

COMPARING THE STRUCTURES OF INDONESIAN CHILDREN'S WRITINGS IN THE NARRATIVE OF HAPPY VS. SAD EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

This study investigated Indonesian school-age children's written narratives of their experiences involving happy and sad emotions. A question addressed in this study is: do different themes influence the composition of the components in the narratives? This study aimed to explain the differences between written narratives on happy and sad experiences by focusing on the structures based on Labov & Waletzky's (1997) narrative components. The participants were elementary school students, aged 8–11 years (N = 131). All the children were assigned two writing tasks: one on a happy and one on a sad experience. Differences in themes in narratives were examined quantitatively. We identified the components of the narratives and classified them into complete, incomplete, complex, singular, and plural narratives. It was found that the children could already write cohesive stories, but some skipped certain components of the narratives. Differences between the narrative themes were found in the number of clauses and the components.

Keywords: narrative, writings, components, school-age children, Indonesian

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji tulisan yang berbentuk narasi dari anak-anak Indonesia usia sekolah mengenai pengalaman mereka yang berkenaan dengan emosi senang dan sedih. Pertanyaan yang akan dijawab di dalam penelitian ini adalah: apakah tema yang berbeda berpengaruh dalam komposisi komponen di dalam narasi? Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan perbedaan antara narasi tulis mengenai pengalaman menyenangkan dan pengalaman menyedihkan dengan berfokus pada struktur-strukturnya berdasarkan komponen naratif Labov & Waletzky (1997). Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah siswa SD, usia 8-11 tahun (N=131). Setiap anak mendapat tugas untuk menulis dua tulisan, yang pertama mengenai pengalaman yang menyenangkan dan yang kedua mengenai pengalaman yang menyedihkan. Perbedaan dalam tema-tema tulisan yang ditemukan dianalisis secara kuantitatif. Kami mengidentifikasi komponen dalam narasi-narasi tersebut dan mengklasifikasikannya menjadi narasi yang lengkap, tidak lengkap, kompleks, tunggal, dan jamak. Dalam penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa anak-anak ini dapat menulis narasi yang kohesif, namun beberapa tidak menyertakan komponen tertentu. Perbedaan di antara kedua tema narasi terletak dalam jumlah klausa dan komponen-komponennya.

Kata kunci: naratif, tulisan, komponen, anak-anak usia sekolah, bahasa Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

A narrative is a universal discourse familiar to children who are raised in oral and literate cultures (Berman, 2009: 355). Children's narratives, as Ninio & Snow (1996) suggested, differ in the conditions of production and genre. Therefore, they can be distinguished into three types: (1) a

script, containing a narrative on something that usually occurs in daily life; (2) a personal event narrative, regarding specific personal, reportable events; and (3) a fantasy narrative or fictional narrative, designed for entertainment and socialization in cultural norms, often about heroes, history, religious beliefs, and so forth.

Narrative skills are one of the most critical skills in language acquisition. It reveals children's knowledge of story structures, vocabularies, syntactic and semantic skills, as well as social skills. The skill is acquired when children are ready to use language more sophisticatedly, meaning that they have acquired lexical and syntactic forms, which include motoric development at the production level (speaking and, later, writing). When children produce a narrative, they must decontextualize their thinking, consider their audience, especially the audience's point of view, and consider the person and setting, both spatially and temporally.

The length and structures of narratives produced by children may vary. Besides their linguistic proficiency, variation in the production of the narratives can be influenced by other factors, such as topics and modalities. The study by Peterson & McCabe (1983) on children's oral narratives of personal experience found that descriptions of negative experiences are produced in greater detail than descriptions of positive experiences (see also Reese et al., 2012). This is in line with the literature on emotions and memory of personal experiences which has found that negative emotions are more memorable than positive emotions (Fivush et al., 2008; Kensinger et al., 2011; Murray et al., 2013; Vettori et al., 2022). Modality affects narrative production as well. Drijbooms et al. (2017) found that modality differences, such as oral and written, may affect markers of decontextualized language and categories with syntactic complexity. Children use a wider range of evaluative devices in their written narratives compared with their spoken narratives. Related studies (Rubin 1982, Perera 1984, and Purcel-Gates et al. 2009, as cited in Drijbooms et al., 2017: 787) have demonstrated that written discourse is more complex than spoken discourse, in terms of syntactical aspects.

At school, children are expected to use language for many purposes and in various media. As Papalia & Martorell asserted (2015: 376), the major linguistic growth during the school years is in pragmatics, which includes narrative skills (see also Ely, 2005). In formal schooling, children learn how to read and write, and they are also encouraged to be good speakers and listeners. They learn how to express their ideas in both oral and written forms: from words to sentences, to clauses, and finally, to discourses, including story-telling as a narrative. School-aged children—Indonesian children are no exception—are encouraged to do expository and narrative writing. In Indonesia, writings are taught mainly in the subject of Bahasa Indonesia (as well as English in bilingual schools). Through writing, children learn to express their ideas in written forms about scripts, fantasies, and their experiences. Personal experience—which sometimes includes feelings that involve emotions—is considered a good topic as a start to writing a narrative.

Narratives have a special place in child language studies, and various aspects have previously been examined: developmental aspects (e.g., Peterson and McCabe, 1983; Demir et al., 2015), cultural aspects (Minami and McCabe, 1995; Estola et al., 2014; Gagarina et al., 2016), structural aspects (Hudson et al., 1992; Chen, 2011; Carmiol et al., 2017; Köder and Maier, 2017; Bonifacci et al., 2018), and modal aspects (Drijbooms et al., 2017). Narratives are also used as a tool for studying children's emotional development or assessment, for example, the development of emotion through narrative coherence (Berzenski and Yates, 2017), assessment of children's perspective on jealousy through narrative evaluations (Aldrich and Brooks, 2016), comparing situational antecedent and mentalization of children's and adolescents' guilty feeling (Gavazzi et

al., 2011), assessing anxieties and fear as the impact of traumatic experiences (Alisic et al., 2016; Veronese et al., 2017), or examining the ability to express internal states (Vettori et al., 2022).

