

THE PLOT IN THE NARRATIVE WRITTEN BY THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the plot structure used in narrative texts written by fourth semester students of teacher training and education faculty of Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. Narrative writing is one of the important language skills that allows students to express imagination, personal experiences, and moral values through written communication. The study focuses on how students organize the sequence of events, develop conflicts, create tension, and use transitional signals in their narratives. The objective of this research is to identify the dominant plot patterns used by the students and to analyze how the students construct narrative elements such as exposition, rising action, climax, resolution, and reorientation. The research also examines the types of conflicts and transitional signals used in their writing. This research applies a descriptive qualitative method. The data consist of 30 narrative texts written by fourth semester students in the academic year 2024/2025. The data were analyzed through data reduction, classification, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that most students used linear chronological plots with simple conflict development. The majority of narratives were personal experiences and fantasy stories influenced by social media trends and teenage life. The students commonly used character versus self-conflict and character versus society-conflict. In addition, the students demonstrated adequate ability in connecting events through conjunctions, adverbial phrases, and time transitions. The study concludes that vocational high school students are capable of constructing coherent narratives, although many of them still have difficulty creating complex tension and suspense.

ABSTRACT

Kata Kunci:

Narasi; Alur Cerita; Konflik; Ketegangan; Sinyal Transisi

Penelitian ini menyelidiki struktur plot yang digunakan dalam teks naratif yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa semester empat Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar. Menulis naratif merupakan salah satu keterampilan berbahasa penting yang memungkinkan mahasiswa untuk mengekspresikan imajinasi, pengalaman pribadi, dan nilai-nilai moral melalui komunikasi tertulis. Studi ini berfokus pada bagaimana mahasiswa mengatur urutan peristiwa, mengembangkan konflik, menciptakan ketegangan, dan menggunakan sinyal transisi dalam narasi mereka. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi pola plot dominan yang digunakan oleh mahasiswa dan untuk menganalisis bagaimana mahasiswa membangun unsur-unsur naratif seperti eksposisi, aksi menaik, klimaks, resolusi, dan reorientasi. Penelitian ini juga mengkaji jenis konflik dan sinyal transisi yang digunakan dalam tulisan mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Data terdiri dari 30 teks naratif yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa semester empat tahun ajaran 2024/2025. Data dianalisis melalui reduksi data, klasifikasi, interpretasi, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa menggunakan plot kronologis linier dengan pengembangan

konflik yang sederhana. Sebagian besar narasi merupakan pengalaman pribadi dan cerita fantasi yang dipengaruhi oleh tren media sosial dan kehidupan remaja. Para siswa umumnya menggunakan konflik karakter versus diri sendiri dan konflik karakter versus masyarakat. Selain itu, para siswa menunjukkan kemampuan yang memadai dalam menghubungkan peristiwa melalui konjungsi, frasa keterangan, dan transisi waktu. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa siswa sekolah menengah kejuruan mampu membangun narasi yang koheren, meskipun banyak dari mereka masih kesulitan menciptakan ketegangan dan suspense yang kompleks.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Narrative writing is an essential component of English learning because it helps students express ideas, emotions, experiences, and imagination through written language. Narrative texts are commonly used to entertain readers while simultaneously delivering moral lessons or social messages (Yusuf et al., 2022). In the context of English as a foreign language, students often face challenges in organizing events coherently, developing conflicts, and maintaining logical sequences within stories (Clinton et al., 2020). The development of technology and social media has influenced students' storytelling styles. Many students are familiar with digital storytelling platforms such as TikTok, Instagram reels, Wattpad, and YouTube shorts, which shape the way they construct stories. As a result, students tend to produce narratives based on personal experiences, friendship problems, school life, online interactions, and fantasy stories inspired by popular culture (Ramadhan et al., 2020).

Students generally focus more on practical and technical subjects than academic writing. However, narrative writing remains important because it develops creativity, communication skills, and critical thinking (Khair & Misnawati, 2022). Students are expected to understand how a plot develops from beginning to ending and how conflicts create interest within stories (Muliani et al., 2022). Plot is one of the most significant aspects of narrative writing. It organizes events logically and emotionally to guide readers through the story. A well-developed plot commonly consists of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution (Ariana & Ardiana, 2021). Through plot development, readers can understand the emotional journey of the characters and the moral value of the story (Putri & Maisarah, 2023).

