

THE ANALYSIS OF THEMATIC ROLE IN NARRATIVE TEXTS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS

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APA Citation: Marlina, R. (2012). The analysis of thematic role in narrative texts of senior high school textbooks. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 1(1), 80-88

Received: 08-09-2011

Accepted: 23-10-2013

Published: 01-12-2012

Abstract: This paper analyzed narrative texts of Senior High School textbooks for X Grade, based on Jackendoff's and Saeed's theories of thematic role. This research employed a qualitative research design and the data were ten narrative texts taken from Developing English Competencies and Interlanguage for X Grade. The research Questions involve the ways of thematic role in constructing the sentence's meaning in narrative texts and the thematic role that mostly employed. This research revealed that nine kinds of thematic role (Agent, Patient, Location, Beneficiary, Experiencer, Theme, Source, Goal, and Instrument) are available in narrative texts and the role Theme was frequently employed (260 times of 782). Meanwhile, thematic role constructs the sentence's meaning in narrative texts by observing the verb and the preposition used in the sentence. Thematic role is a way to describe the role of noun phrase in a sentence, so that thematic role is closely related with the grammatical function. It can be also said that the analysis of thematic role in narrative texts is beneficial for educational participants both teacher and student in order to recognize the sentence's grammatical function. Therefore, thematic role helps them to understand the sentence's meaning and finally they can grasp the message in a text.

Keywords: *thematic role, narrative text, senior high school, textbook*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a process of giving people information (Hornby, 2000). While the aim of communication is to convey meaning from communicator to communicant (Lyons, 1977). It means that the communicant has to process the meaning sent by the communicator so that he will understand what the communicator means. Goddard (1998: 15) states that: "When people are communicating, they do more than just attend to what is actually being said by way of words, grammatical constructions, and intonation patterns". Therefore, to create an effective communication, both communicator and communicant should understand their sentences' meaning each other.

The study of meaning is largely explored in semantics. Further, Hurford and Heasley (1983) clarify that sentence meaning or word meaning can be defined as what a sentence or word means. Moreover, O'Grady *et al* (1991) suggest that knowing the part played a particular entity in an event is one of the most interesting thing to understand a sentence so that we will know the sentence's meaning. While, Goddard (1998, p. 1) states that "To understand how any particular language works we need to understand how its individual design works to fulfill its function as an intricate device for communicating meanings". In semantics, the term is generally known as "thematic role". Further, Saeed (2009) tells that thematic

roles play a central role in language comprehension.

The students mostly just can read a text or article word by word without thinking of the meaning of the sentences. Actually, if we want to understand the meaning of a sentence, we have to firstly know the detailed information of the sentence, one of them is the part played in an event (O'Grady *et al*, 1991). Because of the reason, this paper presents the thematic roles in narrative texts. The aim of this paper are to (1) identify the thematic role that mostly employed, and (2) identify the existence of thematic roles in constructing the sentences' meaning.

Most of recent works on thematic roles has been investigated by several researchers. For the first, Tanja (2009) investigates about Thematic Role in Natural Language Processing and in Linguistic Theory. The result of his study is defining relations between the constituents in a sentence that cannot be defined by the rules of syntax only.

The second, Richard (2008) also explores about Dependency-Based Thematic Analysis of Natural-Language Texts. His study shows the description of how to construct statistical models for thematic role labeling of English texts and how role thematic is related to surface syntax.

The third, Mirella (2010) studies about Semi-Supervised Thematic Role Labeling via Structural Alignment. From her study is found a project annotations from labeled sentences onto similar unlabeled ones. The rest of this paper is organized as follows: section 2 briefly describes thematic roles. Section 3 introduces the method and procedures for analyzing thematic roles in the narrative texts. The result and discussion are shown in section 4. Finally,

conclusion of this study is presented in section 5.

Thematic role can be analyzed by considering the noun phrase's function based on the verb which is used in the sentence, because thematic role is closely related with the verb. We can decide whether the subject has a role as an agent or experiencer by observing the verb. Another definition comes from O'Grady *et al* (1991, p. 226): "Thematic role or semantic role is used to describe the part played by a particular entity in an event". Verbs and other heads of phrases may be associated with such semantic roles as agent, patient, location, theme, source, goal, beneficiary, experiencer, instrument, and stimulus. These roles are assigned to the subject and any arguments of the head.

According to Gruber (1965), Fillmore (1968), Jackendoff (1987) as cited in Fasold and Linton (2006, p. 143): "Thematic role is a part of a word's meaning which indicates the role that some individual plays in the action which that word describes". For example in the following sentence:

The senator sent the lobster from Maine to Nebraska (O'Grady *et al*, 1991: 227).