The present study discusses Indonesian children's narratives of personal experiences in written form which is based on two previous studies on school-aged Indonesian children's written narratives conducted by Dewi & Kushartanti (2021) and Johanna & Kushartanti (2021). Both studies addressed contrastive emotions respectively: happy and sad. These two types of emotions were chosen because they are the basic emotion vocabularies that children first become familiar with (see Grosse et al., 2021). Happy and sad experiences represent positive and negative emotions respectively. Personal experiences are the topics we chose in this study because, following Labov & Waletzky (1997), it is the most original type of narrative. In these two previous studies, nine types of narratives were found, based on the composition of the components in the narrative as suggested by Labov & Waletzky (1967/1997). The afore mentioned two studies indicate that age factor affects the structure of the narratives; the older the children, the more complex the structure of the narratives.

The present study compares the structures of narratives on happy and sad experiences, focusing on the components as suggested by Labov & Waletzky (1997). In terms of participants, we selected children who wrote both narrations on happy and sad experiences to make a balanced comparison (while the two previous studies did not do so). Moreover, this study also examines the cohesiveness of the narratives as one of the parameters. This study departs from a question on the themes: do different themes influence the composition of the components in the narratives?


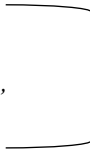

THE APPROACH AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THIS STUDY

In the study of narratives, several approaches have examined the structures. For example, the morphological approach pioneered by Propp (1928), the psycholinguistic approach by Mandler and Johnson (1977), the sociolinguistic approach by Labov and Waletzky (1967/1997), which was also developed by others (Linde 1993, Ochs and Capps 1996, Liebllich et al. 1998, Chesire 2000; all cited in Gimenez, 2010), and the networking approach proposed by Bearman et al. (1999, 2000). Propp (1928) studied the structures of tales and proposed domains of activity that can be grouped into preliminaries, complications, developments, and denouements—which are usually marked by a marriage (see also in Renkema & Schubert 2018). Mandler and Johnson (1977) demonstrated that some parts of a narrative are retained in memory more than the other parts (as cited in Renkema & Schubert, 2018), and proposed that a complete narrative comprises a setting, beginning, reaction, attempt, result, and ending. Bearman et al. (1999, as cited in Gimenez 2010: 206) proposed that an internal network of meanings that influence the interpretation of a story is created by the structural elements in a narrative. Gimenez (2010: 206-207), following Bearman et al., defined a narrative network as “a group of stories, texts, and artifacts collected around the emerging issues in a core narrative.”

Labov and Waletzky (1967/1997) elicited narratives of personal experience by posing a question: “Have you ever been in mortal danger?” They obtained various stories and classified the components as orientation (introduces the audience to the settings and characters), complication (comprises a series of events), evaluation (indicates the attitude of the narrator), solution (the completion), and coda (the closure). A complete narrative comprises the components mentioned above. In the study of narrative, as in Labov and Waletzky's system, it is important to orient the listener or reader to who or what is involved and when and where it happened (Peterson

and McCabe, 1990:74). The study conducted by Labov and Waletzky was later followed by many researchers, especially those working in the field of sociolinguistics. The approach is known as the sociolinguistic approach, which we also follow in the current study.

Gimenez (2010:202) referred to the sociolinguistic approach as the componential approach, which aims to identify the basic structure of a narrative and examine the sequence of its clauses. A narrative, based on the approach, is elaborated by its clauses. As proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1997), a narrative comprises at least two clauses tied by temporal juncture and relates to events in chronological order. The following text, cited from Labov & Waletzky (1997: 10), presents an illustration of the analysis (with an additional summary of the components and figures from us).

<p>(1) <i>I was goin' with a girl, one time</i> (2) <i>We were lyin' on the bed</i> (3) <i>We weren't doin' anything</i> (4) <i>We were talkin'</i></p>		<p>Orientation (1–4)</p>
<p>(5) <i>I looked into her face</i> (6) <i>And I saw, like, horns coming out of her head</i> (7) <i>You know—like—I said, “You look like the devil”</i> (8) <i>She said, “What do you mean, I look like the devil? Don't kid around”</i> (10) <i>I said, “I'm not kidding. I saw horns comin' out of your head.”</i> (11) <i>And the girl got very angry and walked out.</i></p>		<p>Complication (5–11)</p>
<p>(12) <i>But, we got together, and we went together for about four months</i></p>		<p>Evaluation (12)</p>
<p>(13) <i>And, like, this girl tried to put me in a couple of tricks.</i> (14) <i>Like she tried to date the same boys to hurt me.</i> (15) <i>You know. And she was a devil.</i></p>		<p>Solution (13–15)</p>
<p>(16) <i>So, now, anything I see I believe it's going to happen.</i></p>		<p>Coda (16)</p>

Labov & Waletzky (1997: 12) defined a narrative as “one method of recapitulating experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which occurred.” Therefore, linguistic devices link the verbal sequence of clauses. In an analysis of children’s narratives, Berman (2009) proposed three critical narrative functions in child language: reference to the participant in the story, narrative temporality, and discourse connectivity. This study uses two concepts of discourse connectedness: cohesion and coherence.

Cohesion refers to the connections in the discourse, whereas coherence refers to the connection made by the audience based on knowledge outside the discourse (Renkema & Schubert, 2018: 132; see also Hickmann 2004: 282). Halliday & Hasan (1976) distinguished five types of cohesion: *reference*, *substitution*, *ellipsis*, *conjunction*, and *lexical cohesion*. The types of lexical cohesion are *reiteration* (i.e., repetition, synonymy, hyponymy/hypernymy, meronymy, and antonymy) and *collocation* (i.e., the relationship between words based on fact and the surroundings). Additionally, *reference*, *substitution*, *ellipsis*, and *conjunction* can be grouped as grammatical cohesion. Reference refers to the relation between a linguistic element and a preceding or following element. Substitution refers to replacing a linguistic element(s) with another element. Ellipsis refers to the omission of a part of the sentence (see also Renkema &

Schubert, 2018: 126-128). A conjunction is a relationship that indicates how the subsequent sentence or clause should be linked to the preceding or the following sentence (Renkema & Schubert 2018: 127). Since narrative is also defined as “stories or framed segments of ongoing discourse that relate or report events in chronological sequence” (Bonvillain, 2003: 94), conjunctions play a critical role in the cohesiveness of narratives. Three types of conjunctions can be the indicator of cohesive narratives: additive conjunction (e.g., *besides, also*), temporal conjunction (e.g., *and then, afterward, after*), and causal conjunction (e.g., *because, so*). This study uses these concepts to explain cohesiveness and coherence in the written narrative produced by children.

