

The Theme Complexity of Short Story Written by Students in Formal Operational Stage

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Abstract

A short story is one of the literary works. The variety of problems or events in short stories has no limits so the author has the freedom to present them. Therefore, the complexity of the themes presented by the authors is different. One of the differences is students at the junior and senior high school levels. Both enter the same cognitive development, namely the formal operational stage but have different characteristics of presenting the theme complexity. This study aimed to analyze the theme complexity of short stories written by students in the formal operational stage. This study consisted of two approaches, which were theoretical approach using an objective approach and methodological approach using a qualitative descriptive approach. The results showed that the theme complexity in short stories written by students in the operational stage was in the simple category. Based on the categories, it was found that the characteristics of short story essays for junior high school students were: (1) focusing on major themes, (2) writing short stories based on experiences or observations, (3) not presenting the theme of sexuality, and (4) rudimentary abstract thinking patterns. Then, the theme complexity in short stories written by high school students is in the medium category. According to the categories, it was found that the characteristics of short story essays for high school students were: (1) focusing on major and minor themes, (2) writing short stories based on imagination, (3) presenting the theme of sexuality, and (4) abstract thinking patterns are more perfect than junior high school level.

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INTRODUCTION

A short story essay is one of the literary works. In the essay, there is a process of integrating the author's thoughts, feelings, imagination and providing benefits to the reader (Zulfahnur, 2011; Sapdiani, 2018; Diani, Azwandi, and Syahrial: 2019; Huda and Doyin, 2019 and Koroglu, 2020). According to Nurgiyantoro (2013), there is no limit in presenting short story essays, authors can create, manipulate or deal with various problems in fiction works. It means that one author with another has differences in presenting short stories.

The variety of problems in short stories compiled by the author can be in the form of possibilities that occur, will occur, or never occur. Wellek and Warren (1993) state that the reality of possibilities in fiction can be an illusion of reality and a convincing impression that is presented to the reader, it is not always a reality. In addition, Setyaningsih (2010) states that fiction can also be arranged based on the facts experienced or felt by the author. Presenting a short story requires normative elements in its preparation, namely conflict and resolution (Sa'adah and Doyin: 2019; Muliawan, Pondra, Nuryatin, Agus, and Zulaeha, Ida: 2020). Moreover, it requires creativity so that ideas can be developed (Adefia, Subyantoro, and Wagiran:2021). All of these things are solely the author's choices in developing storytelling in literary works to give special effects during the reading process (Furoidah and Adji, 2018).

The difference in compiling the variety of problems between one author and another causes variations in presenting short stories. One of the differences in the presentation that stands out is the theme complexity in short story essays at the junior high school (SMP) and high school (SMA) levels. Composing short stories is part of the creation of written form. The creation of the written form is one of the competencies that must be mastered by junior high school and high school levels. This competency is found in Basic Competence (KD) 4.6 class IX at the SMP/MTs

level. Meanwhile, in the SMA/MA KD level, it is 4.8 for class X and 4.9 for class XI.

According to Jean Piaget's theory, junior high school and high school levels are in the same cognitive development namely the formal operational stage. The characteristics of a person in the formal operational stage are able to perform deductive hypotheses related to finding solutions in solving problems and draw conclusions that are arranged systematically (Mu'min, 2013). Then, thinking concretely and thinking more abstractly, idealistically, and logically (Ibda, 2015). The idealization carried out is accompanied by the ability to compile speculations or desired possibilities in oneself or others. Individuals in the formal operational stage range in age from 12 to 18 years old (Lida and Zulaeha, 2017).

Junior high school and high school levels are at the same stage of cognitive development but different from the presentation of short story essays. Based on the observation results, one of the prominent differences is in terms of the complexity of the theme. Theme is a basic idea or meaning that supports a literary work and abstract which is raised repeatedly through motifs and displayed implicitly (Nurgiyantoro, 2013). The arrangement of themes that is influenced by action is determined that humans are the highest beings, and themes that are influenced by the most dominating thoughts are determined that humans are social beings, and the theme with feelings is determined that humans are individual beings (Wijayanti, 2017). The difference in the complexity of the themes that stands out in the short story essays of students in the operational stage is a separate characteristic at each level.

The theme complexity is the level of complexity of the themes presented in the short story essay. According to Shipley (in Nurgiyantoro, 2013), themes in literary works are distinguished based on the level of mental experiences which is arranged from the simplest, medium, and highest levels. The levels consist of physical, organic, social, selfish, and divine level themes. The descriptions of each of these themes are: (1) the physical level theme is physical

activity and physical mobility rather than psychological, (2) the organic level theme shows sexuality problems, (3) the social level theme is raised in the form of social problems including problems of economic, education, culture, social, struggle, politic, affection, propaganda and so on, (4) the selfishness level theme is raising the understanding that humans are individual beings who demand their individual rights, and (5) the divine level theme is understanding that humans are high-level beings. The problems that are highlighted in this theme are human relations with God, issues of religiosity, or issues related to philosophical such as views of life, beliefs, or visions.

