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THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF ONLINE SHORT STORIES IN CROSSING BOUNDARIES: NEW VOICES FROM INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to analyze the themes in online short stories in Crossing Boundaries: New Voices from Indonesia. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the thematic patterns in the short stories? (2) What literary devices and techniques are used to develop these themes? (3) What insights can be gleaned from this study in consonance with the objectives of the 2013 curriculum of Indonesia? (4) What teaching strategies and learning activities can be proposed? The study was delimited to the analysis of the themes of nine online short stories in the anthology. The analytical qualitative method was used to analyze the content of the short stories in order to extract the themes. Theme is the central topic in the story which is either implicit or explicit. The answer of problems was presented the analysis of themes, identified literary devices and techniques and the insights gained in one table so as to facilitate clearer view of readers on how the problems have been answered. Likewise, a proposed material with suggested teaching strategies and activities was developed.

Keywords: *Thematic Analysis, Online Short Stories, Literary Devices, Literary Techniques*

¹*Mengajar di SMA*

²*Dosen UAD*

A. Introduction

Theme is the central topic in the story which is either implicit or explicit. It is mostly found in literary works. Literature is a body of writings on a particular subject having excellence of form or expression and presenting ideas of permanent or universal interest (Merriam-Webster, 2005). It is distinguished from ordinary speech or other kinds of writing on the basis of its "literariness." Major forms may be fiction or non-fiction, prose or poetry. The short story, under the category of fiction, is shorter, less expansive narrative form than the novel, epic, saga, and romance. Authors may address many different frailties or concepts quickly and feel they have contributed a statement of concern or entertained the reader or perhaps both. The created tale or imagined work is set to be loaded with depth and insight, the value of which cannot be traded for mere enjoyment. In order to bring forth these values, a short story writer uses literary devices such as: flashback, flash-forward, foreshadowing, metaphor, point of view, archetype, symbols, deus-ex-machina, among others. These devices have two components: the literary elements like plot, setting, characters, theme, style and point of view, otherwise known as the "unavoidables." The other component, which is literary technique, is not universal or necessary as a requirement in writing. Literary techniques are the methods employed to make a piece of fiction more appealing to the reader, to add beauty to the work, and to make the author's message clearer. It encompasses a wide range of approaches to crafting a work. Both literary

devices and literary techniques play roles in thematic patterning and distributing of recurrent thematic concepts that emphasize the unifying argument or salient idea. In the 2013 curriculum of Indonesia (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2013) the use of Information Technology is one of its features, on top of the character-building goal. In response to these requirements, the researcher chose to study nine online short stories written in Bahasa Indonesia but translated into English. Since Indonesia is composed of many islands with diverse culture and language, one of the most possible ways to unify this diversity is to use technology. The character-building aspect can be addressed by the analysis of the online short stories that describe the many facets of Indonesian character, the complexities and problems which are described in *Crossing Boundaries: New Voices from Indonesia*. This is an online anthology of nine short stories that attempts to represent and connect these diverse cultures of Indonesians, accessible through

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/booksandarts/features/crossing-boundaries/>

This study aims to explore and analyze the themes of nine Indonesian online short stories in English from the anthology *Crossing Boundaries: New Voices from Indonesia*. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions: (1) What are the thematic patterns in the short stories? (2) What literary devices and techniques are used to develop these themes? (3) What insights can be gleaned from this study in consonance with the objectives of the 2013 curriculum of Indonesia? (4) What teaching strategies and learning activities can be proposed?

B. Methodology

The analytical qualitative method was used to analyze the content of the short stories in order to extract the themes. Theme is the central topic in the story which is either implicit or explicit. In analytical research method, researcher has to use facts or information already available and analyze it to make a critical evaluation of the material. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014). It is especially important in the behavioral sciences where the aim is to discover the underlying motives and human behaviors. This research is conducted for the purpose of describing themes and identifying literary techniques and devices which bring forth the insights gained from the short stories.

C. Data Source

The online research was used to find relevant short stories that conform to the 2013 curriculum of Indonesia which emphasize on values and stresses the use of technology. *Crossing Boundaries: New Voices from Indonesia* is the material used as the subject of the study. It was accessed through

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/booksandarts/features/crossing-boundaries/> (2017)

D. Material Gathering Procedures

The processes of interpreting the short stories, the following steps were followed:

1. Reading the short stories carefully.

2. Extracting the themes from the texts in order to get a picture of what the author wants to show. Themes can be known through conversations and action of characters, through the description of the author or what the character say about the “big idea” of the story.
3. Identifying literary techniques and devices that show how they carried out the themes.
4. Analyzing the lessons learned from the stories.
5. Formulating conclusions and giving recommendations based on the results of the study.