When writing narratives, children may need more time than adults to arrange events in a story. They might make corrections on typos and ideas. According to Latham (2002), the use of complete sentences as an explanation and description is more frequent in children’s written narratives than oral narratives, because children have led the readers to reach comprehension. Similar to adults’ written narratives, coherence in a narrative, as well as its cohesiveness, is a critical consideration in children’s written narratives.

Peterson (1994) affirmed that a child’s “good narrative” should be at least informative, decontextualized, exhibit a linguistically explicit temporal and causal relationship, chronologically organized, and structurally well-patterned. To be informative, a child’s “good narrative” should be dense with information, such as characters, settings, and events. To be decontextualized, a narrative—especially about personal experience—should make sense to the audience in terms of the spatiotemporal contexts. Temporal and causal relationships should be presented linguistically and therefore, the use of expressions such as *before, after, then, while, until, and finally* are critical to describing events chronologically. In summary, a well-structured narrative is arranged chronologically and cohesively with grammatically and semantically correct words, as well as a structurally well-patterned narrative that can be examined based on narrative components.

By using these theoretical concepts, we investigate the structures of children’s narrative writing on their personal experiences that involved happy and sad emotions. Cohesiveness in their written narrative productions is examined through the use of cohesive devices, especially conjunctions, as defined by Halliday & Hasan (1976). In particular, this study applies Labov & Waletzky’s (1997) narrative components to outline the structures of children’s written narratives.

METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative approach, based on Labov & Waletzky’s (1997) narrative components, to analyze the structure of the narratives, and a quantitative approach to analyze the tendencies in the data. The main data in this study is Indonesian school-age children’s narrative writings on happy and sad experiences. Personal information about the children was obtained from questionnaires filled out by the children.

Instrument and Procedures

The main instrument for obtaining children's writing was prompted in declarations that read *Saya ingin menulis sebuah cerita tentang pengalaman saya yang menyenangkan* “I would like to write a story about my happy experience” and *Saya ingin menulis sebuah cerita tentang pengalaman saya yang menyedihkan* “I would like to write a story about my sad experience” in two sheets of

paper to elicit narrations on happy and sad experiences respectively. These prompts, each preceded a blank space for the writings, were attached with a questionnaire to obtain demographic information. The subsequent pages presented the questions to obtain children's information: name, gender, birth date, place of birth, parents' occupation, parents' ethnicities, number of siblings, first language, regional language (if any), language at home and school, activities, other caretaker (if any), predilections (reading, watching TV/movies), and activities.

The data collection was conducted at schools with permission from the headmasters, who in turn informed the parents about the project in advance. All parents had no objection to the involvement of their children in this project. The schools provided a reading room or classroom and allocated the Bahasa Indonesia class for conducting the data collection. We administered the questionnaires to the children in groups, informing children about the project, and assisting them when they filled out the questionnaires.

The data collection comprised three sessions. The first session was the writing task on the happy theme, the second session was on the sad theme, and the third session was to fill out the demographic questionnaires. The children wrote their stories independently and individually, taking approximately 15–18 minutes to write each task. Between the sessions, the children had a five-minute break to stretch their hands and fingers.

The Participants

The participants in this study were children aged 8–11 years. The children were third, fourth, and fifth graders from three elementary schools in Bekasi and Depok, the border areas of Jakarta, Indonesia. The teachers selected the children after their parents had granted consent. All children were capable of reading, and writing, and cooperated well. Based on the teachers' suggestion, 157 children were available as participants. However, we made a further selection, based on the quality of writing.

The qualified children's writings had to meet several criteria. First, we selected children who wrote the narratives in legible handwriting. Second, the "narrative-ness" was considered: we selected the writings that comprised at least two clauses arranged as a story containing chronological information, events, and characters. Third, those whose writings come in pairs—happy and sad stories—were selected. At the end of this selection process, the final sample was 131 children (consisting of 46 third graders, 45 fifth graders, and 40 fifth graders) with legible handwriting and completed the two writing tasks (i.e., the two narrative themes). The 131 children comprised of 47 boys and 84 girls.

The majority of these children (82%) were born in Jakarta and the surrounding areas (Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi). They came from middle-class families whose fathers mainly worked as civil servants (64.1%) and non-governmental employees (35.9%) and whose mothers worked as nongovernmental employees (82.4%) and civil servants (10.7%). Notably, some children did not fill out the section on the mother's occupation. In majority, of the fathers were Javanese (50.4%) and Betawi (17.6%), while the majority of the mothers were Chinese descendants (60.3%) and Javanese (15.3%). In other words, many of the children came from interethnic marriages.

Children use Indonesian at home (91.6%), indicating that Indonesian is their first language. It was found that 72.5% of the children claimed they could speak English, while 39.7% claimed to speak a regional language with their relatives, whereas the remaining children did not.

The parents were the main caretakers, and the remaining children were raised by others (i.e., 47.3% by relatives, 18.3% by grandparents, and 10.7% by servants) who spoke Indonesian (54.2%) or a regional language (45.8%).

The children claimed to go to school and do other activities, such as courses that support school subjects—mainly math or science (39.7%), language courses (72.5%), as well as reading and watching television (84%); comics and cartoon films were their favorites. From the children's activities and predilections, it is assumed that they were already familiar with the narrative structures they acquired at home.

Sorting and Analyzing the Narrative Data

This study investigated a total of 232 handwritings from 131 children. The selected data from the children's handwriting were copied into manageable documents to allow for textual analysis. By following Labov and Waletzky (1997), we organized every copy of the handwriting by clauses from which we analyzed the content and structure. First, we grouped the narratives into happy and sad stories and classified the topics in each group. Next, we calculated the number of words and clauses the children wrote. Further, we identified the components of the narratives (orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda) and examined the structure—whether each of the narratives contained a complete or incomplete single structure or multiple narratives. We also observed the cohesiveness of the narratives through the use of cohesive devices. Finally, we investigated the patterns and coherence of the narratives, the tendencies in the children's narrative structures in both narratives, and a comparison between both themes, based on the structures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents three sub-sections that illustrate the stages of the analysis. The first presents the findings of our observation on the children's competence in writing. The second presents a discussion on the topics in both happy and sad themes which also includes our findings in the number of clauses and words in both themes. The last sub-section presents the patterns and the structures of the narratives.