The difference in presenting the theme complexity in short stories becomes a separate characteristic of each level. Moreover, teachers still have difficulty in developing material of short story text that is used as a guide in learning (Leksono and Subyantoro: 2018). This research is considered important and interesting to be conducted. Students at the SMP/MTs and SMA/MA/SMK levels are in the same stage in Jean Piaget's theory that is the formal operational stage. The differences that appear in the results of short story essays become the characteristics of each level.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative design. Data collection was obtained by reading heuristics from short stories written by students in the formal operational stage. Furthermore, in order to interpret the theme complexity of each short

story essay, hermeneutic reading is used. In this study, the complexity referred to the level of theme complexity of the short story. The determination of the level of theme complexity is obtained from Shipley's theory, which is based on the levels from the simple level, namely the physical and organic level, to the high level that is the divine level theme. Between these two levels, there is a medium level that consists of the social level theme and the selfish level theme. This study consists of two approaches, which are theoretical approach using an objective approach and methodological approach using a qualitative descriptive approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The theme complexity in the short stories written by students was analyzed based on 100 data obtained in the field. Short story essays were obtained from students at the formal operational stage, that is at the junior and senior high school levels in Kebumen Regency. The results of the analysis of the theme complexity were categorized with simple, medium, and high ordinal levels. Based on the data analysis, it was found that the junior high school level was 28 data, the medium level was 20 data, and the high level was 2 data. Then, at the high school level, it was found that the theme complexity was 15 data at the simple level, the middle level with 28 data, and the high level with 7 data. The following is presented in the form of a chart to facilitate understanding in reading the results of the analysis that was carried out.

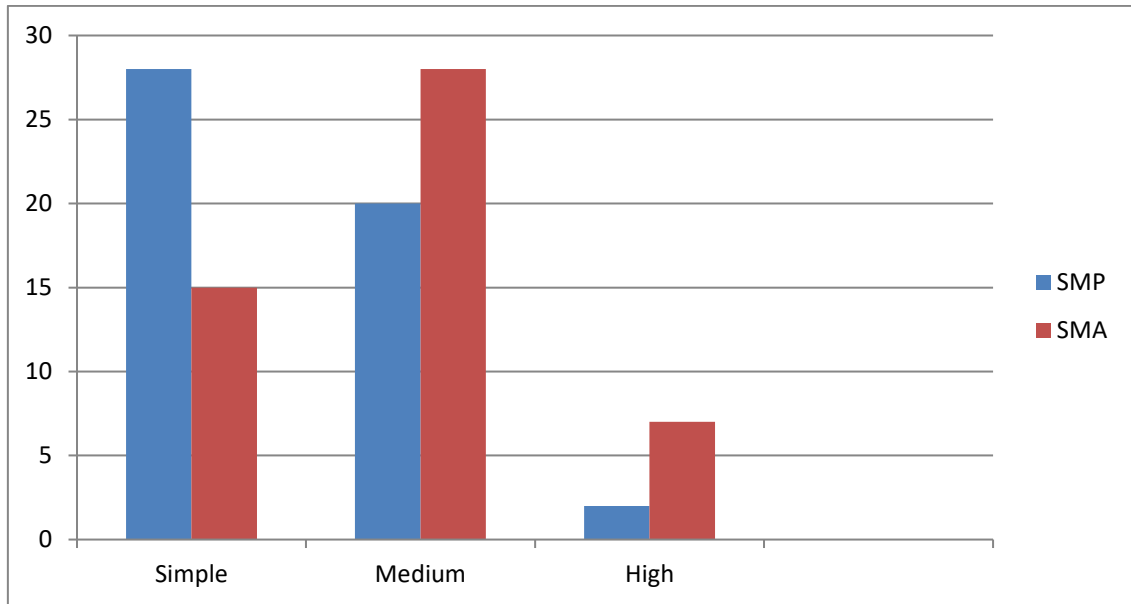


Chart 1. The results of the analysis of the complexity of the themes of short stories written by students in the formal operational stage

Based on the chart above, the short story essays of students in the formal operational stage differed in the theme complexity presented. At the junior high school (SMP) level, the theme complexity was dominated by the complexity of the content at the simple level. This level was the lowest level according to Shipley's theory in delivering the theme level. Furthermore, at the

high school level, the theme complexity was dominated by the complexity of the content at the medium level. According to Shipley's theory, this level was an intermediate level in delivering the theme level. The following gave a more detailed description of the results of the theme complexity analysis in tabular form.

