspective

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Abstract: This study aims at investigating thematic realization in university students' narrative texts based on systemic functional perspective and its pedagogical implementation in teaching writing. The research design employed in this study was qualitative content analysis. The research instrument used in this study was writing sheet. The data were taken from narrative text written by 20 second-year students of English Literature study program of Universitas Sumatera Utara. Then, the data were in the form of clause and analyzed by using textual function realized by Theme and Rheme. The finding shows that there are 20 different titles of narrative text comprising of 1086 Theme occurrences. The occurrences of Theme types successively are topical (725 or 66.76%), textual (336 or 30.94%), and interpersonal Theme (25 or 2.30%). It leads to the conclusion that those three types of Theme appear in the data, and topical Theme is the dominant Theme characterizing university students' narrative texts. The pedagogical implementation is some university students failed to present the interaction among characters in their narrative text so that the lecturers should give more materials on the use of interpersonal Theme markers in writing course.

1 INTRODUCTION

Writing is considered as productive skill along with speaking. Harmer (2004) clearly states that this skill should be acquired by the students due to its existence in the syllabus. At university level, some academic genres should be mastered by students which one of them is narrative. To produce a good text is not easy since there are many aspects to be considered such as cohesion and coherence.

Each type of text is unique based on its characteristics namely lexicogrammatical features, schematic structure and social function. Anderson and Anderson (2004) state that narrative genre possesses schematic structure namely orientation ^ complication ^ evaluation ^ resolution ^ coda. The function of this genre is used to entertain the readers (Gerot & Wignell 1994). The fulfilment of those characteristics is a compulsory in order to produce a good narrative text (Zein, Sinar & Nurlela 2017). The investigation of the lexico-grammatical stratum of language reveals the kinds of internal patterns of clause structures which are highly favoured for interpreting experience (Halliday 1994). If students can consistently use all of the language features and

schematic structure in their writing, they will produce a good organization of a text.

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is beneficial to evaluate students' writing (Tshotsho 2014). The analysis in SFL is more stressing on a clause analysis rather than a sentence analysis (Hanafiah, Yusuf & Aswani 2018). In SFL, language has three kinds of meaning simultaneously regarded as metafunctions covering ideational, interpersonal, and textual function. This is inherent in every language use in social contexts and relevant at any linguistic level (Sinar 2007).

Textual function (clause as message) is realized through the use of Theme and rheme in a clause. The departure point of the message is defined as 'the Theme'. This is differentiated into textual, interpersonal, and topical Theme (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). When the Theme is identified, the Rheme is just a piece of cake to be identified since it is the rest part of the clause (Martin & Rose 2008). The example of the use of Theme in a clause is presented as the following:

Table 1: Theme realization in a clause.

Unfortunately,	he	broke his promises
interpersonal	topical: unmarked	Rheme
Theme		

The example in advance presents that there are two types of Theme in that clause, there are topical and interpersonal Themes. The existence of Theme in a text is very prominent since it is used to signal the connection of the messages (textual theme). Then, the speakers' position and their interaction can be observed through interpersonal Theme. Meanwhile, topical Theme is utilized to show who is experiencing or what is being experienced (Butt et al. 2006). In narrative text, the use of Theme is very important such as textual Theme to connect the chronological actions. Narrative text has complication part containing the conflict and interaction and it can be signaled by the use of interpersonal Theme. It makes sense that the study of thematic realization in narrative text is urgent to be conducted.

There are a number of previous studies focusing on the analysis of thematic realization. Wang (2007) conducted a study which is focused on the Theme-Rheme relation in order to enhance cohesion. Then, it presents that Theme and Rheme patterning is applicable in teaching writing in classrooms to diagnose students' weaknesses in thematic progression, selection, or even both. The other experts, Correa and Domínguez (2014) in their research attempt to explore narrative text by using SFL specifically the realization of metafunction in text. The previous studies are obviously different from this research in some aspects such as the objects of analysis, the theories used, and the genres.

Students are required to be capable of comprehending and producing a well-written narrative text in order to pass the course. Belmonte and McCabe (cited in Ebrahimi & Ebrahimi 2012) state that the production of well-organized and cohesive text is possible to be attained through thematic patterning. Therefore, this study is aimed to investigate thematic realization in university students' narrative texts based on systemic functional perspective and see its pedagogical implementation. The findings of this study are hoped to be beneficial as a reference for educators (lecturers and teachers) in teaching writing, and students to improve the quality of narrative text product.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Language is used constantly in our daily activities. Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is one of the frameworks to analyze and interpret language. This theory is always related to the context and utilized for construing human experiences and looking into the working of language within social context (Naz, Alvi & Baseer 2012). Then, the structure of language or the text is chosen by the function or purpose set by its speakers in using the language (Saragih 2016). Meaning is structured at three different levels covered in metafunctions namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual function.