Children's competence in writing narrative

At school, children learn that they must read the title of a story before reading. In this study, we observed a notable finding: only approximately one-quarter of the children wrote a title (28.2% for the happy theme, and 22.1% for the sad theme). It is suggested that the majority of children read the prompt "I would like to write a story on my happy/sad experience" as the abstract (following Labov 1972) that leads the whole story. The finding also indicates that these children focused their memory on their own experiences. We observed that all children were able to write coherent narratives.

In this study, children's productions of narratives meet Peterson's (1994) criteria of a good narrative: informative, decontextualized, linguistically explicit temporal and causal relationships, chronologically organized, and many of them ($\geq 91\%$) are structurally well-patterned. One example is presented in the following.

Example (1)

- (a) *Saat itu aku ikut konser piano untuk menunjukkan bakatku.* “it was when I joined a piano concert to show my talent”
- (b) *aku dan keluargaku pergi ke tujuan.* “I and my family went to the destination”
- (c) *Saat aku sampai banyak orang yang menunggu, aku merasa deg-degan.* “when I got there, there were people awaiting, I was so nervous”
- (d) *Di sana banyak peserta yang menampilkan lagu dari bukunya (buku les piano) tetapi aku tidak karena boleh memilih lagu diluar buku dan aku memilih lagu “BUNDA”* “there are many participants performed the piano playing using their book (course book) but I didn’t as I could choose other song from other book and I chose ‘BUNDA’”
- (e) *Saat aku dipanggil untuk memainkannya dengan tenang banyak penonton yang merekam performanku* “when I was called to play it calmly, there were many audiences recording my performance”
- (f) *tanpa kusadari Setelah aku selesai banyak yang memberi tepuk tangan* “I didn’t realize that many claps their hands”
- (g) *Saat aku turun dari panggung banyak yang memberi sambutan* “when I stepped down from the stage, many gave applauses”
- (h) *Aku pun sangat senang dengan hal itu* “I was so happy with that”
- (i) *Semoga itu terjadi lagi* “I hope it will happen again”
- (j) *Terima kasih* “thank you”

In Example 1 (written by a fifth-grader), the writer presented a piece of complete information: the person involved, setting, and time. He was able to decontextualize the event, by mentioning *Saat itu aku ikut konser piano untuk menunjukkan bakatku* “it was when I joined a piano concert to show my talent.” A temporal and causal relationship is explicitly mentioned by using conjunctions such as *saat* “when,” *dan* “and,” and *setelah itu* “after that,” which also indicates a well-organized chronological order. This example, therefore, is a cohesive narrative. Additionally, the structure of the narrative is considered complete, as it consists of the orientation (a–b), complication (c–g), evaluation (h), solution (i), and coda (j). The finding is in line with Latham’s (2002) that in writing, children produced a more detailed explanation to make the reader understand the “time and place of the event.” Additionally, this also indicates that non-egocentric thinking ability is one of the characteristics of school-age children (see Papalia and Martorell, 2015). They were capable of producing coherent narratives in written forms. As Drijbooms et al. (2017) suggested, children have more time to compose narratives in written form, as compared to an oral narrative. Writing also frees children from the constraint of face-to-face communication (Martorell et al., 2015: 377).

Nevertheless, we also found various patterns with both complete and incomplete components. The main discussions in the following sections are the patterns based on the components of the narratives, preceded by a discussion on our findings on topics in both happy and sad themes and tendencies in the number of words and clauses in the narratives.

Comparison between happy and sad-themed narratives in topics, number of words, and clauses

Various topics of happy and sad themes were found in the data. However, these topics can be classified, based on the described events in the narratives. The main topics are presented in Table 1 with the number of writers.

Table 1. Topics (and number of writers) in the Happy and Sad Themes

Happy Themes		Sad Themes	
Holiday/recreation	75	Illnesses and wounds	38
Good performance in study	11	Death	32
Birthday	11	Poor performance in the study	14
Playtime	5	Scolded	12
Presents from the others	6	Quarrels (with and of others)	9
Sports and cultural activities	5	Parents' divorce	2
Mixed (of the topics as mentioned earlier)	13	Mixed (of the topics as mentioned earlier)	24
Other topics	5		-
Total	131	Total	131

Table 1 indicates that many of the children (75 out of 131, or 57.3%) in this study liked to recall their experiences related to a holiday or recreation as the happy events they remember. Illnesses and wounds (38 out of 131, or 29%), as well as the death of a significant person (32 out of 131, or 24.4%), are the events most remembered by the children as sad events. It is found that topics are more varied in the sad themes. We also observed that aside from children's personal experiences (as they were the main characters) that affected their emotions, events that involved other people were memorable. Many of them wrote about people close to them. From Table 1, we can also see that in writing children also mixed topics in the same theme resulting in complex structured narratives.

We also calculated the number of words and clauses and grouped them in ranges for each theme that are presented in Table 2. The table presents the number of writers in percentages.

Table 2. Number of words and clauses (range) in both themes

	Range	Happy Theme N = 131 (%)	Sad Theme N = 131 (%)
Words	0–50	11.5	17.6
	51–100	47.3	49.6
	101–150	29.8	25.2
	151–200	11.5	6.9
	201–	0	0.8
Clauses	0–10	12.2	21.3
	11–20	38.9	55.0
	21–30	37.4	19.8
	31–40	11.5	3.1
	41–50	0	0.8

We observed that the number of words in the happy and sad themes were on average equal (between 0–50 and 101–150), but the number of clauses in the sad theme on average (between 11–20) was less than in the happy theme (11–20 and 21–30). It means that children tended to write shorter narratives on sad themes. Note that in the data collection procedure, writing about a happy experience preceded the sad one, and the allocated time provided by schools for writing was limited. Nevertheless, it does not mean that these children wrote less informative

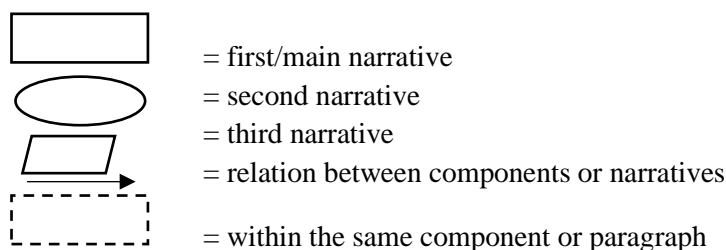
writings about their sad experiences. We also found that some of them wrote plural narratives (more than one story in their writings). These findings will be discussed further in the next section.