'The senator' is the Agent, 'the lobster' is the Theme, 'Maine' is the Source, and 'Nebraska' is the Goal.

This paper initially employed the role set proposed by Jackendoff (1990) which consist of Agent, Patient, Location, Beneficiary, Experiencer, Instrument, Theme, Source, and Goal.

METHOD

The task of analyzing thematic roles is divided into three main subtasks: (1) Identification of thematic role in each noun phrase, (2) Classification the thematic role that mostly employed, and (3) Interpretation the frequency of

thematic roles in the form of graph and table.

The first part (subtask) can be accomplished by finding all thematic roles employed in each noun phrase in a sentence. The second part (subtask) uses some semantic rules to distinguish different roles such as Agent, Experiencer, Source, and Goal. This part faces a complicated problem since the number of arguments (noun phrase) and their positions vary depending on kinds of verbs and preposition used. The third part (subtask) presents the frequency of thematic roles in the ten narrative texts in the form of table and graph, so that the role which is mostly employed can be recognized.

The exploited approach to perform those three main subtasks is summarized by the following steps:

1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis by sorting and arranging the narrative texts into different types depending on the textbook as the source.
2. Read through all the narrative texts in order to grasp their meaning.
3. Begin detailed analysis with a coding process. According to Rossman & Rallis, (1998: 171) as cited in Cresswell (2007: 218): "Coding is the process of organizing the material into "Chunks" before bringing meaning to those "Chunks". This step involves taking the narrative texts, segmenting sentences into categories, and labeling those categories with a term of thematic role.
4. Use the coding process to generate a description. In this step, the researcher develop the reason of identifying thematic role in each sentence, and interconnect them with the kinds of verb or preposition used.
5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative. The researcher presents a narrative passage to convey the findings of the analysis.
6. In final step, the researcher interprets the data by clarifying the thematic role used in the sentence by comparing it with information are there in the theories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this paper are as follows: First, kind of thematic role that mostly employed in narrative text is the role Theme. For example, it can be identified from a text titled *Kyai Jegod*. In that text, the role theme occurred twenty-three times. The words considered as the theme in the text are as follows: a king, grass, some water, it, small pond, some water, it, his palace, it, the palace, strong and old woods, the forest where those woods lied, his lumberjacks, the only thing they could have, anything, the main pole, loud and deep voice, the voice, an old, tall, and massive tree, it, Kyai Jegod, the protector of that palace.

Second, thematic role constructs the sentence's meaning in narrative texts by observing the verb and the preposition used in the sentence. For detail explanation, the role of subject and object in a sentence decided from the kinds of the verbs used; the action verb indicates the existence of the role agent, intensive verb indicates the role experiencer and the preposition also decides whether the object plays the role as the source, goal, or instrument. The detail analysis of each role in a sentence as follows:

Agent

DATA #001

Title: Kyai Jegod which is taken from Interlanguage for X Grade

- 1.c. Then Sultan started to build the palace in that forest.
- 2.b. (...) Prabu Boko and all soldiers went to Pengging Kingdom to revolt.
- 2.d. When Patih Gupalo found out that his king died, **he** ran away from the battle.

In 1.c. the agent is represented by *sultan*. Since *sultan* is person who is responsible for building the palace. If *sultan* is omitted, the sentence will be ambiguous. The word *build* involved to action verb which indicates the existence of an act done by someone. So that, *sultan* as the subject is considered as the agent.

This role is also described by *Prabu Boko and all soldiers* in 2.b. which indicates that they are the doer of the action. The verb which is used in this sentence is action verb that shows someone's action. Through the verb, this sentence demands the doer, so that *Prabu Boko and all soldiers* regarded as the agent.

The next example indicates that the word *he* in 2.d. also represents the agent. It is supported by the verb *ran away* which included to action verb. The verb demands a subject as the doer in order to construct the sentence's meaning. Therefore, the word *he* is identified as the agent, i.e. the person who ran away from the battle.

Patient

DATA #003

Title: The Legend of Princess Loro Jonggrang and The Snow Bride both are taken from Interlanguage for X Grade

- 3.a. (...) he killed her father.
- 3.b. Feeling deceived, Raden Bandung Bondowoso was very angry and cursed her.
- 3.c. Raden Bandung Bondowoso cursed the girls around Prambanan area (...).

From the above data, it can be represented that the words *her father* in 3.a. plays the patient role since it is the entity that killed by him. The role patient here is in a transitive sentence which is marked by the verb *killed*, so that *her father* considered as the direct object that presents the role patient.

