

**Intrinsic Elements and Narrative Techniques in Short Stories Written by
Junior High School Students in Sidenreng Rappang Regency**

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ABSTRACT

This study describes the intrinsic elements and narrative techniques in short stories written by junior high school students who participated in the 2025 Festival Bulan Bahasa in Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The study employed a descriptive qualitative design. The data consisted of textual excerpts from 13 short stories and were examined through an objective approach rooted in New Criticism and a narratological perspective. Data were collected through documentation, repeated reading, marking, and classification, and were analyzed using content analysis. The findings show that all 13 short stories contain seven intrinsic elements: theme, character and characterization, plot, setting, point of view, language style, and moral message. The stories consistently developed the competition theme, "Youth and the Indonesian Language," through education, friendship, self-development, language awareness, and polite communication. All stories used chronological forward plots, while settings were dominated by schools, homes, libraries, and other environments familiar to students. Narrative techniques were characterized by orderly plot management, character development through action and dialogue, complementary use of dialogue and narration, consistent first- or third-person perspectives, and conflicts drawn from students' everyday lives. Several texts, however, showed compressed conflict development or rapid character change. Overall, the interaction between intrinsic structure and narrative technique enabled the students to construct coherent stories and communicate moral and linguistic values clearly.

Keywords: Intrinsic Elements; Narrative Techniques; Short Stories; Junior High School Students; Indonesian Language

INTRODUCTION

Literary works bring together imagination, lived experience, and reflection through language. In educational settings, literature also provides a space in which students can develop sensitivity, critical thinking, creativity, and language competence. Short stories are particularly accessible to adolescent writers because their relatively compact form allows students to transform everyday experiences, ideas, and emotions into a focused narrative. Nurgiyantoro (2018) explains that fiction is constructed through interrelated intrinsic elements, while Tarigan (2015) emphasizes the educational value of literary activity for developing expression and appreciation. For junior high school students, writing a short story therefore involves not only producing a sequence of events but also coordinating theme, character, plot, setting, point of view, language, and message into a meaningful whole.

This study emerged from the 2025 Festival Bulan Bahasa organized by the Indonesian Language Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. The festival involved junior high school students in Sidenreng Rappang Regency through several language and literary competitions, including speech, poetry reading, and short-story writing. The short-story competition provided a useful corpus for examining how student writers construct narratives under a shared thematic framework. The competition theme, "Youth and the Indonesian Language," encouraged participants to connect language awareness with situations familiar to young people, including school life, friendship, communication, self-development, and social interaction.

An analysis of student short stories requires attention to both what builds the story and how the story is told. The objective tradition associated with New Criticism treats the literary text as an autonomous structure whose meaning can be examined through close attention to its internal relationships (Abrams & Harpham, 2015; Ransom, 1941). From this perspective, theme, character and characterization, plot, setting, point of view, language style, and moral message function together as intrinsic elements. Narratology complements this structural focus by distinguishing story from discourse and by examining the techniques through which events, characters, and information are arranged for readers (Chatman, 1978; Genette, 1980). The combination of these perspectives makes it possible to describe not only the components found in a student text but also the effectiveness of their narrative presentation.

Initial reading of the competition entries indicated that the students were generally able to establish recognizable story structures, but the depth of narrative development varied. For example, *Tutur Kata yang Merubahmu* presents a clear change in the main character but moves through that transformation quickly. *Aku, Kamu dan Sore Hari Itu* has an orderly sequence of events but only limited conflict, while *Nyala Bahasa di Hati Syifa* and *Mengembangkan Bahasa Tercinta* move rapidly from difficulty to success. These patterns suggest that chronological clarity

does not always guarantee sufficient psychological development, conflict escalation, or narrative tension. A more systematic analysis was therefore needed to identify both the structural strengths and the recurring limitations of the corpus.