Structures and patterns of children’s written narratives on happy and sad experiences

The main objective of this study is to examine the structure of the narratives. Based on the number of topics, they are classified into singular and plural; based on the cohesiveness, there are cohesive and incohesive narratives; and based on the components in narratives (as proposed by Labov & Waletzky 1997) there are complete and incomplete narratives, as well as complex narratives. A singular narrative has a single topic while a plural narrative has more than one topic. A narrative is considered cohesive if cohesive devices (especially the conjunctions) tie the linguistic components in the text. Complete refers to narratives that have five components, as asserted by Labov and Waletzky (1997): orientation, complication, evaluation, solution, and coda. Incomplete refers to narratives in which one or more components are absent. A complex-structured narrative has one or more components that occur more than once.

Based on those criteria, we found eight types of narratives: 1) *singular-cohesive-complete narrative*, 2) *singular-cohesive-incomplete narrative*, 3) *singular-cohesive-complex narrative*, 4) *plural-cohesive-incomplete narrative*, 5) *plural-cohesive-complete and incomplete narrative*, 6) *plural-cohesive-complete and incomplete narrative*, 7) *plural-incohesive-incomplete narrative*, and 8) *plural-incohesive-complex and incomplete narrative*.

The description of each type is as follows with an example. In each sample, the clauses are presented in alphabetical order. The patterns are illustrated in figures, with the components and the classified clauses shown in brackets. The components of the narratives are abbreviated as follows: O (orientation), C (complication), E (evaluation), S (solution), and Cod (coda). Relations in plural narratives are also presented in figures.



- (a) A *singular-cohesive-complete narrative* contains a single topic with a complete and cohesive structure and has five components, as presented in Example (2).

Example (2)

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|--|
| (a) | <i>Saat aku bermain</i> | “when I was playing” |
| (b) | <i>aku diajak bermain bola.</i> | “I was invited to play soccer” |
| (c) | <i>Ada temanku mencetak gol.</i> | “there was a friend who scored a goal” |
| (d) | <i>Hatiku sangat senang</i> | “I was so happy” |
| (e) | <i>Walau kebobolan</i> | “despite losing” |
| (f) | <i>hati tetap senang</i> | “I was still happy” |
| (g) | <i>Akhirnya aku menang</i> | “finally I won” |
| (h) | <i>Terima kasih</i> | “thank you” |

The narrative in Example (2) comprises orientation, complication, evaluation, solution, and coda. The pattern of the narrative is in Figure 1.

$$O (a-b) \rightarrow Com (c) \rightarrow E (d-f) \rightarrow S (g) \rightarrow Cod (h)$$

Figure 1. Singular–Cohesive–Complete Narrative

- (b) A *singular–cohesive–incomplete narrative* contains a single topic with an incomplete structure but is cohesive, in which one or more components (e.g., solution or coda) are missing, as presented in Example (3).

Example (3)

- (a) *Saat raport [sic!] ku jelek* “when my academic report was bad”
- (b) *itu sudah membuatku merasa sedih.* “it has made me feel sad”
- (c) *karena hasil kerja kerasku berbuah hasil yang tidak memuaskan hati* “because my hard work resulted in unsatisfactory result”
- (d) *Itu pula yang terjadi saat aku kelas 2* “it also happened when I was in the second grade”
- (e) *saat itu nilai ku sangat menurun* “at that time, my academic performance degraded”
- (f) *yang tadinya aku peringkat 5 harus turun begitu drastis ke peringkat 7.* “I was in the fifth rank and it drastically degraded into the seventh rank”
- (g) *Sedihnya hari itu* “I was sad that day”
- (h) *namun itu membuat diriku termotivasi untuk belajar lebih lagi* “but it motivated me to work harder”

The narrative in Example (3) started with orientation in clauses (a) to (d), complication in (e) and (f), evaluation in (g), and solution in (h). No coda was observed. Observe Figure 2.

$$O (a-d) \rightarrow Com (e-f) \rightarrow E (g) \rightarrow S (h)$$

Figure 2. Singular–Cohesive–Incomplete Narrative

- (c) A *singular–cohesive–complex narrative* contains a single topic with a complex structure, in which one or more components occur in the text, as in Example (4).

Example (4)

- (a) *Saat itu ulang tahun BANK Mandiri yang ke 19* “it was the 19th anniversary of Bank Mandiri”
- (b) *Mamaku mendapat four tiket gratis* “my mom got four free tickets”
- (c) *Jadi, aku sekeluarga pergi kesana* “so my family went there”
- (d) *Saat kami sampai* “when we got there”
- (e) *hujan turun gerimis* “it was drizzle”
- (f) *Jadi, kami harus menunggu* “so we had to wait”
- (g) *hujan berhenti* “the rain stopped”
- (h) *Saat hujan berhenti* “when the rain stopped”
- (i) *kami ke arena bermain* “we went to the playing ground”
- (j) *Aku naik banyaak... sekali wahana* “I took so many rides”
- (k) *Hampir semua wahana aku coba* “I tried almost all rides”
- (l) *Lalu, mama menukar kupon KFC* “and then mom changed the KFC coupons”
- (m) *dan kami makan ayam goreng* “and we ate fried chicken”
- (n) *Hm.... Sedap!* “hm...delicious!”
- (o) *Setelah selesai makan,* “after finishing the meal”
- (p) *kami membeli tas untukku* “we bought a bag for me”

- (q) *dan bando untuk adikku* “and a bandana for my sister”
 (r) *Lalu, kami pulang dengan riang* “and then we went home happily”

The structure in Example (4) is complex because it has two orientations, complications, and solutions. The structure started with orientation in clauses (a)–(c); and then had the first complication in (d) and (e); and the first solution in (f) and (g). Another orientation is observed in (h) and (i), a second complication is observed in (j) to (m), and evaluation is observed in (n) to (q), followed by another solution in (r). Although double components are found, the narrative is cohesive and tied by conjunctions, such as *jadi* “so,” *setelah* “afterward,” *lalu* “and then,” and *dan* “dan.” There are also repetitions such as *hujan* “rain,” and *makan* “eat.” The pattern of this type of narrative is illustrated in Figure 3.

$$O_1 (a--c) \rightarrow Com_1 (d--e) \rightarrow S_1 (f--g) \rightarrow O_2 (h--i) \rightarrow Com_2 (j--m) \rightarrow E (n--q) \rightarrow S_2 (r)$$

Figure 3. Singular–Cohesive–Complex Narrative

- (d) A *plural–cohesive–incomplete narrative* contains more than one topic with an incomplete structure tied by a cohesive device, in which one or more components are missing.

