

## THE NARRATIVE PATTERN OF TWO SENTENCES HORROR STORIES IN A SEMANTIC PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*This study aims to find the type of semantic meaning that shows terror and the narrative pattern that forms a horror story in a two-sentence horror story. The stories taken from the thought catalog website, and the @horrorphiles Instagram account, and Extremely Short Horror Stories (Two Sentence Horror Stories) on wattpad. This study used Geoffrey Leech and Charles Derry. By using qualitative descriptive research methods, data collection taken qualitatively by documentation and analysis results are presented descriptively. It can be seen from the research's results that the sentences used in these two-sentence horror stories more often conveyed the message in a straightforward manner so that the story is easy to understand. These stories usually contain a plot twist or surprise ending where the first sentence acts as an introduction or opening to the story. Whereas, the second sentence acts as an unexpected peak or ending.*

**Keywords:** Short Story, Horror, Semantic Meaning, Narrative Pattern

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, short stories can be easily found in any form whether in online platform or in a printed form. Short story is a narrative story that only focused on a problem with several characters which build the story. Also, short stories can be divided based on its length, like microfiction/nanofiction, drabble, and minisaga. Even now, short stories can be built from only two sentences. These kinds of stories usually written for comedy and horror genre, but two sentences horror stories are easier to be found.

Two sentences horror stories are horror short story which consist only of two sentences. This story can be included as a kind of short story. Short stories are stories that can be read in one sitting (Poe, 1846). These stories can be found easily on the internet as they became a trend after shared by Creepy pasta and Reddit website. They can be written both in Indonesian and English. However, as the readers of these stories come from all around the world, so it usually written in English.

These stories are written limited to only two sentences in which its structure has similarity with bit structure in the stand up comedy. The first sentence act as a set up that becomes the bridge to the peak of the story. Whereas, the second sentence becomes the peak or the

punchline itself. The two parts of the stories usually will be end with surprise ending or what people usually called as plot twist. Plot twist is an unpredicted ending of a story.

Two sentences horror stories have a purpose to scared people in accordance with its genre; horror genre aims to evoke fear in the readers. The word horror comes from word *horrere* which come from Latin that means to stand at the end (as hair stands at the end) or to brush and *orror* from old French meaning to comb or shudder (Caroll, 2015). The genre of suspense, mystery, and horror got its name from the influence that the genre itself wanted to show; those are a sense of tension, mystery, and fear (Caroll, 2015). Besides, the fans' emotions of horror fiction work in the form of films, short stories, or the novel will be in line with the emotions of the characters in the horror fiction work. Caroll (2015) stated that horror seems to be one of the genres where audience's response, ideally, is in line with the character's emotions. Certainly, in horror works, the character's response is often beckoning audience's emotional response (Caroll, 2015).

Another feature of this genre is that most of horror stories use unique and unusual diction that seldom appear in daily life. The application of such diction is to deliver the atmosphere in the story as the purpose of horror stories is to frighten and bring terrors to the readers. Nevertheless, people still like horror stories and it makes horror story is unique and more interesting. So, two sentence horror story is a short story that can be considered appealing for readers because with the minimal sentence usage rules, they still can find it scary; with the coherence between the limited sentence that being used and the uniqueness of horror story makes the two sentence horror stories are interesting to be studied.

However, the lack of sentences itself can make the meaning of the sentence is not conveyed properly. also, it caused the lack of fictional elements that can be a weakness of a short story. Short story's fictional elements are built different from novels. Novels can have many conflicts and a detail plot explained as the fictional elements. Whereas, the short story just focused on a conflict from an interesting and strong theme to build a nice plot so that it will leave an impression to the readers.

One of the most important aspects of a horror story is suspense. Suspense is a delay in resolution that triggers a sense of joy in uncertainty in the reader. Without a well build suspense, writers will be failed to make a good horror story. To be able to build this aspect, other well-organized fictional elements are needed like plot, characters, setting, and story's point of view. However, the fictional elements in these stories can become its weakness as it is limited just for two sentences. So, as mentioned before, the limited sentences, the distinctive diction, and the limited fictional elements that support the story are things that make these stories difficult to understand. Also, not every reader has the same background with the writer so they may don't fully understand some words from of the story.

