



The Realization of Marked Theme in Narrative Text of Secondary School Textbook

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Abstract : *This study aimed to analyzed the realization of marked theme in narrative text. The data of this study is the narrative text in the English for Nusantara Textbook. This study applied a qualitative approach with content analysis as research design. The study found that the narrative texts in English Textbook are realized through adverbial group, prepositional phrase and linking words. This study concluded that the narrative texts in the textbook can be a model for students to create different sentence structures by putting adverbial or prepositional at the beginning of the sentence and connect ideas logically by using connectors.*

Keywords: *Marked Theme; Narrative Text; Textbook;*

Abstrak : Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis realisasi tema yang ditandai dalam teks naratif. Data penelitian ini adalah teks naratif dalam buku teks Bahasa Inggris untuk Nusantara. Penelitian ini menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis konten sebagai desain penelitian. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa teks naratif dalam buku teks Bahasa Inggris diwujudkan melalui kelompok adverbial, frasa preposisional, dan kata penghubung. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa teks naratif dalam buku teks dapat menjadi model bagi siswa untuk membuat struktur kalimat yang berbeda dengan menempatkan adverbial atau preposisional di awal kalimat dan menghubungkan ide-ide secara logis dengan menggunakan kata penghubung.

Kata kunci: Marked Theme; Teks Naratif, Buku Pelajaran

1. INTRODUCTION

Thematic structure is the key in the organization of message in a text, particularly in how ideas are introduced and developed across clauses. In the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, theme is specified as the starting point in a message, guiding how information flows and how cohesion is built within discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Mardani (2023) to build cohesion within discourse, the understanding of thematic structure is necessary. Thematic structure consists of Theme and Rheme. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe the Theme as the element that initiates the clause, providing orientation along with context to the clause. In contrast, the rest of the message, where the Theme is further elaborated, is known as the Rheme. According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), Theme can be grouped into three types: Topical, Interpersonal, and Textual Theme. Furthermore, Gerot and Wignell (1994) claim that there are two types of topical theme, marked theme and unmarked. Halliday (2004), explained that unmarked theme is when the starting point of the clause aligns with the grammatical subject. In contrast, a marked topical theme as stated by Halliday (1994) is an

element that takes the initial position in the clause but does not align with the grammatical subject is referred to as a marked theme. Marked topical Theme refers to a circumstance, prepositional phrase and complement which acts as the beginning point of a clause but not as the subject in the clause. A large proportion of marked Themes can represent the level of control and competency of the writer in guiding the readers to the development and organization of a text (Thompson, 1996; Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Marked theme also offer the coherence and clarity of the text (Butt et al., 2000). Considering the functional importance of marked topical Themes in shaping meaning and text organization, this study views it as necessary to analyze how marked Themes are utilized in texts.

An academic text must contain a good text. One of the examples of text that is used in academic settings is text in the textbook. Narrative Text is one of the texts contained in an Indonesian textbook. Qatrinada (2024) narrative texts are crucial for enhancing students' comprehension of historical narratives, as well as fostering creativity and critical thinking. Although difficult to understand logically, narrative story contain moral messages to guide people's daily behavior (Guroian, V., 2023). Therefore, it is important for students to understand narrative texts. Despite the importance of narrative texts, students continue to experience challenges in both comprehension and composition. Septy (2024) highlights that students struggle to fully grasp the overall structure and meaning of narrative texts. Similarly, Anggadewa (2022) identifies text length as a contributing factor to these comprehension difficulties. Beyond reading challenges, students also face obstacles in narrative writing. According to Falihah et al. (2022), a major difficulty in constructing narrative texts lies in students' inability to develop coherent ideas and formulate grammatically structured sentences in English. These findings suggest that students encounter difficulties in effectively interpreting and organizing narrative story, which impacts both their reading and writing proficiency.

Previous studies have explored thematic structures in a range of contexts. For example, Dashela (2021) analyzed theme rheme in *Sleeping beauty* short story and found that the marked theme was realized through adverbial. Similarly, Mustika, Nurdin, and Sakina (2021) examined marked topical themes in student narratives and observed that adverbial groups frequently functioned as marked themes. Yulianti & Roza (2023) analyzed the two narrative stories of Indonesian folklore, the result shows that the marked theme was realized through complement, adverbial and prepositional phrases by fronting the time or place at the beginning of the sentence. Furthermore, Zha (2019) revealed that students commonly used connectors such as however and but as marked theme in their writing. Additionally, Ebrahimi (2017) analyzed the marked and unmarked theme types of university English textbook, the result show marked

theme commonly realized through the use of prepositional, adverbial to emphasize time and conditions.