Example (5)

A.

- (a) *Dulu aku sering diceritakan oleh ayah mama* “I was often told by dad and mom”
 (b) *tentang masa kecilku.* “about my childhood”
 (c) *Dulu kami senang traveling* “we liked traveling”
 (d) *apalagi lebih senang* “and would be happier”
 (e) *bila traveling* “if traveling”
 (f) *dan kebetulan bertemu kerabat* “and met our relatives”

B.

- (g) *Aku juga senang menggambar* “I also like drawing”
 (h) *dan mewarnai,* “and coloring”
 (i) *membuat kue bersama mama* “baking cakes with mom”
 (j) *Adalagi pengalaman menyenangkan* “there is another pleasant experience”
 (k) *saat keluarga atau kerabatku berulang tahun* “when my family or relatives had birthday celebration”
 (l) *Contohnya ulangtahun ayahku.* “for example my father’s birthday”
 (m) *kemarin ia pada tanggal 27 Februari* “yesterday was his in February 27”
 (n) *Jadi, saat tanggal 20 Februari* “so in February 20”
 (o) *aku mama dan adikku membuat kue ulang tahun untuk Ayah* “I, mom, and my little brother made a birthday cake for my dad”
 (p) *Kami melarang ayahku* “we forbade my dad”
 (q) *membuka kulkas* “to open refrigerator”
 (r) *Esoknya ayahku cuti* “the day after my father took a day off”
 (s) *Sepulang sekolah* “after school”
 (t) *aku dan keluargaku ke mall* “my family and I went to a mall”
 (u) *merayakan ulang tahun ayahku* “celebrating my dad’s birthday”

In Example (5), Narrative A comprises only orientation in (a) to (f) and is tied to Narrative 4B because the adverb *juga* “also” is present. In Narrative B, orientation is presented in clauses (g) to (m), followed by complication in clauses (n) to (o). The evaluation is presented in clauses (p) and (q), followed by the solution in clauses (r) to (u). There is no coda in this example. Figure 4 illustrates the structure.

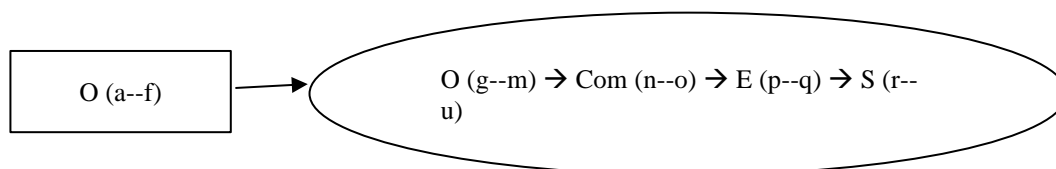


Figure 4. *Plural-Cohesive-Incomplete Narrative*

- (e) A *plural-cohesive-complete and incomplete narrative* contains more than one topic tied by cohesive devices but has one or more components missing in one of the texts.

Example (6)

A.

- (a) *Waktu kelas 1, 2, 3* “when I was in Grade 1, 2, 3”
 (b) *aku slalu [sic!] menjadi ranking 1* “I was always in the first rank”
 (c) *Tapi tetap saja saat penerimaan raport [sic!]* “but still when the reporting time come”
 (d) *aku merasa takut* “I was afraid”
 (e) *karena kalau tidak ranking 1* “if I were not in the first rank”
 (f) *aku tidak bisa membuat kedua orang tuaku bahagia* “I would have not been able to make my parents happy”
 (g) *itulah rasa senangku* “that is my happiness”

B.

- (h) *Aku juga senang* “I was also happy”
 (i) *saat orangtuaku memberi ku hadiah* “when my parents gave me present”
 (j) *karena aku mendapat ranking 1* “because I was in the first rank”
 (k) *Biasanya hadiah dari orangtuaku adalah* “usually, the present from my parents is”
 (l) *aku diajak jalan-jalan* “that they brought me to stroll”
 (m) *diberi suatu barang, dsb* “given some present, etc.”
 (n) *Tetapi menurutku* “but according to me”
 (o) *untuk meraih ranking 1 itu tidak mudah* “it’s not easy to have the achievement”
 (p) *Harus belajar giat dan tekun* “I have to study hard”

C.

- (q) *Aku juga senang* “I was also happy”
 (r) *ketika menang lomba* “when I won a contest”
 (s) *contohnya aku pernah ikut lomba calistung (membaca, menulis, berhitung) sebanyak 3 kali, dan drum band, bola basket, dll.* “for example I joined the reading-writing-counting contest three times, drum band, basketball competition, etc.”
 (t) *Intinya senang bagiku adalah* “the point is, happiness for me is”
 (u) *Ketika mendapat penghargaan* “when I achieve appreciation”
 (v) *dan berhasil melakukan sesuatu* “and succeeded to do something”

Three stories are observed in Example (6) and all are separated by spaces but tied by the adverb *juga* “also.” The topic of each story is also the same: achievement. Narrative 6A has a complete structure, but the others do not. The structure of Example (6) is illustrated in Figure 5.