Thus, based on the factors explained above, these stories are not stories that could be considered as scary. It is quite questionable whether stories like this can be included to horror genre. This study implemented to determine how can it be categorized as horror and where is the fear lies within it. Therefore, this research focused on linguistic elements such as words, phrases, and even sentences that can evoke terror from semantic terms and the narrative pattern that form the horror within the stories.

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning and conveying the meaning from word to sentence level. Semantics can also be linked to three other disciplines, namely

psychology, philosophy, and linguistics (Kreidler, 1998). However, to know the meaning of the word itself in a language, it is necessary to study semantics in linguistics. According to Griffiths (2006), semantics is the study of meaning; knowledge about codes in language, vocabulary and patterns to construct meaning more complicated to the level of sentence meaning.

Narrative pattern is a pattern or structure that forms a narrative story. These patterns consist of intrinsic elements or elements of fiction; plot, characters, setting, and story's point of view. This fictional element explains what happens in a story. Character is an element that explains who the figure or who performs the action in the story. Settings indicate the location, period, and social conditions that happens in the story. In 2004, Klarer stated that in gothic novels and other certain forms of prose fiction, setting is one of the important elements of such genre. Whereas, the point of view of the story is the writer's way to presents 3 elements of fiction previously described.

This study focused on 3 online platforms as the data sources. Those platforms are online story titled Extremely Short Horror Stories (Two Sentence Horror Stories) written by an account name \_\_\_Joelk ad have been read 29,1 million times which taken from Wattpad application. The second platform is a website named Thought catalog which is an online magazine where the readers can also participate as a writer to share their ideas. The last is an instagram account called @horrorphiles. This account only consisted of two sentences horror stories and images. This account was made by 9gag and already have 321 thousand followers.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Geoffrey Leech's Semantics Meaning**

Geoffrey Leech's semantics theory was being used to classified the semantics meaning within the stories. According to Leech, there are seven types of semantics meaning, that is conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning. Conceptual meaning is the dictionary definition or a conceptual definition of words, phrase, and sentence. Conceptual meaning (sometimes called denotative or cognitive meaning) is generally assumed to be major factor in linguistic communication and can be shown as an integral part of the important function of language by distinguished it from the other types of meaning (which does not mean that the conceptual meaning is most important element of any act in linguistic communication) (Leech, 1981). The purpose of conceptual meaning is to provide interpretation the meaning of the sentence by showing what we should understand from the sentence and distinguish it from other meanings that may exist in the same sentence.

Connotation is referred to a hidden meaning behind the real word. Leech (1981) argues that the meaning of connotative is the communicative value that an expression has. It is based on something which refers behind its conceptual meaning. Mainly, the notion of the connotative meaning's reference overlaps with conceptual meaning. This meaning is built with uncertain features or it does not have certain criteria. For example, women can be referred to their physical characteristics, social features, and psychological traits they possessed. So, connotation can be interpreted varied depending on the view of an individual, community or even society. In general, this meaning is the language agreed by society in a communication system; and, it's varied according to a people's culture, history, and experience.

Social meaning is the reflection of one's social, education, and culture background. Leech (1981) stated that social meaning is what conveyed by a language about social conditions based on its use. This meaning can indicate regional origin, status, and stated person's educational background can be seen from several features such as pronunciation and choice of words used, dialects, and forms of language standard, and non-standard used. Social

meaning in a text is described by recognizing the various dimensions and levels of language style different in a language. Based on this meaning we can find a variety of different styles of expression but have the same meaning (synonym). For example, *steed* (poetic), *horse* (general), *nag* (slang), and *gee-gee* (baby language). Those 4 words have the same meaning even though their usage varies depending on the social environment of the speaker and listener.