Based on preliminary observation, many students can write narratives, but their stories often contain weak conflict development and limited suspense (Faridi & Saleh, 2018). Some students directly move from exposition to ending without sufficient tension

or climax. Therefore, this research is important to analyze how students construct plots in their narrative texts (Aslian & Umam, 2022).

Research Problems

This research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What types of plot structures are used by the fourth semester English department students in writing narrative texts?
2. What types of conflicts are found in the students' narratives?
3. How do the students use transitional signals to connect events in their stories?
4. How do the students develop tension and suspense in their narratives?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

1. To identify the plot structures used by the fourth semester English department students
2. To analyze the types of conflicts used in students' narrative writing.
3. To describe the use of transitional signals in connecting events.
4. To explain the development of tension and suspense in the narratives.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this research are expected to provide benefits for students, teachers, and future researchers. For students, the research can improve understanding of narrative writing structure. For teachers, the findings may become a reference in teaching narrative texts more effectively. For future researchers, this study can provide additional information related to narrative writing analysis in English language learning.

Review Of Related Literature

Narrative Text

Narrative text is a type of text that tells stories or events in chronological order. According to narrative theory, narratives are used to entertain readers and communicate experiences, lessons, or imagination. Narrative texts usually involve characters, setting, conflict, and resolution (Sariyatun et al., 2024).

The generic structure of narrative text generally consists of:

1. Orientation
2. Complication
3. Resolution
4. Reorientation

Plot

Plot is the sequence of events that develops a story from beginning to ending. A plot organizes actions logically and creates emotional responses from readers. Freytag's Pyramid divides plot into five stages (Erniwati et al., 2022):

1. Exposition
2. Rising Action
3. Climax
4. Falling Action

5. Resolution

Plot can be classified into several types:

1. Linear Plot
2. Flashback Plot
3. Circular Plot
4. Progressive Plot

Conflict

Conflict is the central problem faced by characters in a story. Conflict creates tension and makes narratives interesting. The main types of conflict are (Asni & Susanti, 2018):

1. Character versus Self
2. Character versus Character
3. Character versus Society
4. Character versus Nature

Tension and Suspense

Tension refers to emotional pressure experienced by characters or readers during the story. Suspense creates curiosity about what will happen next. Both elements are important to maintain readers' attention (Pardede & Herman, 2020).

Transitional Signals

Transitional signals are words or phrases used to connect ideas and events in narratives. Examples include:

1. then
2. after that
3. suddenly
4. meanwhile
5. finally
6. one day

These signals help readers understand the chronological order of events.

2. METHOD

Research Design

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method (Windiyani et al., 2019). The descriptive qualitative method is appropriate because the research focuses on analyzing narrative structures, conflicts, and language patterns found in students' written texts. The data are analyzed inductively to describe how students construct narratives (Vadipoor et al., 2021).

Subject of the Study

The subjects of this research are 30 fourth semester students of English department Universitas HKBP Nommensen pematangsiantar Academic Year 2024-2025

Object of the Study

The object of this research is the plot structure in students' narrative texts, including conflict, tension, suspense, and transitional signals.

Source of Data

The data source consists of 30 narrative texts written by students during classroom writing activities. The students were asked to write narratives based on personal experiences, fictional stories, or imaginative adventures (Simanungkalit et al., 2019).

Technique of Data Collection

The data were collected through the following procedures:

1. The researcher asked students to write narrative texts.
2. The researcher collected the students' writing.
3. The researcher classified the narratives based on plot patterns and conflict types.
4. The researcher analyzed the narratives qualitatively.