E. Discussion

1. Thematic Analysis

One of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research is thematic analysis. It emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns within data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question. The themes become the categories for analysis. Thematic analysis is performed through the process of coding in six phases to create established, meaningful patterns. These phases are: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thematic_analysis).

Since thematic analysis is a widely used method of analysis in qualitative research, in 2006 Braun and Clarke published an article that described to novice researchers how to use thematic analysis in a step-by-step manner. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that thematic analysis is a foundational method of analysis that needed to be defined and described to solidify its place in qualitative research.

Thematic analysis is simple to use which lends itself to use for novice researchers who are unfamiliar with more complex types of qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It allows for flexibility in the researchers choice of theoretical framework. Some other methods of analysis are closely tied to specific theories, but thematic analysis can be used with any theory the researcher chooses. Through this flexibility, thematic analysis allows for rich, detailed and complex description of your data.

2. Literary Analysis

A study from Wa Rosdahlia (2013) is about to know themes and messages of *Habibie dan Ainun*, a novel by Bachrudin Jusuf Habibie. It uses qualitative descriptive method, by analyzing content. The result of this research shows that *Habibie dan Ainun*, a novel by Bachruddin Jusuf Habibie has many themes and messages.

Another study about theme analysis is from Santi Husain Niode (2015) entitled “Analisis Tema Dalam Novel *The Fault in Our Stars* Karya John Green” is completed and submitted. The aims of this research are to identify, classify and analyze the theme in the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* through the characters, plot and setting. The author uses the theory of Stanton to analyze the major theme in the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* through the characters, plot and setting. Intrinsic approach is used to understand the characters through physical interaction, is the thoughts and problems that occur in their lives. Understanding the plot is through the sequence of events that happen and understanding the setting is through the time and place where the story takes place, including is describing a situation or object. The results of this research show that the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* is a novel with a theme on teens’ struggle against cancer, who have a passion for life. This can be seen through the characters, plot and setting in *The Fault in Our Stars*.

The study conducted by Estrella Arroyo (1993) to analyze and interpret the poetry of Bienvenido N. Santos in his second volume of poems, *Distances: In Time*. Specifically, it sought to analyze the thematic patterns in the poems, the poetic devices used, and how themes and poetic devices help in the crystallization of form and meaning in the poems. The main method used in this study was the formalistic approach. This literary approach places art as art rather than an expression of social, religious, ethical or political ideas. It is to concentrate on the aesthetic quality of the work.

3. Short Story

"Short Story-Based Learning at the Indonesian Education and Literature" aims to describe short stories-based learning conditions in the selected research settings. Through this study, the researchers highlight the advantages and disadvantages of implementing short stories-based learning performed by the lecturers. This study applied a qualitative descriptive approach, and the result shows that the weight of the course of Indonesian literature in the curriculum is compared proportionally to a total number of credits taken by college students. Lecturers of Indonesian literature course have shown good competence and most of the college students are more interested in learning Indonesian language, but only a few of them are interested in learning Indonesian literature. Learning short stories does not stand alone as a subject because it is closely connected to the appreciation of Fiction Prose and Creative Writing focusing on the lecturers and the theoretical bases as well (Bambang Sarwiji, Herman J, and Nugraheni, 2017).

Garzon and Castañeda-Peña (2015) presents the pedagogical implementation of the reader-response theory in a class of English as a foreign language with language pre-service teachers as they experience the reading of two short stories. Theresearch took place over a 16 week period in which students kept a portfolio of their written responses to the stories. Participants also discussed their interpretations in class. The core constructs of this study are the reader-response theory, the use of literature in English as a foreign language classes and its relation to critical thinking. Results showed that the application of tasks based on the reader-response theory encourages a meaning seeking process as well as the development of higher order thinking skills in future language teachers.

The table below was presented the analysis of themes, identified literary techniques and devices and the insights gained to facilitate clearer view of readers on how the problems have been answered. Likewise, a proposed material teaching strategies and learning activities have been developed.