Affective meaning is used to show listener's emotion to words spoken by the speaker. Factors to consider in affective meaning are intonation and tone of voice. The purpose of affective meaning is to communicate our feelings and attitudes towards things. For example, the sentence, "will you belt up" can be changed into a joke with each other if delivered with a light intonation for request. Reflected meaning refers to words that leave ambiguity because of the different impression on a specific context. Leech (1981) mentioned that the reflected meaning is the meaning that arises in cases of multiple conceptual meanings, when a single meaning of a word is part of our response to other meanings.

Collocative meaning is the association of meaning from a group of words based on its scope. Collocative is an association of meanings from a set of words that emerge based on the environment (Leech, 1981). For example, in the words *pretty* and *handsome*. Both are adjectives meaning beautiful or unsightly, but the two words can be associated with some other nouns that can be paired. For example, the word *pretty* can be juxtaposed with *girl*, *boy*, *woman*, *flower*, *garden*, *color*, and *villages*. Meanwhile, *handsome* can be associated with *boy*, *man*, *car*, *vessel*, *overcoat*, *airliner*, *typewriter*, etc.

The last is thematic meaning which explains how a writer or speaker emphasizes their intention in a sentence. Thematic meaning, or what is communicated with the way the speaker or writer organizes messages, in terms of order, focus, and emphasis (Leech, 1981). Thematic meaning is the meaning that emphasizes the message which the writer or speaker wants to convey. This meaning can be seen by analyzing one sentence as a whole. Although there are two sentences that have the same conceptual meaning, different thematic meanings it will be different if it is conveyed in a different way.

## *2.2 Charles Derry Horror Genre Classification*

Charles Derry's theory was being used to find out how the narrative elements in the story can form a horror story. Charles Derry divided horror genre into three sub-categories. First, horror of personality which is the horror psychology. This type appeared around the early 60s along with the change of a classic horror genre that usually has a science-fiction horror theme or supernatural horror. To distinguish this genre from classic horror, then we have to know the usual pattern of themes used – supernaturally or scientifically (pseudoscientifically). This film belongs to the horror genre which is specific, not abstract and does not require metaphors like horror classic. These films have the same aspects where most of them the theme is the insanity of the characters in it and the violence that the character does to the character other. The theme is a reflection of the greatest fear great in the 60s.

Horror films have always reflected our deepest anxieties about ourselves. In a time where life, or at least our awareness of it, seems to be increasingly horrible, it is most understandable that elements from the horror- of-personality films (violence, insanity) are now being fed into the mainstream (Derry, 2009, p.53).

The second is Horror of Armageddon which is the horror of disaster. This type of horror genre is the result of the development of the film the 50s science-fiction horror genre has become an authentic horror film and still has the same core problem and idea as predecessor.

The horror-of-Armageddon films suggested that the world was horrible either because

man was becoming over-scientific and antihumanist, or simply because the malevolent universe by definition compelled the world and human condition to be naturally and existentially horrible. (Derry, 2009, p.88).

The word armageddon comes from the Bible which is a place the final battle between the forces of good and evil. Term Armageddon also seems to be related to many stories in the Bible, for example a plague sent to reveal God's wrath. The ancients could imagine the end times caused by God, modern humans can easily imagine it being caused by humans' deeds.

Last, horror of demonic or the horror of demons. This genre originated from the idea of an evil incarnation that is an American tradition. "The third great horror subgenre of the sixties, the horror of the demonic, suggested that the world was horrible because literal, evil forces were constantly undermining the quality of existence." (Derry, 2009, p. 88). Themes of repression and evil forces have long been part of importance of American literature. Movies of this genre show great consistency and tend to have at least 4 things in common theme, the first is the idea of revenge. Demons or witches torment the people who are around them to take revenge to those who have tormented them in the past. Second theme is deceiving goodness. Demons or magicians will target people; they would kill if they couldn't trick them. The third theme is mystical phenomena, especially takeovers body by the devil. In a world full of demons, anything can happen including an animal with a human head, a door lock that suddenly breaks, an easy matter of life and death. The fourth theme in these films is emphasis on Christian symbology.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study consisted of descriptive qualitative research by using semantic approach and textual analysis approach. So, a qualitative data collection method will be carried out and the results of this research will be explained by using a description. Qualitative descriptive as an alternative category that opposed the new adaptations characteristic of basic theory, phenomenology, and ethnography (Sandelowski, 2000). This type of research was chosen because the results of data analysis was explained descriptively. Sandelowski (2000) argues that This research is carried out when a detailed description of the phenomenon is desired directly. Semantic approach and textual analysis approach used to analyze meaning from word to sentence level as well as story elements that build two sentences horror story. Documentation was chosen as the data collection method by taking screenshot of the two sentence horror stories from three sources.