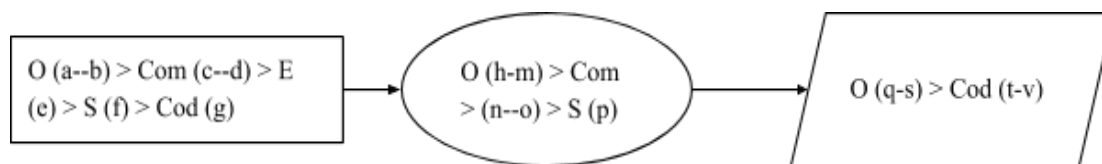


Figure 5. *Plural-Cohesive-Complete and Incomplete Narrative*

- (f) *Plural-cohesive-complex and incomplete narrative* contains more than one topic tied by cohesive devices, one or more components occur in one text, and certain components are missing in the other text as in Example (7).

Example (7)

A.

- (a) *Pada saat itu, kakeku jatuh sakit* “it was when my grandpa was ill”
- (b) *Karena ayahku mengantar dan mengurusnya di rumah sakit* “because my father brought and took care of him in the hospital”
- (c) *aku dan kakaku dititipkan kepada Nenekku* “my brother and I were sent to my granny”
- (d) *Aku dititipkan selama beberapa hari* “I stayed there for several days”
- (e) *Tapi ketika aku bangun di pagi hari* “but when I woke up in the morning”
- (f) *aku mendapat kabar kalau kakeku meninggal dunia* “I heard the news that my grandpa has passed away”
- (g) *Aku sangat sedih* “I was so sad”
- (h) *dan aku bertambah sedih* “and I was more sad”
- (i) *ketika melihat petinya* “when I saw his coffin”
- (j) *Aku sangat sedih* “I was so sad”
- (k) *sehingga aku menangis* “so that I cried”
- (l) *Saat itu aku baru kelas satu SD* “it was when I was just in Grade 1”

B.

- (a) *Aku juga pernah merasa sedih* “I also felt sad”
- (b) *bila aku menonton film yang sedih* “when I watched sad movie”
- (c) *Bahkan aku pernah menangis* “even I had ever cried”
- (d) *karena film yang sedih itu* “because of the sad movie”

Example (7) consists of two different stories. Each story has an incomplete structure. Nevertheless, both are tied by the adverb *juga* “also,” and the repetition of the word *sedih* “sad.” The structure of Example (7) is illustrated in Figure 6.

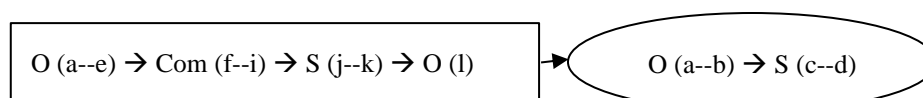


Figure 6. *Plural-cohesive-complex and incomplete narrative*

- (g) A *plural–incohesive–incomplete narrative* contains more than one topic that is incoherent and not tied by cohesive devices, and in which one or more components in each text are missing; see Example (8).

Example (8)

A.

- (a) *tadi pagi* “this morning”
 (b) *aku dimarahin oleh nenekku* “I was scolded by my granny”
 (c) *karena tempat minumku ketinggalan dikelas sebelah* “because my bottle was left in the class nextdoor”
 (d) *ketinggalannya* “it was left”
 (e) *karena aku sedang les Bahasa Inggris* “because I was having an English course”
 (f) *Lalu aku lupa* “and I forgot”
 (g) *dan meninggalkan tempat minumku* “and left my bottle”

B.

- (a) *saat aku lagi makan di Pizza Hut* “when I was eating at Pizza Hut”
 (b) *aku merasa ingat ibuku yang sudah tidak ada* “I remember my mom who had passed away”
 (c) *Lalu aku menangis* “so I cried”
 (d) *dan bilang ke papaku* “I told my father”
 (e) *aku ingin ke kuburan Ibuku* “that I wanted to go to my mom’s grave”
 (f) *Aku mau ke kuburan Ibuku* “I wanted to go to my mom’s grave”
 (g) *tetapi ada halangan terus* “but there were always drawbacks”
 (h) *Jadi tidak jadi ke kuburan ibuku* “so I couldn’t go to my mom’s grave”

Two stories that are not tied by cohesive devices are seen in Example (8). Therefore, no arrow relates to both narratives. In addition, both stories demonstrate incomplete structures, because there is no coda in either narrative. The structure of Example (8) is illustrated in Figure 7.

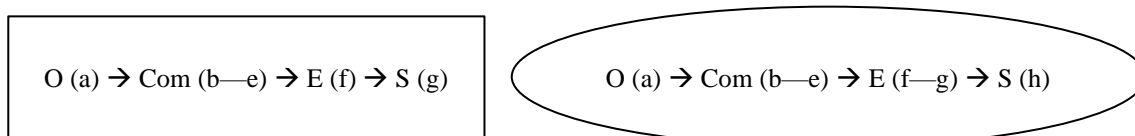


Figure 7. *Plural–Incohesive–Incomplete Narrative*

- (g) A *plural–incohesive–complete and incomplete narrative* contains more than one topic not tied by cohesive devices, and one or more components in one of the texts are missing, as in Example (9).

Example (9)

A.

- (a) *Pada waktu itu aku mengerjakan ulangan,* “when I was doing the exam”
 (b) *Dan ternyata nilaiku sulit diperkirakan orang tuaku seperti di bawah kkm* “it turned out that my grade was difficult to be predicted by my parents such as under the minimum standard”
 (c) *aku merasa sedih* “I felt sad”
 (d) *dan khawatir* “and worried”
 (e) *jika aku dimarahin orang tuaku,* “to be scolded by my parents”
 (f) *Pada sampai rumah* “when I came home”
 (g) *aku dimarahi orang tuaku* “I was scolded by my parents”
 (h) *karena nilaiku jelek* “because I had bad marks”

(i) *disitu aku merasa sedih* “I was so sad”

B.