2.2 Textual Function

Halliday (1985) asserts that the textual function (realized through the use of Theme-Rheme) is that of constructing a message. In text organization, the Theme is regarded as a prominent part since it is the departure of the message (McCabe & Heilman 2007). Moreover, in a clause, there is also the structure of Theme-Rheme, or given-new information. The Theme often presents given information while the Rheme often presents new information (De Oliveira 2015). Theme comprises of three categories i.e. topical, interpersonal, and textual.

Egins (2004) provides the explanation of categories of Theme as the followings:

- Topical Theme: in a clause, it is normally an element which is able to be assigned as transitivity label placed in the first position. A prominent thing is each clause must have only one topical Theme. Topical Theme also comprises of marked Theme (MT) and unmarked Theme (UMT)
- Interpersonal Theme: It happens when at the beginning of a clause, a constituent called as a Mood label appears (not a transitivity label). The constituents consist of unfused finite, Mood adjunct, vocative, polarity adjunct, and comment adjunct.
- Textual Theme: it deals with building the cohesion in text, and this kind of Theme is also defined as any elements which do not belong to any experiential and interpersonal meaning.

2.3 Writing

Writing is a complicated process with a number of activities happening simultaneously and comprises of some steps namely planning, drafting, editing, and final version (Harmer, cited in Yusuf & Saragih 2014). Then, Richards and Renandya (cited in Eliya 2015) add that writing is applicable in generating and scrutinizing the ideas as well as language. The effective way to learn how to write is to go at it as a process. As the conclusion, writing is the way to convey the idea, message, and thought in written form involving complicated process.

2.4 Genre

Genre has close relationship to text and context. Pardiyono (2007) states that genre is elucidated as text type which has a function as frame of reference so that one text can be written effectively and precisely. In conclusion, genre is a frame of reference which covers a staged, and goal-oriented in a particular society of culture.

2.5 Narrative Text

Zaimar and Harahap (2009) argue that narrative text is signed by the chronological use of time. Anderson and Anderson (cited in Agusta 2015) assert that this text is a kind of text used to tell a story. Zein (2009) also adds that narrative text provides relation between characters especially between human being and nature, between human being, and between human being and non human. Moreover, values and moral aspects can be found in narrative text. Specifically, it also has communicative purpose to amuse the readers or listeners. Furthermore, Joyce and Feez (2000) also hold that this genre possesses lexicogrammatical features as listed below:

- Specific participant such as human or animal with human's characteristic.
- The dominant use of action to describe what actually occurs. This can be explored through transitivity analysis.
- Simple past tense is generally used
- The existence of dialogue realized by saying verb or verbal process.
- The use of descriptive language in order to improve and expand the story.
- The use of first or third person is possible.

Rustipa (2011) argues that generic structures of narrative text are as the following:

- Orientation
- Complication

- Evaluation
- Resolution
- Coda

3 METHOD

This research utilized qualitative content analysis as the research design. This method is explained as a step to summarizing and report written data. The research was conducted at English literature department of Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia. The number of participants involved as sample was 20 second-year students. The reason of the selection is they have acquired the materials about narrative text and the method used in teaching writing is genre-based approach. The source of the data was collected from narrative text which the length of the text is 250-400 words. The main instrument used was the writing sheets.

The content analysis carried out data collection and data analysis steps. Some steps proposed by Ezzy (2002) to analyze the data are presented as the followings:

- Recognizing the segments of the texts
- Identifying and separating the sentences into clauses
- Identifying and grouping the types of Theme
- Inference making.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

The analysis presents that 20 different titles are discovered in students' narrative texts. There are 1086 occurrences of Theme comprising of topical, interpersonal, and textual Themes. The dominant type of Theme is topical Theme (725 or 66.76%). Overall, text 3 has the highest number of Theme occurrences totalling to 81 while the lowest one is text 8 totalling 33 occurrences. Text 3 has 81 occurrences of Theme which is the highest number among all the texts. In terms of topical Theme, text 16 has the highest number of occurrences (54) and the lowest one is text 8 (22). Interpersonal Theme does not appear in some texts namely text 3, 5, 9, 11, and 15. Then, text 7 and text 12 have 3 occurrences of interpersonal as the highest occurrences. Then, for textual Theme, text 3 has 35 occurrences as the highest frequency occurrences while text 8 is the lowest with 9

occurrences. The description of thematic occurrences and its distribution are illustrated as the following.