However, these studies largely focused on identifying all thematic types in literature and general text. Limited attention has been given to how marked topical themes are specifically realized in narrative texts particularly those found in Indonesian EFL textbooks. To fill this gap, the present study focuses on the realization of marked topical themes in narrative texts taken from the *English for Nusantara* Grade 8 textbook, which is widely used in Indonesian junior high schools. The study aims to analyze what marked themes are realized in the narrative texts and how it reflects variations in textual coherence.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research utilized a qualitative approach as it is well-suited for an a thorough examination of thematic structures within textual analysis. According to Gay (1996:208), qualitative approach involves collecting a substantial amount of data across multiple variables over an extended period, conducted within a natural and real-life setting. Furthermore, a content analysis approach was chosen to allow for an in-depth examination of marked theme realizations in narrative texts. As noted by Bengtsson (2016), content analysis is a systematic and objective method for describing the explicit content of communication. The use of content analysis was appropriate, since it aligns with the study's aim of analyzing how the thematic structure, particularly the marked theme functions within narrative texts.

The data for this research include four narrative texts sourced from the textbook *English for Nusantara* (Grade VIII). The textbook was released by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2022. The narrative texts are *Ugly Duckling*, *Elephant*, *Fisherman* and *Timun Mas*. The object of the study was the marked theme in these narrative texts. The researcher collected the data by creating a corpus. Corpus is a versatile methodology of computational analysis of language (Biber et al. 1999). The corpus of the research contained four narrative texts from English for Nusantara Textbook.

In collecting the data the researcher followed the Miles & Huberman (2014) research framework, that consists of three main stages: first data reduction, then data display and lastly conclusion drawing. The researcher read the narrative text, segmented the text into clauses and identified the thematic structure to find out the marked theme in the narrative texts. In

identifying the thematic structure the researcher used theoretical frameworks by Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) and Eggins (2004) for thematic structure analysis.

3. FINDING AND DISSCUSSION

1. Marked Theme In Narrative Text

The realizations of marked theme in four narrative text are different. Below are the detailed findings of marked theme and its realization in the narrative text.

4. 1 Adverbial group as Marked Theme

Table 4. Marked Theme In Narrative Text 3 “Fisherman”

Helplessly	the man	was drawn along
Topical : circ	Topical : subject	
Marked Theme		Rheme

The clause in the table above started with “Helplessly” which functions as a marked theme because it appears before the subject “the man”. The realization of the marked theme in this clause is through the use of adverbial groups to show the emotional or physical condition of the participant. This type of realization emphasizes the character’s condition that adds emotional depth to the narrative.

Table 3.. Marked Theme in Narrative Text 1 “Ugly Duckling”

Suddenly	a big hungry dog	came
Topical : circ	Topical : subject	
Marked Theme		Rheme

4.2 Prepositional Phrase as Marked Theme

Table 2. Marked Theme in Narrative Text 1 “Ugly Duckling”

Once upon a time in in big farm	a mother duck sat on her nest
Topical : circ	
Marked Theme	Rheme

In the clause above, “once upon a time in a big farm” acts as the marked theme. It provides the setting for the narrative, which is typical of story openings. It does not function as the subject, hence it is marked. The marked theme is realized through a prepositional phrase combining information about time (“once upon a time”) and place (“in a big farm”). This phrase is common to be found in narrative stories to provide settings of the story.

Table 5. Marked Theme in Narrative Text “Timun Mas”

With a stash of magic cucumber seeds, needles, and salt from her mother,	Timun mas run away
Topical : circ	
Marked Theme	Rheme

The first element that comes in this clause is realized with a prepositional phrase. It explains what the character had with her at the moment of action. It is marked because it does not act as the subject but provides contextual information of the clause. Although it appears at the beginning of the clause, it is not the subject. The subject “Timun Mas” comes later in the clause. It builds tension and contributes to the rising action of the story

4.3 Linking Word as Marked Theme

Table 3. Marked Theme in Narrative Text 2 “Elephant”

Then	the elephant met the frog
Textual : conj	
Marked Theme	Rheme

The table above showed that the clause started with “Then” which functions as a textual conjunction and serves as a marked topical Theme since it is not the subject of the clause. It indicates a temporal sequence, showing that the action of the elephant meeting the frog occurs after a previous event. Its role is crucial in ensuring the text's coherence by helping readers follow the logical progression of events. The use of such connectors reflects a narrative technique to signal transitions in the plot.