Theme Complexity	Sub Theme	Total Data
Simple	Experiences (12) Observations (7) Daily activities (9) Not found (0)	28
Medium	Education (6) Economics (4) Self-esteem/Dignity (7) Selfishness (3)	20
High	Human Relationship with God (2)	2

Table 1. The results of the analysis of the theme complexity in short stories written by students in junior high school (SMP) level

At the junior high school level, most students presented the theme in the simple category that is the physical level theme. The analysis results showed the amount of data was 28 data. This amount was more than half of the data collected in the field. The sub-theme in the simple category was not found in the analysis results of the themes at the organic level that was the issue of sexuality. The sub-themes that appear in the simple category were the physical level theme in the form of physical mobility derived from experiences and observations of daily activities. Furthermore, the medium category between the social and the selfishness level was not too far away. It meant that junior

high school students were quite mastering those two themes. The social level raised the education and economy sub-themes, meanwhile, the selfishness level raised the sub-themes of self-esteem, dignity, and egoism. At the junior high school level, students still rarely raised themes in the high category because only 2 data were found in short story essays. The sub-theme that appeared in the high category was the relationship between humans and God. There was no high category with the sub-theme regarding the view or vision and mission of life. This meant that students at the junior high school level hadn't interpreted ideology in the life they live.

Theme Complexity	Sub Theme	Total Data
Simple Physique	Experience (3) Observation (2) Daily activities (2)	9
Organic	Sexual problems (2)	
Medium Social	Struggle (9) Education (7) Culture (3) Affection (6) Economics (3)	31
Selfish	Self-esteem/Dignity Selfishness (6)	
High Divine	Human relationship with God (6) View of life (4)	10

Table 2. The results of the analysis of the complexity of themes in short stories written by students junior high school (SMA) level

At the high school level, most of the students presented the complexity of the medium category theme with a total of 28 data. This category was certainly higher than the theme complexity at the junior high school level which was the simple category. The theme complexity presented by students at the high school level differed from the sub-themes

described. Students in the high school level began to display the sub-theme of sexuality problems, namely the organic level which was not displayed by junior high school students. Nevertheless, the physical level still had the same sub-themes in the form of experiences and observations of daily activities. Furthermore, the medium category of

social level presented sub-themes in the form of struggle for success, education, economy, culture, and affection. The social level at the high school level was more varied than at the junior high school level because students were able to present cultural issues that were featured in short stories. In addition, there was a sub-theme of affection that did not only show the feelings of happiness but also the dark side of the household, such as domestic violence, infidelity, and immoral victims. Those problems were not only observation in daily lives but a form of social criticism of the events. Then, the medium category that was the selfishness level had the same presentation as the junior high school level. It raised the sub-themes of self-esteem, egoism, and dignity. At the highest level, divine, students presented the sub-themes of human relations with God and views of life. High school students began to display several views of life such as freedom and justice. This meant that high school students began to understand ideologies in the realm of life.

Based on the results of the analysis of the theme complexity of short stories written by junior high and high school students, various differences were found between them. Jean Piaget's theory stated that both were at the same stage, namely the formal operational stage. Even though they were at the same stage of cognitive development, the level of abstract thinking was different. The following were the characteristics of the theme complexity of each level that could be used as a reference in teaching and learning activities in compiling short stories.

1) Focus on Theme

According to Gunani, Karomani, and Suyanto (2015), based on the priority, there were two delivery themes namely the major theme (main theme) was a theme that covered the whole story, while the minor theme (additional theme) was a theme that only found in certain parts. Based on the results of the analysis, junior high school students only contained major themes. The focus of the theme delivered by the junior high school level was only centered on one theme. The relaxation of events was not

conveyed through the minor theme. This made the transition of events conveyed by junior high school students using time transitions. The use of time shifts made the storytelling arranged chronologically. This condition was supported by the statement of Nurgiyantoro (2005) which stated that short stories that had one theme become a natural thing to be found in various children's magazines. It meant that the mindset of junior high school students still referred to the characteristics of children.

At the high school level, students were able to show the focus of the major theme and gave the relaxation of the story through the minor theme. The presence of a minor theme was able to support the major theme so that the events or problems in the short story essay more livened up the atmosphere and storyline. It made the composition of short stories written by high school students rarely used time transitions but instead brought up new events. In addition, the delivery of themes carried out by students at the junior high school level was more open than the high school level which was more implicit. The openness of the theme conveyed by junior high school students was by displaying it directly through the title so that the reader knew the theme of the short story essay easily. Whereas according to Nurgiyantoro (2013), the theme had an abstract nature that was raised repeatedly through motifs and displayed implicitly. In line with Nurgiyantoro's opinion, Nurfalah (2021) stated that the presence of the theme of its existence was still blurred in the readers' view. According to the results of the analysis, view on themes that was abstract or not explained directly by the new author was carried out by high school students who met this view.