Title	Themes	Literary devices and techniques	Insights
Making an Elephant Happy	Man's journey sometimes be marked by darkness or failure because of uncalculated actions leading to wrong directions	Irony, imagery, motif, personification, symbol, hyperbole	Do not ask children to make decision in your life
The Story of a Tongue	Cycle of life	Imagery, simile, third-person point of view, metaphor, epiphany,	We cannot avoid the cycle of life.

		personification, metaphor, dream device, stream of consciousness	As we grow there are more problems we have to face.
Tears	Mother's unconditional love, strong determination, poverty, superstition	Foreshadowing, third-person point of view, exposition, simile, conflict.	Giving up is not an option, love for family
La Runduma	Love, virginity, superstition.	Imagery, flashback, foreshadowing, exposition, first-person point of view, conflict, repetition	Every action has its own consequences.
Her Story	Some people fail to understand their own existence	Third-person point of view, simile, limited omniscient point of view, hyperbole, stream of consciousness	Accepting what we are.
The Groom's Price	Tradition forces us to accept without explanation, failing in fulfilling dream, love	Omniscient point of view, flashback, irony, conflict, idiom, imagery	Respect others
A Complicated Exchange	Different way of thinking between man and woman, love	Conflict, simile.	Don't be too judgmental.
Mother's Heaven	Children's love, tradition forces one to fulfill his duty as community member	Conflict, irony, idiom, simile	Respecting parents, devotion of a child, love of family
Five Ringgit	Clash between the natural and supernatural.	Simile, conflict, foreshadowing	Respect other culture, do not be arrogant

There are some teaching strategies that can be used by teacher to teach short stories. Teaching strategies are methods used to help students learn the desired course content and be able to develop achievable goals. Teaching strategies that are suggested such as:

- Repeated Reading which requires students to read a story several times and chart their understanding and enjoyment of the text. During class time, ask them to form small group and give short presentation about their experiences.
- Round table Reading allows students discuss among themselves their observations, thoughts and reactions about the story.
- Finding the "surprise" in the story: ask students how epiphany works in literature.

- Ask them to write the epiphanic moment in the story. Teaching Interpretation through a parable: Use stories with animal characters whose attributes may be relates to that men.
- Perform the story: ask students to read some dialogues that convey the message a meaning of the story. Students may also role-play some of the scenes in the story.
- Alternative ending: students write an alternate ending to the story and explain the critical difference between their endings and the author's.
- Class consciousness: ask students to find examples of a character's class as compared to the other characters. Then discuss how these details affect students' reading of the story.
- Highlighting character: ask students to choose a character from the story and describe him or her in detail. Then ask them to identify passages from the text that support/flesh out their descriptions. What are the author's physical descriptions of the character? What do we know about their demographic factors (age, gender, race, class, etc.)?
- Highlighting plot: have students to make a list of characters' actions and reactions. Another way to focus on plot is ask students to write a timeline of the events in the story.
- **How Would This Be Different If...?:** ask students to consider how the story would be transformed by changing small things (specific words of descriptions, minor details) and large things (point of view, important facts about the characters, etc.).
- **Make a List:** listing out material objects in the text is a great way to get students to pay attention to detail in the text. Give them a category of material objects that are significant to the text and ask them to go through the story and list all of those objects.
- Map it out: ask students to visualize the story literally, by making a map, because it helps them order things like plot events and identify the significance of settings in a really concrete way.
- **Model Paragraph Assignment:** Have students produce a substantial paragraph interpreting an element of a short story.

Learning activities can be proposed for students based on online short stories.

There are nine short stories in *Crossing Boundaries: New Voices from Indonesia*, every short story has five different activities which completed with scores. For the first short story by Eka Kurniawan and translated by Maggie Tiojakin the activities are summarize the plot, state the theme, enumerate some common problems in the world today based on the story, analyze the symbolic meaning, and role playing one scene in the story. *A Story of the Tongue* by Clara Ng, translated by Maggie Tiojakin, has activities as follows: find function of the tongue as a part of the body, state the main theme, describe their experiences in a big town or a city, extract the lesson learned, and draw/sketch one phase in life that is depicted in the story. The activities for next short story, *Tears* by Langit Amaravati and translated by Toni Pollard, are describe the character of Ijah, list the difficult words found in the story, express opinions in an argument, research some quotations about mother's unconditional love, and write a letter to their mother on Mother's Day. *La Runduma*, a story by Wa Ode Wulan Ratna and translated by Pam Allen, has activities such as: find new vocabularies, answer questions related to the story, express their idea about Johra's father, write a different ending for the story, and make a presentation of a local ritual. Norman Pasaribu wrote and translated into English *Her Story* has five activities as follow: summarize the story, find the elements of the story, describe their feeling in living their life, write a reflection paper on the theme of the story, and draw a comic strip showing the main character's attitude about life. Activities in *The Groom's Price*, by Uda Agus and translated by Toni Pallard, are find the words related to the short story, express their opinion about