But	he flew	till	he	found another farm
Textual : conj		Text: Conj	Topical	
Marked Theme	Rheme	Marked Theme		Rheme

The table shows that the conjunction “But” and “Till” as marked theme. In this clause these two conjunctions function to connect between two dependent clauses. Where “but” indicates contrast idea and “till” indicates an action that is going to happen. So, they are not the subject of the clause.

2. The Realizations of Marked Theme in Narrative Text

As shown in the findings, there is a notable presence of marked topical themes in the text narrative of English textbook. As stated by Halliday (2014) an element that takes the initial position in the clause but does not align with the grammatical subject is referred to as a marked

theme. Marked theme refers to a circumstance complement, and prepositional phrase, which acts as the beginning point of a clause but not as the subject in the clause. This finding shows that the marked theme in narrative texts are realized through adverbial group and prepositional phrase. This finding is consistent with Ebrahimi (2017) that the marked theme in the textbook is realized through prepositional and adverbial to emphasize time and conditions. Similarly, Mustika, Nurdin, and Sakina (2021) also revealed marked topical themes in student descriptive text is realized through adverbial groups and prepositional phrases. In line with this study, Yulianti & Roza (2023) revealed that in narrative text of folklore, the marked theme was realized through complement, adverbial and prepositional phrases by fronting the time or place at the beginning of the sentence. However, this study is in contrast with Dashela (2021), marked theme in narrative story is realized only through the use of adverbial groups. Amartya, Nugraha & Ridwan (2022) most students' recount texts contain adverb as marked theme. The use of adverbial and prepositional phrase at the beginning of the clause indicates that the writer of the textbook provide background information of the story. As explained by Eggins (1993) that proficient writers consciously use marked themes to add emphasis in their writing.

Besides prepositional and adverbial, this study revealed that there is another element that serves as a marked theme in the narrative text. This study found that marked themes are also realized through the use of linking words such as conjunction and continuative. As stated by (Martin & Rose [2003] 2007) that marked themes in written discourse often serve to structure transitions, helping to indicate shifts in time, setting, or key participants (Martin & Rose [2003] 2007). Gao & Lyu (2020) At the same time, they also play a crucial role as cohesive elements that connect participants and circumstances in sequential events. This study align with previous study conducted by Zha (2019) the most used marked theme in student writing is linking words or connectors such as "however", "and" along with "because". This supports the idea that connectors play a vital role in organizing ideas in narrative texts.

The use of marked theme indicates the more varied sentence structure, because it does not only use the common subject verb object pattern. As stated by Thompson (1996); Halliday & Hasan, (1989) a large number use of marked themes can indicate the level of writer's competency in directing the readers on the construction and organization of a text. The use of marked theme in the text of narrative is in line with the purpose of the narrative text itself which is to amuse or attract readers. Lan Ningyi (2020) the marked themes provide the time background, which make it easier to get the reader's attention. Therefore, this findings

strengthen the idea that the narrative text in English textbook can be a model for students to create different sentence structures by putting adverbial or prepositional at the beginning of the sentence and connect ideas logically by using connectors.

3. KESIMPULAN DAN SARAN

This study investigated how marked topical themes are realized in narrative texts. The analysis revealed that marked themes are realized through prepositional phrase, adverbial group and linking words. The use of these elements at the beginning of the clause indicating time, place, manner, and connectors to link events and characters in the story. This study concludes that the use of marked theme contributes to the well written and organization of events in the narrative text. The results and contribution of this research lie in providing a deeper understanding of how these marked theme are formed and used can help teachers and students better recognize and apply cohesive writing strategies.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can improve the practical application of marked themes in narrative writing. Teachers should integrate explicit instruction on prepositional phrases, adverbial groups, and linking words into writing courses. This implementation helps students develop a stronger understanding of cohesive device in narrative text. Additionally, textbook developer can provide knowledge or exercise about marked theme in textbooks. Further research could explore the impact of marked themes on readability and comprehension of students' narrative text

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