Technique of Data Analysis

The data analysis followed several stages:

1. Data Reduction
2. Data Classification
3. Data Interpretation
4. Drawing Conclusion

The researcher identified plot stages, conflicts, suspense, and transitional signals used in the students' narratives.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Plot Structures

From the 30 narrative texts analyzed, most students tended to use linear chronological plots in developing their stories (Mughtar et al., 2020). About 20 students or 67% organized their narratives in a simple sequence from beginning to ending. Meanwhile, 6 students or 20% used progressive plots, while only 4 students or 13% applied flashback techniques in their writing. This result shows that students were generally more comfortable writing stories in chronological order because it helped them arrange events more easily. Most narratives started with an introduction of characters and setting, followed by simple conflicts and direct resolutions (Permatasari, 2017).

2. Types of Stories

The stories written by the students varied depending on their interests and experiences. Personal experience stories became the most dominant category with 14 texts or 47%. Fantasy stories appeared in 8 texts or 27%, while friendship stories accounted for 16% and horror stories represented 10% of the total data (Niu, 2022). Many students seemed more confident when writing about situations close to their daily lives, such as friendship problems, school experiences, and emotional struggles. On the other hand, some students also showed creativity through fantasy and horror themes influenced by movies, games, and social media content (Routarinne et al., 2023).

3. Conflict Analysis

The analysis revealed that character versus self-conflict appeared most frequently in the students' narratives (YUNI, 2021). Around 40% of the stories focused on internal struggles such as fear, anxiety, disappointment, and lack of confidence. Character versus society-conflict appeared in 27% of the narratives, followed by character versus

character-conflict with 20%, and character versus nature-conflict with 13% (Gayed et al., 2022). These findings reflect the emotional experiences commonly faced by teenagers (Pingmuang & Koraneekij, 2022). Several students expressed feelings related to social pressure, friendship misunderstandings, and insecurity through their stories (Tillema, 2012).

4. Tension and Suspense

Only 11 stories or 37% showed clear suspense and tension development, while the remaining 63% still lacked strong climax organization. In many cases, the conflict was introduced clearly at the beginning but resolved too quickly at the end of the story (Ali, 2024). The horror narratives tended to create suspense through fear and uncertainty, whereas friendship stories mostly relied on emotional tension caused by betrayal or misunderstanding (Sulfasyah et al., 2018).

5. Transitional Signals

A total of 420 transitional signals were found in the narratives. Connectors became the most dominant type with 33%, followed by adverbial phrases with 23%, pronouns with 19%, clauses with 15%, and noun phrases with 10%. Words such as “then,” “after that,” “suddenly,” and “finally” appeared repeatedly throughout the narratives. Although these transitions helped students connect events coherently, the repetition also indicated limited vocabulary variation (Ilham, 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that most students already understand the basic structure of narrative writing, especially in organizing events from beginning to ending. However, many of the stories still followed simple patterns and lacked deeper conflict development. The dominance of linear plots may indicate that students feel more confident using straightforward storytelling rather than more complex techniques such as flashbacks or mixed timelines. This is understandable because chronological storytelling is easier to manage, particularly for students who are still developing their writing ability. Interestingly, personal experience stories became the most common type of narrative. This shows that students often rely on real-life experiences to generate ideas for writing. Experiences related to friendship, social relationships, embarrassment, or family situations appeared frequently in the narratives. In several stories, students indirectly expressed their emotions and personal struggles through fictional characters. Another noticeable finding was the large number of internal conflicts found in the stories. Feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and fear were commonly presented in the narratives. This may reflect the emotional condition of teenagers who are still trying to build confidence and social identity. Although the students were able to connect events using transitional signals, many of them repeatedly used the same expressions. This suggests that students still need more exposure to varied vocabulary and narrative styles.

In terms of suspense, most students still struggled to maintain emotional tension throughout the story. Some narratives introduced interesting conflicts at the beginning but resolved them too suddenly, making the climax feel less impactful. This may happen

because students are more familiar with short-form digital storytelling from social media, where stories are usually brief and direct. Even so, the narratives showed creativity and imagination. Several students successfully combined real experiences with fictional elements, creating stories that reflected modern teenage life and current social issues.

Suggestions

1. English teachers should provide more practice in developing plot complexity and suspense.
2. Students should be encouraged to read more literary works to enrich storytelling techniques.
3. Future researchers may analyze narrative writing using larger samples or different educational levels.
4. Teachers may integrate digital storytelling media to improve students' creativity in narrative writing.

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