culture, compare the characters, evaluate the theme, and recite students' idea in front of the class. Students' activities for *A Complicated Exchange* by Jessica Huwae, translated by Maggie Tiojakin, are express opinion on the differences between man and woman, share feelings about the characters, identify a lesson from the story, role play the story, and create another story ending. In *Mother's Heaven*, by Fitrawan Umar and translated by Toni Pollard, the activities are differentiate characterization from description in the story, express their empathy to the character, describe death ritual in their place, compare the story with *The Groom's Price*, and recite their opinion about cultures in Indonesia. And for the last short story, *Five Ringgit* a story by I Nyoman Manda which translated into English by Kadek Krishna Adidharma, the activities are choose their favorite character in the story, describe the style of author in delivering the story, retell the story, give their opinion about a particular culture, and draw the plot structure of the story

F. Findings

The thematic patterns in the short stores are the following: love for family and between man and woman found in *Tears*, *La Runduma*, *The Groom's Price*, *A Complicated Exchange*, and *Mother's Heaven*. Superstitious belief in Indonesia shown in *Tears*, *La Runduma*, and *Five Ringgit*. Tradition which should be obeyed by the member of the society discovered in *La Runduma*, *The Groom's Price*, and *Mother's Heaven*. In *Tears* and *Mother's Heaven* tell about poverty. Failure in fulfilling dreams can be found in *Making an Elephant Happy* and *The Groom's Price*. The cycle of life which shown in *The Story of a Tongue* and *Her Story*. The last theme is different way of thinking between man and woman in *A Complicated Exchange*.

The literary devices and techniques used in the texts are the following: Epiphany as part of literary devices was found in *The Story of a Tongue*. Exposition was used in *Tears* and *La Runduma*. Author used first-person in *La Runduma*. Flashback is used to create background to the present situation, place, or personⁱ as used in *La Runduma* and *The Groom's Price*. Foreshadowing used in *Tears*, *La Runduma*, and *Five Ringgit*. Hyperbole is bold overstatement, or the extravagant exaggeration of fact or of possibilityⁱⁱ as used in *Making an Elephant Happy* and *Her Story*. In *The Groom's Price* and *Mother's Heaven*, authors used idiom in expressing their idea. Imagery was used in *Making an Elephant Happy*, *The Story of a Tongue*, and *The Groom's Price*. Irony can be found in *Making an Elephant Happy*, *Tears*, and *The Groom's Price*. Personification in *Making an Elephant Happy* shows the talking Elephant. Simile, a figure of speech, used in *The Story of a Tongue*, *Tears*, *Her Story*, *A Complicated Exchange*, *Mother's Heaven* and *Five Ringgit*. Stream-of-consciousness is a style of writing in which the author uses interior monologue to show how the mind worksⁱⁱⁱ as used in *The Story of a Tongue* and *Her Story*. Symbolism used in *Making an Elephant Happy* and *The Story of a Tongue*. Third-person point of view occurs when the narrator tells the story using third-person pronouns (she, he, they) to refer to the characters. It is used in *Making an Elephant Happy*, *The Story of a Tongue*, *Tears*, *Her Story*, *The Groom's*, *A Complicated Exchange*, *Mother's Heaven*, and *Five Ringgit*.

From analyzing short stories researcher got insights as follows: *Making an Elephant Happy* tells about "Do not ask children or immature people to make decision in your life." From *The Story of a Tongue* we can learn that "We cannot avoid the cycle of life and as we grow there are more problems we have to face." "Love for family" is the insight of *Tears* and *Mother's Heaven*. *Tears* also teaches about "Giving up is not an option." *La Runduma's* insight is "Every action has its own consequences." "Accepting what we are" is the insight from *Her Story*. "Respecting others and other culture" is the insight of *The*

Groom's Price, Mother's Heaven, and Five Ringgit. As a person "Don't be too judgmental" as told in *A Complicated Exchange*. "Do not be arrogant" is the insight of *Five Ringgit*.

The proposed Teaching Strategies and Learning Activities can be an effective tool in improving the learner's competencies in all domains of learning.

G. Conclusion

The following conclusions are listed as follows: (1) The nine online short stories of *Crossing Boundaries: New Voices from Indonesia* have some common predominant themes such as love, superstitious belief, local tradition, failure in fulfilling dreams, cycle of life, and poverty. (2) Third-person point of view is the most-often used literary device in nine short stories. (3) Insights gleaned from the nine online short stories are love and respect. (4) Teaching Strategies and Learning Activities can be an effective tool in improving teaching strategies to facilitate both understanding and experiencing pleasure in reading short stories.

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