- (a) *Pada waktu itu kami pulang ke medan* “it was when we went to Medan”
- (b) *dan mendapat kabar kalau nenek[*sic!*] sakit.* “and got message that my granny was ill”
- (c) *Kami langsung bergegas pergi ke sana* “we went there immediately”
- (d) *dan kerumah sakit.* “and went to the hospital”
- (e) *Setelah itu kami menjenguk nenek[*sic!*]* “and then we visited my granny”
- (f) *aku merasa sangat sedih* “I was so sad”
- (g) (*XXX*) *Tidak lama kemudian kami langsung balik ke bekasi* “not long after, we went back to Bekasi”
- (h) *karena saya mau UTS* “because I would have a midterm exam”
- (i) *Setelah beberapa hari kemudian* “after a few days”
- (j) *Tak tersangka kami mendapat kabar* “we did not expect to have bad news”
- (k) *bahwa nenek kami meninggal* “that I our granny passed away”
- (l) *disitu aku merasa sangat sedih* “I was so sad”

Example (9) has two stories. The first story, Narrative A, has an incomplete structure because the evaluation component is missing. Additionally, Narrative B has a complete structure. Even though each narrative shows cohesiveness as it has cohesive devices, there is no cohesive device tied to either narrative. The structure of Example (9) is illustrated in Figure 8.

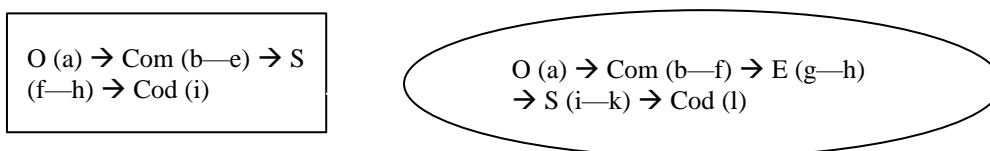


Figure 8. Plural-incohesive-complete and incomplete narrative pattern

To summarize, the number of each type of narrative in the happy and sad stories is presented in Table 3. The table also presents the number of writers in each category.

Table 3. Structures and Components of Narratives in the Happy and Sad Stories

Structures and Components of Narratives		Happy	Sad
		(number of writers)	(number of writers)
Singular	Singular-cohesive-complete	34	37
	Singular-cohesive-incomplete	34	57
	Singular-cohesive-complex	50	13
		118	107
Plural cohesive	Plural-cohesive-incomplete	2	11
	Plural-cohesive-complete and incomplete	3	1
	Plural-cohesive-complex and incomplete	0	1
		5	13
Plural incohesive	Plural-incohesive-incomplete	4	9
	Plural-incohesive-complete and incomplete	4	2
		8	11

Table 3 shows that many of these children can write cohesive and coherent narratives for both themes. Of the 131 writers, there were 123 (93.9%) wrote cohesive happy stories, and 120 (91.6%) wrote cohesive sad stories. They also tended to be more focused on one topic in both themes: 118 or 90% in the happy theme; and 107 or 81.7% in the sad theme. Several children wrote on more than one topic in their writings (13 or 9.9% on happy themes and 24 or 18.3% on sad themes). They were also capable of writing cohesive and coherent narratives, even though they missed some of the components. We found that happy themes tended to be written in a complex structure; that is a repetition of certain components. Meanwhile, the sad themes tended to be incomplete as certain components were absent.

In this study, a complex structure in which certain components occurred more than once, namely, orientation, complication, and evaluation, was observed. Notably, the complex structure—repeating certain components—is observed more in the narratives of the happy theme than in the sad theme. The children were keen to write several detailed moments for the happy themes. The finding is in line with Hudson et al. (1992) who found that young children's descriptions were richer in experiences that involved positive (i.e. happy) emotions than negative emotions. They also suggested that variations in narrative genre may be related to the emotional tone of the narrative.

Structure differences between both themes might also be from the topics. According to Peterson and McCabe (1990: 75), content can have an impact on the structure of personal narratives. Repeating orientation, complication, and evaluation as found in this study indicated that these experiences were regarded as unforgettable. As previously discussed, holidays and recreation were the happy events mostly recounted by the children (see Table 1). The finding relates to Hudson and Hagreen (1987 as cited by Peterson and McCabe 1990: 75) that narratives about trips are structurally sophisticated—in this case, the presence of repeating components. On the other hand, sad events were recounted more simply than the opposite ones, although there was a tendency that plural narratives found more in the sad themes than in the happy themes. In recounting their sad experience, children tended to describe events chronologically, resulting in a simpler plot.

We observed that several children (18.3%) wrote more than one topic of sad experiences. It is suggested that, for them, it is not enough to write just one story about their sad experience. Additionally, in the sad themes, the children tended to skip a component, especially the coda. They tended to leave the story as “open-ended,” but kept the solution component. We found the absence of a coda in sad themes in 61.8% of children in this study. Almost in line with the finding in this study was the finding from Hudson et al. (1992), who found that negative emotions involved in narrative more closely resembled traditionally plotted stories. In these kinds of stories, dynamic events rise to a climax or high point that is followed by a solution. Note, however, that in the previous section, we had alluded to the order of the writing tasks and the limited time that can be the reason for the lack of codas in sad themes.

CONCLUSION

This research aims to explain the differences in written narratives with themes of happy and sad experiences by focusing on the structures based on Labov & Waletzky's (1997) narrative components. The data for this research are the writings of Indonesian school-age children. In this

study, the topics of both themes were identified, as well as the number of words and clauses. Eight types of narratives from the children's writings were found, based on the number of topics within texts, the cohesiveness, and the completeness of the components. We observed that the number of words in both narratives on average was equal, but the number of clauses in the happy themes was greater than the counterpart. Children in this study tended to write complex structures more frequently in the happy story and incomplete structures in the sad stories.

Findings in this study suggest that topics of each theme might have an impact on the structure. This study found an indication that children tended to use orientation, complication, and evaluation components more than once in happy themes, whereas they tended to skip the coda component in sad themes. In the happy-themed narratives, many of the children recounted their experience in holidays or recreations while in the counterpart themes, they tended to recount various events. We also found that children tended to recount more than one story of a sad experience. Nevertheless, we also observed that the order of the writing tasks and limited time may have contributed to the differences in the number of words and clauses which admittedly was one of the limitations of this study.

Given that children tend to describe more things in pleasant narratives than sad ones, this suggests that they are more open to telling happy things than sad ones. Cultural aspects may have an impact. However, these assumptions need to be proved. A further study that includes cultural factors has to be conducted to confirm it.

The limitations of this study include its limited scope, focusing only on the structures based on the components of the narratives and the themes that involved two basic emotions. Other contributions that differ in approaches and foci may enrich the study of children's narratives and will give an overall illustration of the narrative productions by Indonesian children.

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