In 3.b., the role patient is presented by *her*. It expresses the entity cursed by Raden Bandung Bondowoso. It also included to transitive sentence which signed by the verb *cursed*. If *her* is omitted, the sentence will be ambiguous since the verb demands an object. Therefore, *her* is recognized as the patient.

In 3.c., *the girls around Prambanan area* plays a role as the patient for two reasons. First, they are the entity which is cursed by Raden Bandung Bondowoso. Second, it is the direct object which indicated by the transitive verb *cursed*.

Location

DATA #004

Titles: The Snow Bride and Cinderella which both are taken from Interlanguage for X Grade

- 4.a. A wooden house squatted beside a huge camphor tree.
- 4.b. But his horse ran away from the tiny hut.
- 4.c. He found a lean-to built on the side of the hut, (...).
- 4.d. Yuki glided around the room in a silken whisper.

The above examples describes about the role of location in the term of thematic role. It can be concluded that *beside a huge camphor tree* in 4.a. plays the role of location, since it indicates the place of a wooden house located. While, in 4.b. the role of location is presented by *the tiny hut*. The words describes the place where the horse ran away. *On the side of the hut* is represented as the

location in 4.c. example. It presents the place where the agent *he* found a lean. In the case of 4.d., the role of location is presented by the words *around the room*. It explains where Yuki's action takes place.

Beneficiary

DATA #005

Title: The Legend of Princess Loro Jonggrang taken from Interlanguage for X Grade

- 5.a. She had two requests that should be fulfilled by Raden Bandung Bondowoso so that (...)
- 5.b. First, she asked him to make Jalatunda well.
- 5.c. Then, she asked him to make 1000 temples in one night.
- 5.d. Then, Princess Loro Jonggrang asked Raden Bandung Bondowoso to go into the well, and (...).
- 5.e. After that, Princess Loro Jonggrang asked Raden Bandung Bondowoso to do the second request which (...)
- 5.f. Therefore Raden Bandung Bondowoso commanded genies to make the temples immediately.
- 5.g. She ordered the girls to pound and burn stubbles, so that (...).
- 5.h. He asked Princess Loro Jonggrang to count the amount of temples.

In the above example (5.a., 5.b., and 5.c.), the role beneficiary played by the word *she*. For detail explanation, *she* in 5.a. gets benefits from Raden Bandung Bondowoso in fulfilling her requests. In 5.b. *she* considered as the beneficiary since *she* asked someone to make Jalatunda well, so that *she* gets benefit from the action. Similarly, in 5.c., *she* gets benefit by asking someone to make 1000 temples.

The words *Princess Loro Jonggrang* is presented as beneficiary in 5.d. in fulfilling her request to go into the well, and in 5.e. *Princess Loro Jonggrang* gets

benefit from Raden Bandung Bondowoso in fulfilling her second request. While, in 5.f. *Raden Bandung Bondowoso* is the beneficiary since he gets benefit from genies in making temples. The word *she* again plays as the role beneficiary in 5.g., *the girls* did an action for her, so that *she* gets benefit from the girls' action. In the last sentence, the word *he* gets benefit from Loro Jonggrang in counting the temples.

Experiencer

DATA #006

Title: Blind Listening taken from Developing English Competencies for X Grade

- 6.a. They had no children.
- 6.b. Because of this, they were very unhappy.
- 6.c. One day, they found a baby boy outside their door.
- 6.d. They loved him very much.
- 6.e. Mr and Mrs Lin were very sad to hear this.

All sentences in the DATA #006 represent the role experiencer. In 6.a., the word *they* plays a role as the experiencer since *they* is the people affected by the state of "had", and it is usually used to expresses someone's possession. While, the word *they* in 6.b. considered as the experience because *they* is the people who feels unhappy. The role experiencer in this sentence is recognized by using stative verb. In 6.c., the word *they* is also identified as the experience since *they* is the person who aware of the action. Similarly, *they* plays as the experience in 6.d, but in this case the sentence uses the verb *love* which expresses their emotion onto him. In 6.e. the role of the experience is presented by the words *Mr and Mrs Lin*. They are identified as the entity which is aware of the state, and the existence of stative verb in this

sentence indicates that *Mr and Mrs Lin* plays a role as the experiencer.

Instrument

DATA #007

Titles: The Legend of Princess LoroJonggrang taken from Interlanguage, The Legend of Beowulf, and The Foolish Sons which taken from Developing English Competencies for X Grade
7.a. He killed Grendel's mother with a special sword.
7.b. (...) and after that she ordered Patih Gupolo to pile up the well with stone.
7.c. The third son tried to cure his father with medicine which he had bought.