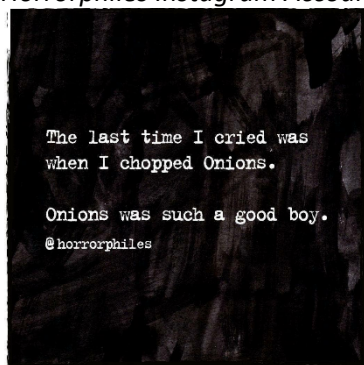
The data sources are the Instagram account @horrorphiles whose data will be taken from January to March 2018, Thought Catalog website which the last upload was updated in April 2021, and one of the ebook in the Wattpad application with title Extremely Short Horror Stories (Two Sentence Horror Stories) which was last updated on July 2017. 25 story will be taken from each of the sources. The two sentences horror stories that being documented will be selected. There are several stories consisting of three sentences and there are also similar stories from the three selected sources.

The analysis method will be implemented by using several steps. First, the data will be analyzed for categorizing the types of semantic meaning used to build horror in them by creating tables according to predetermined data sources (@horrorphiles, website thought catalog, Extremely Short Horror Stories (Two Sentence Horror Stories)). Second, the stories will be re-analyzed after find out the purpose of the story from the semantic meaning. To confirm whether the story that only consists of these two sentences can be classified into horror genre stories, textual analysis was carried out by looking at the literary formula of the genre story horror. Literary formulas are narrative structures or conventions dramatic use in a large number of individual works (Cawelti 1976). There are 2 the type of use of literary formulas, those are (a) formulas that show a stereotype in a society's culture at a certain time and (b) a

formula that refers to a stereotyped plot used by many writers on a genre. Thus, this study uses the type of the use of the second formula with the aim of categorizing the stories into types of horror genres by looking at the elements that build the two sentence horror stories by compiling tables according to predetermined data sources. The result of the analysis will be explained by a descriptive text.

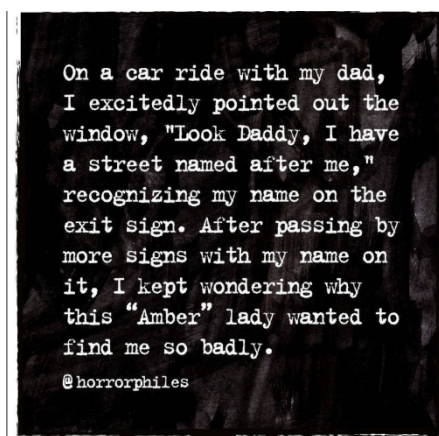
#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **4.1. @Horrorphiles Instagram Account**



*Figure 4.1.1.source: @horrorphiles Instagram account,2021*

This story has a connotative and conceptual meaning. According to Merriam webster, onion is a cultivated Asian spice broadly (*Allium cepa*) of the lily family with a sharp aroma edible. However, the word onion in this story has connotative meaning. Before, onion is mentioned as a good boy which means well-behaved pet or child. Therefore, onion in this story was a living being. It states that "I" character mutilate living things. This story does not use typical diction horror stories that show certain emotions of the characters. However, what makes this story a horror story is elements of narrative patterns that make up the horror genre. The character already mutilating living things so this story can be classified into the type of horror of personality. The character looked normal even though he had mutilating living things. This type of horror is generally built with elements where the characters take out of mind actions.