Table 2: Thematic occurrences in students' narrative texts.

No	Theme			Total
	Topical	Interpersonal	Textual	
1	29	1	19	49
2	29	1	13	43
3	46	0	35	81
4	43	1	15	59
5	28	0	19	47
6	33	2	17	52
7	32	3	18	53
8	22	2	9	33
9	26	0	12	38
10	43	2	20	65
11	38	0	14	52
12	33	3	10	46
13	36	2	19	57
14	31	1	12	44
15	38	0	12	50
16	54	1	23	78
17	36	1	13	50
18	43	1	25	69
19	44	2	17	63
20	41	2	14	57
Total	725	25	336	1086
Percentage	66.76	2.30	30.94	100

The example of the realization of topical, interpersonal, and topical Theme is illustrated as the followings:

Table 3: Topical theme (taken from text 17).

We	stayed at Berastagi for 3 days
Topical: unmarked	
Theme	Rheme

The clause in table 3 consists of one Theme namely topical Theme specifically unmarked Theme. Since the clause is in the form of declarative and started with a subject, this is grouped into topical theme.

Table 4: Interpersonal theme (taken from text 18).

Fortunately,	our class	won the second prize
Interpersonal	Topical:unmarked	
	Theme	Rheme

The example in table 4 presents that the clause has two Themes namely interpersonal and topical theme. Interpersonal Theme is realized by the use of comment adjunct (fortunately).

Table 5: Textual theme (taken from text 6).

and	she	Lived only with her step mother and step sisters
Textual	Topical	
	Theme	Rheme

In table 5, the data present that there are 2 clauses comprising of multiple Theme (topical and textual). Textual Theme is realized through the use of conjunctive adjuncts which have the function to link clauses together.

4.2 Discussion

Thematic realization in a text has important role. The use of textual Theme is used to signal the connection of the messages, interpersonal Theme is used to signal interaction among speakers or the positions which they are taking, and topical Theme is used to signal who is experiencing or what is being experienced. The dominant type of Theme found in this research is topical Theme. It is also relevant that topical Theme is used to signal who and what is experiencing and every clause must have topical Theme even though it is possible that a clause does not have interpersonal and textual Theme.

The use of textual Theme is very important since it is to signal the connection between messages to the previous ones and link it. Narrative text is a text which contains of chronological use of time and this absolutely can be described by the use of conjunction which is considered as conjunctive adjunct in textual function analysis. All students understand in writing chronological story through the existence and the distribution of conjunctive adjuncts in their narrative texts.

Based on the data analysis, interpersonal Theme is not found in some texts (3, 5, 9, 11, and 15). Narrative text has complication part as the main section of a narrative in which the writer normally presents the conflicts or the problem among the characters. The conflicts or problem is the result of the interaction among the characters and it can be signalled by the use of interpersonal Theme. In this

case, some students failed to illustrate the interaction and conflict among the characters. This finding is also in line with the research from Correa and Domínguez (2014) clarifying that problem of the use of the Theme is also experienced by their student. In addition, there are only two interpersonal Themes discovered in the text namely *sometimes* and *suddenly*.

The pedagogical implementation related to the findings is the lecturers should give materials about vocative use and adjunct to the university students in writing class. The vocative use such as *my darling*, *my father*, *Toba*, *Cinderella*, and also comment adjuncts such as *surprisingly*, and *fortunately*, are possible to be placed in the text to have a better set for the events or conflicts to be told.

5 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

After the data have been analyzed, the conclusion can be drawn that all three types of Theme (topical, interpersonal, and textual) appear in the data and topical Theme is the dominant Theme (725 or 66.76%) characterizing university students' narrative texts. The pedagogical implementation is some students are not successful in presenting the interaction among characters so that the lecturers should give more materials on the use of interpersonal theme markers such as vocative and comment adjuncts in teaching narrative text.

It is also suggested that the lecturers give extra material and practice to students in writing this genre specifically in thematic realization. Then, students should pay attention more on the use of Theme in their writing since it affects their quality of writing.

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