From the above sentences, it can be identified that *with a special sword* plays the role instrument in 7.a. since it describes how the agent did his action. Similarly, in 7.b. the existence of the role instrument is played by the word *with stone*. It explains how Patih Gupolo pile up the well. While, the role instrument in 7.c. is indicated by the word *with medicine*. It describes the manner done by the agent in order to cure his father. All of the role instrument in those sentences indicated by the preposition *with*.

Theme

DATA #008

Title: Kyai Jegod taken from Interlanguage for X Grade
8.a. Once upon a time there was a king who ruled Mataram Kingdom.
8.b. His name is Amangkurat IV.
8.c. One day, when a gardener was gathering grass for his cattle in the forest, (...)
8.d. (...) he looked for some water because it was so hot.
8.e. He found a small pond and (...)
8.f. (...) he was going to drink some water from it, (...)

From the above examples, it can be concluded that *a king who ruled*

Mataram Kingdom in 8.a. plays a role theme since it considered as the entity which is undergoer the state, and it can answer the question "what the sentence tells about", so it considered as the theme. In 8.b, the theme is represented by *Amangkurat IV*. It indicates that *Amangkurat IV* is being talked in this sentence, so it regarded as the theme.

The role theme in 8.c. is presented by the word *grass*. It can be identified that *grass* is the thing affected by a gardener; it is the thing which is gathered. So that, *grass* regarded as the theme. In 8.d., the words *some water* represents the role theme since it is the thing which the location is described by the action of the agent. It also plays as direct object in this sentence. Therefore, it can be said that *some water* is the theme.

From the above data, *a small pond* regarded as the theme in 8.e. since it becomes the direct object of the sentence. Besides, it also plays as the entity which location is being found by the agent. Because of the reasons, *a small pond* considered as the theme. In the last sentence, *some water* again plays as the theme since it is identified as the thing affected by the action of the agent; it is the thing which is drunk by him. So that, it is said as the theme.

Source

DATA #009

Title: A Story about Red taken from Developing English Competencies for X Grade
9.a. Rosaura was hiding from her mother and father.
9.b. As soon as she had finished her food she slipped down from her chair.

From the above sentences, it can be identified that *from her mother and father* plays the role source in 9.a. since it indicates the starting point of Rosaura's action. In 9.b, the role source is presented

by the words *from her chair*. It also describes the starting point where the agent did her action. Both the role source in the above examples marked by the preposition *from*. So that *from her mother and father* and *from her chair* considered as the source in the term of thematic role.

Goal

DATA #010

Title: The Legend of Beowulf taken from Developing English Competencies for X Grade

10.a. One day, he went to the King's castle.

10.b. A knight called Beowulf heard about the problem and went to Denmark to help the king.

10.c. Grendel went back to his home in a lake and died.

10.d. Grendel's mother was very angry and the next night she went to the castle and killed a knight.

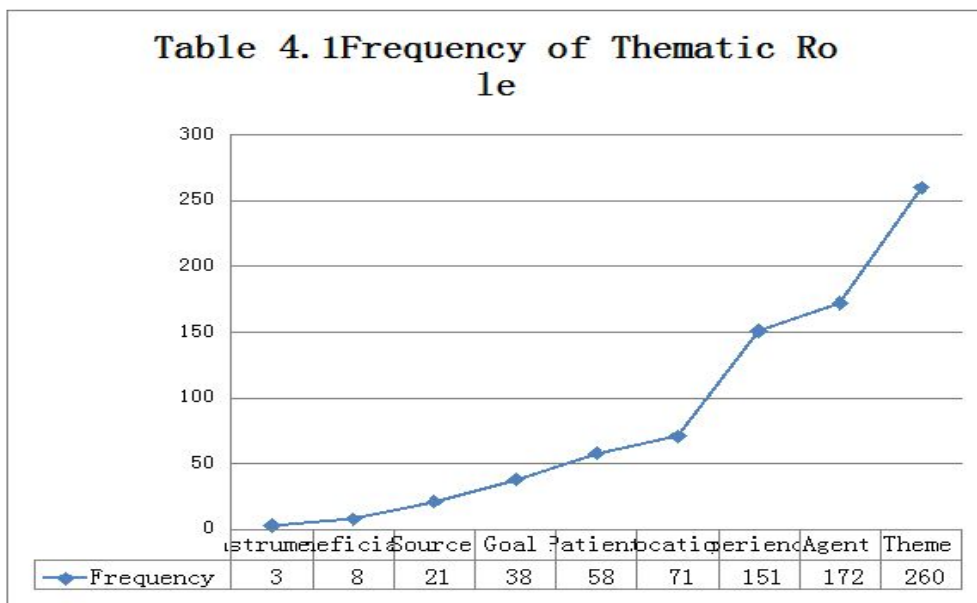
10.e. In the morning, Beowulf went to the lake.