*Figure 4.1.2.source: @horrorphiles Instagram account,2021*

This story has a collocative, connotative, and social meaning. On the phrase, "signs with my name on it" have a collocative meaning associated with the frequent missing person search sign was on the side of the road. According to Merriam webster, signs is a symbol that has a conventional meaning and is used instead of words or to represent complex ideas. The word amber can also refer to the connotation of amber alerts. According to Merriam Webster, the amber alert is a message widely publicized to warn the public about a child who was recently

kidnapped or missing. The term included in the social meaning because this term comes from America United and first used in 1997. This story is not using diction typical of the horror genre, but using diction which is often appears in daily life. This story contains a plot twist. On the first sentence, "I" character is walking with his father and saw many signs mentioning him along the way. Unbeknownst to "I" character, those marks are society's signs of the search for the missing child. That means, the person who traveled with him was not his father. Based on the plot of the story, this story classified as Horror of Personality.

#### 4.2. Thought Catalog Website

The doctors told the amputee he might experience a phantom limb from time to time. Nobody prepared him for the moments though, when he felt cold fingers brush across his phantom hand. — Gagege

Figure 4.2.1.source: Thought Catalog Website ,2021

There was conceptual meaning on the phrase of phantom limb. Quoting from Merriam Webster, that phrase means a painful sensation from a body part that has been amputated or also called a phantom pain. In this story, the doctor said that the part that had been amputated from the male character will feel a painful sensation. However, no one told the male character that the sensation felt can be in the form of cold fingers which touched it. The plot of this story makes it categorical into the horror of demonic. Phantom limb felt by him was the cold finger that touched it on the amputated that had no form.

I can't move, breathe, speak or hear and it's so dark all the time. If I knew it would be this lonely, I would have been cremated instead. — Graboid27

Figure 4.2.2.source: Thought Catalog Website ,2021

Conceptual meaning and diction identical to horror stories shown through "I" character who mentions that he was in a narrow and dark place where he cannot move, breathing, speaking, or listening as indicated by first sentence. Then, in the second sentence we could concluded that "I" character was buried, marked with "If I knew it would be lonely like this, I would have been cremated as a replacement." This story included into horror of demonic type if you look at it of the plot elements of the story. The character is actually dead and already buried. However, he could feel lonely when he was buried. He would prefer to be cremated if he knew the loneliness felt inside the grave.

#### 4.3. Extremely Short Horror Stories (Two Sentence Horror Stories) Wattpad Application

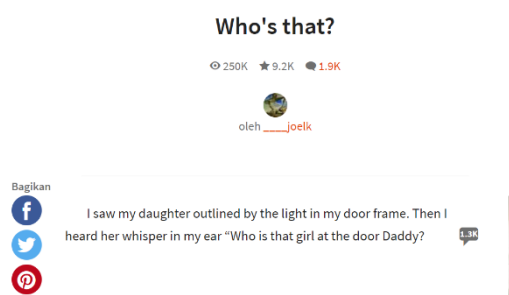
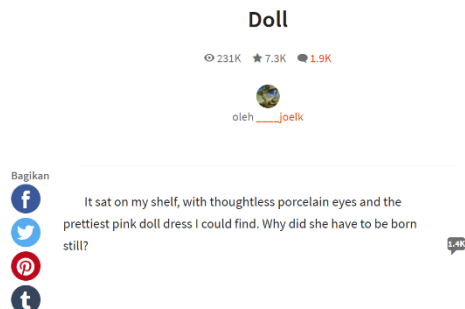


Figure 4.3.1.source: Extremely Short Horror Stories (Two Sentence Horror Stories) Wattpad Application ,2021

This story contains real meaning or conceptual meaning. "I" saw his daughter who was in front house's door. Then, in the second sentence, suddenly he heard the voice of his daughter whispering in his ear asking who was child at the door. The two sentences of this story are not showing the use of diction that is identical to horror stories, but interpreted from the first sentence we knew the background of the place. This story is a horror of demonic seen from story plot. "I" character clearly sees his daughter in front the door, but at the same time he heard her voice whispering said, "Daddy, who's the girl at the door?".