2) Observations and Experiences on Themes

The theme complexity at the junior high school level was dominated by simple categories in the form of physical levels. The physical level was a theme level that contained physical mobility or physical activity without highlighting mental problems. The dominance in the physical level that was displayed contains

experiences and observations. Junior high school students wrote short stories that came from the memory recording process. It indicated that junior high school students were able to compose a storyline by presenting problems or events from something that had been passed. Piaget and Inhelder (2000) mentioned that the subjects of the formal operational stage (junior and high school levels) had been able to free themselves from concrete things. This meant that students had been able to think abstractly. Based on the analysis results, the junior high school level had been able to describe a story in an abstract way, it was true but it needed to be passed or observed first. In contrast to the high school level, students were able to process imagination without prior observation or experience to be able to present problems in short stories. The abstract thinking level of high school students was higher than that of junior high school students. It meant that the high school level had been able to do speculation or the possibilities of events logically and systematically so that conclusions were found at the end of the events presented. This was following criticism of Basri's (2018), Murniati (2020) Rahmani, and Maemona, and Mahmudah (2022) regarding Jean Piaget's theory which stated that cognitive development that occurred in everyone cannot be generalized. Based on Kohlberg's theory regarding the social development of junior high school students according to their characteristics, they entered the conventional stage. In this stage, they knew good and bad things and did interpersonal relationships with groups. Then, the high school level according to its characteristics entered the post-conventional stage so that students began to make choices from the principles they believed in. This made the imagination of high school students more explored than junior high school students because of the differences in social development between them.

3) Presence of Sexuality Theme

The simple category in the theme complexity of the short story essay consisted of

the physical level and the organic level. The organic level was a theme that described the problem of sexuality. Based on the analysis results, no sexuality problems were found in the short story essays of junior high school students. It showed that the knowledge and insight of students at the junior high school level related to sexuality issues were still low. It was in line with the results of research conducted by Salirawati, Ratna, and Endarwati (2014) which showed that understanding of sexual attitudes or behavior and understanding of sex education for junior high school students was lower than high school students.

Furthermore, Cithrawati, Adnyana, and Dewi, (2019) also mentioned that comprehensive knowledge of junior high school students about adolescent reproductive health was still low. In contrast to the high school level, students began to present problems of sexuality in short story essays. Some of the sexuality issues that were conveyed were domestic violence, immoral acts to infidelity. The existence of an organic level theme at the high school level indicated that the short story essays that produced reflected students' understanding of sexuality issues.

4) Abstract Thinking Pattern

The theme complexity at the junior high school level was dominated by the simple category, while at the high school level it was dominated by the medium category. Both of them did not require objects to be present directly to be used as short stories, meaning that students were able to think abstractly. Thinking abstractly was a reasoning because the authors would consider the arguments against their writing so that they got a logical sequence of events and knew the conclusion (Natawidjaja, 1998 ; Keraf, 2001 ; Lida and Zulaeha, 2017). In accordance with the theme complexity category, the abstract thinking pattern of junior high school students is still not perfect, while the abstract thinking pattern of high school level is more perfect than junior high school level. It was in line with research conducted by Mu'min (2013) that described that not all children who

were at the age of the formal operational stage had perfect abstract thinking patterns.

CONCLUSION

Junior high school and high school education levels are levels that are at the same cognitive development stage, namely the formal operational stage. Even though both are at the same level, they have differences in compiling the theme complexity of the short story essay. The results of the analysis of the theme complexity in the short story essays showed that the junior high school level had the highest amount of data in the simple category, namely 28 data, then the medium category was 20 data, and the high category was 2 data. In contrast to the high school level, the most data amount of the theme complexity of short story was in the medium category with 28 data, the simple category with 15 data, and the high category with 7 data. The theme complexity in short stories written by students in the operational stage was in the simple category. Based on these categories, it was found that the characteristics of short story essays for junior high school students were: (1) focusing on major themes, (2) writing short stories based on experiences or observations, (3) not presenting the sexuality theme, and (4) rudimentary abstract thinking patterns. Then, the theme complexity in short stories written by high school students was in the medium category. Based on these categories, it was found that the characteristics of short story essays for high school students were: (1) focusing on major and minor themes, (2) writing short stories based on imagination, (3) presenting the sexuality theme, and (4) abstract thinking patterns are more perfect than junior high school level.

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