The sentence in the above data represents the existence of the role goal in the term of thematic role. In 10.a., the

role goal is played by *to the King's castle* since it indicates the destination of the verb "went", and it is marked by the existence of preposition "to". The words *to Denmark* in 10.b also identified as the goal which is marked by the "to" preposition and it becomes the destination for Beowulf to help the king.

The goal in 10.c. is showed by *to his home*. It plays as the destination where Grendel went back. While, the goal in 10.d. is presented by *to the castle*. It becomes the entity where Grendel's mother visited. In 10.e., the words *to the lake* is again employed as the goal which expresses the destination of the verb "went" as in 10.a.

From the ten samples chosen, thematic roles employed in narrative texts (782) times. The role agent employed in those texts (172) times, patient (58) times, location (71) times, beneficiary (8) times, experience (151) times, goal (38) times, instrument (3) times, source (21) times, and theme (260) time. Meanwhile, the frequency of thematic roles in this research can be identified from the following graph:



The phenomena of thematic role in narrative texts reveals that there is relation between thematic role and verb and preposition used in a sentence. The role agent indicated by the use of action verb, the role experience identified by the use of intensive verb, perception, intellection, emotion, and sensation. The

use of preposition “to” indicates the role goal, the use of preposition “from” identifies the role source. Meanwhile, the role instrument is recognized by the use of preposition “with” or “by”. The following table 4.2 is the illustration of the overall thematic role.

Table 4.2
 THE REALIZATION OF THEMATIC ROLE IN NARRATIVE TEXTS

| No. | TR Titles | Frequency (...times) | | | | | | | | | Amount |
|-----|--------------|----------------------|----|----|---|-----|----|---|----|-----|--------|
| | | A | P | L | B | E | G | I | S | T | |
| 1. | KJ | 7 | 1 | 9 | - | 11 | 2 | - | 3 | 23 | 56 |
| 2. | TLPLJ | 25 | 8 | 9 | 5 | 29 | 11 | 1 | 5 | 45 | 138 |
| 3. | QABP | 17 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 10 | 5 | - | 2 | 21 | 66 |
| 4. | TSB | 27 | 16 | 6 | - | 10 | 1 | - | 2 | 38 | 100 |
| 5. | C | 17 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 26 | 2 | - | 1 | 43 | 101 |
| 6. | BL | 22 | 5 | 1 | - | 4 | 3 | - | 2 | 20 | 57 |
| 7. | TFS | 12 | 2 | 2 | - | 9 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 13 | 44 |
| 8. | TFT | 14 | 11 | 8 | - | 19 | 3 | - | - | 21 | 76 |
| 9. | ASR | 16 | 2 | 17 | - | 22 | 3 | - | 3 | 27 | 90 |
| 10. | TLB | 15 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 11 | 6 | 1 | - | 9 | 54 |
| | Amount | 172 | 58 | 71 | 8 | 151 | 38 | 3 | 21 | 260 | |

CONCLUSION

On the basic of the findings above, it can be firstly concluded that thematic role in a sentence indicated by the use of verbs (Fasold and Linton, 2006). Second, thematic role is a way to describe the role of noun phrase in a sentence, so that thematic role is closely related with the grammatical function (O’Grady *et al*, 1991). Third, the role theme seems to be the mostly employed in narrative texts. It is indicated as the part which is undergoer the state or event (Jackendoff, 1990). The role theme has function to answer the question: “what the sentence tells about”.

This research offers some methodological and practical suggestions. This research is delimited methodologically. It explores thematic role from a semantic point of view. Further, such studies may see it from

another perspective such as syntax and literary studies. In addition, this research can be broadened in terms of textual analysis or transitivity as studied in systemic functional grammar (SFG).

There are also practical suggestions for teachers and students. In the teaching and learning process, the teacher has to clearly explain to the student about the existence of thematic role and how to recognize them. Since thematic role is a part of semantics studies as one of knowledge that elaborates meaning. Meanwhile, for the student, thematic role helps them to identify the grammatical functions of a sentence, i.e. subject, object, complement, noun phrase, verb, and preposition. By recognizing them, the student will easily grasp the sentence’s meaning, so that they will understand the overall text.

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