*Figure 4.3.2.source: Extremely Short Horror Stories (Two Sentence Horror Stories) Wattpad Application, 2021*

This story contains collocative and conceptual meaning. Collocative meaning can be seen from the first sentence. Anyone would think that there is a beautiful doll sitting on a shelf. Second sentence change the previously positive collocative meaning to negative and scary. It was now as the word referring to the denotative meaning of born still which means the doll was a baby who died at birth. This is known from the word born still which refers to stillborn baby. Quoting from the Merriam webster dictionary, stillborn means died at birth. The plot of the story and "I" character are the elements that form a type of horror story of personality. This story contains plot twist; at first, we thought a sitting doll on the shelf are pretty dolls in general. Turns out, doll it is a dead baby. Then, who made it It's getting scary because my character put the baby on the shelf.

#### Semantics Results

	Conceptual Meaning	Connotative Meaning	Social Meaning	Collocative Meaning
@Horrorphiles Instagram Account	23	4	2	2
Thought Catalog Website	25	3	0	0
Extremely Short Horror Stories (Two Sentence Horror Stories) Wattpad	25	1	0	1

From the results above, this study showed that from the 75 data analyzed that from seven types of semantic meaning by Geoffrey Leech, there are four types which can be used to conveyed the stories' intention. Those are conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, and collocative meaning. The most dominant meaning used in these stories are conceptual meaning which being used in almost every stories. This meaning used to convey the story in a straightforward manner. Conceptual meaning is the meaning in language that conveys the intent or meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence based on the concept of real world or according to the meaning in the dictionary, it makes the story easier to be understand.



Connotative meaning is the second meaning which frequently appear in the stories. It refers to something or another meaning upon the real concept of meaning itself. for example, the story in first data of @horrorphiles Instagram account using word 'onion' with connotative word. If the word meaning were conceptual then the word will refer to spice that usually uses for many cuisines. However, since the meaning is connotative, then the whole story will be taken as a consideration to interpret the meaning. The 'onion' meaning could be a type of living creature, it could be pet or child.

The third frequently appeared meaning is collocative meaning. It is meaning in language that can be associated with other words based on its scope. For example, in the story of @horrorphiles Instagram account's second data, there is a collocative meaning in the phrase "signs with my name on it" that can be associated with the sign of the search for missing people who are often on the side of the road. The use of connotative meaning and collocative of meaning makes the story more varied and interesting in terms of conveying the meaning of the story.

The meanings that occasionally appear in the story are social meanings. This meaning makes the story difficult to understand. Stories that contain social meaning can be understood if a reader has the same linguistic, cultural, and social background as the writer of the story. Social meaning shows a person's cultural and social identity. However, as many readers have varieties background, some diction that was being used in some stories make it confusing.

#### **Narrative Pattern Results**

	Horror of Personality	Horror of Demonic	Horror of Armageddon
@Horrorphiles Instagram Account	16	7	2
Thought Catalog Website	6	18	1
Extremely Short Horror Stories (Two Sentence Horror Stories) Wattpad	6	18	1

From the table above, the most frequently used narrative pattern in two sentences horror stories was the story plot. These stories often use plot twists to build tension in the story. This narrative pattern forms the most formulas for the horror of demonic genre. This type is most often used because horror stories related to the supernatural are easier to imagine because human nature is generally more afraid of things they can't see or are beyond logic.

Then, the type of horror genre in second place is horror of personality. This type of horror is psychologically scary and often built by element of narrative where characters do things that beyond logic and seems like a crazy person with no empathy. The type that is rarely used is the horror of Armageddon which is composed of a story formula where humans experience extinction due to technology or the existence of intelligent beings other than humans. The plot of the story where usually human almost extinct and the world is destroyed is an element of the narrative pattern that builds this horror of armageddon story.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In summary, this two sentences horror story is able to show its strength as a horror genre story with easy-to-understand language, creates tension and is able to leave a curious space for readers. These stories are generally constructed with simple diction and sentences. The use

of conceptual meaning is done to facilitate the delivery of the meaning of the story correctly so that the reader will feel the tension even though the story is only consisted of two sentences. Limited sentence writing also affects the narrative pattern used. This story only uses one or two narrative elements in each story from the four elements which exist. Plot is the most dominant element in shaping this horror story by using a plot twist or surprise ending where the first sentence is the introduction and the second sentence is the unexpected ending.

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