Previous research has frequently examined intrinsic elements in established literary works or measured students' ability to identify those elements. Nimpuno (2018) analyzed intrinsic elements and values in a short story by Dewi Lestari, while Meti Novia and Santi Faujiah (2023) examined a short story by Seno Gumira Ajidarma. Yanti and Neisya (2021) focused on learners' ability to analyze intrinsic literary elements, and Yulianawati (2023) reported difficulties experienced by students when interpreting characterization and plot. Sulistyaningrum and Dewi (2024) combined intrinsic analysis with educational values in a published short story. These studies are useful, but they do not specifically integrate intrinsic structure and narrative technique in a corpus of short stories authored by junior high school students for a literary competition. The present study addresses that gap by analyzing 13 student texts through an integrated New Criticism and narratological framework. Accordingly, the study asks: (1) What forms of intrinsic elements build the students' short stories? and (2) What narrative techniques are used to organize and present those stories?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Short Stories and Intrinsic Elements

A short story is a compact form of prose fiction that generally concentrates on a limited number of characters, a relatively narrow setting, and a dominant conflict. Its brevity requires selection: details must contribute directly to the central effect of the narrative. Nurgiyantoro (2018) argues that the intrinsic elements of fiction operate functionally and collectively to construct total meaning. These elements include theme, character and characterization, plot, setting, point of view, language style, and moral message. Wellek and Warren (2016) similarly view literary structure as a system in which internal components gain significance through their relationships with one another.

Within an objective approach, the theme provides the underlying idea, characterization gives human agency to the story, plot organizes causally or temporally related events, and setting locates those events in place, time, and social circumstances. Point of view determines the position from which information is delivered, while style concerns diction and figurative choices that shape the tone and atmosphere of the text. The moral message emerges from the overall relationship among these elements rather than from one component in isolation. For student writers, the ability to coordinate these elements is central to producing a story that is understandable, coherent, and meaningful.

Narrative Techniques and Narratology

Narratology shifts attention from the presence of story elements to the techniques by which those elements are arranged and communicated. Chatman (1978) distinguishes between story, referring to the content of events and existents, and discourse, referring to the manner in which the content is presented. Genette (1980) further demonstrates that narrative order, perspective, and the distribution of information shape readers' understanding of events. Bal (1997) likewise emphasizes the relationship among events, actors, time, and focalization in narrative construction. In the present study, narrative technique is operationalized through five aspects drawn from the research instrument: plot management, character development, the use of dialogue and narration, narrative point of view, and conflict presentation. Plot management concerns how events are ordered and connected. Character development concerns the way traits and changes are revealed through action, dialogue, and experience. Dialogue and narration determine how information and interaction are balanced. Narrative point of view concerns the narrator's position and consistency, while conflict presentation concerns the way tensions are introduced, developed, and resolved.

Previous Research and Research Gap

Empirical studies have established that intrinsic analysis remains important in literary education. Ahmad et al. (2020) connected students' mastery of intrinsic elements with short-story writing ability. Nimpuno (2018) and Sulistyaningrum and Dewi (2024) showed how theme, character, plot, setting, and value can be interpreted within individual literary works. Yanti and Neisya (2021) examined learners' competence in analyzing intrinsic elements, whereas Yulianawati (2023) demonstrated that characterization and plot can be difficult for students to interpret when texts rely on figurative language. These studies reinforce the value of structural analysis but largely position students as readers or analysts rather than as authors whose own narratives are examined. The distinctive contribution of this study is therefore contextual and analytical. It examines short stories produced by junior high school students in an authentic literacy event and combines two levels of analysis: the intrinsic structure of the texts and the narrative techniques used to present that structure. This integrated perspective is useful because a story may contain all expected elements while still showing uneven management of conflict, character development, or pacing. Examining both dimensions provides a more complete picture of students' narrative competence.

METHOD

Design and Sample

The study employed a descriptive qualitative design because its purpose was to describe in depth the forms of intrinsic elements and narrative techniques found in student short stories rather than to test a statistical hypothesis. The analysis

combined an objective approach associated with New Criticism for the intrinsic elements and a narratological approach for the techniques of storytelling. This combination kept the analysis centered on the texts themselves while also accounting for how narrative information was organized. The primary data consisted of textual excerpts from 13 short stories submitted by junior high school participants in the 2025 Festival Bulan Bahasa in Sidenreng Rappang Regency. The secondary sources consisted of books, journal articles, and literary theory used to support the categories of analysis. The 13 short stories formed the complete corpus examined in the study.

Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected through documentation using reading and note-taking procedures. All 13 short stories were gathered as the principal documents, read repeatedly to establish an overall understanding, and then marked for passages representing the seven intrinsic elements and five narrative-technique categories. Relevant excerpts were recorded in analysis tables, coded, and grouped according to the research indicators. This procedure followed the source report's emphasis on systematic reading, marking, recording, and classification of textual evidence.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through content analysis. The researcher first identified textual evidence related to theme, character and characterization, plot, setting, point of view, language style, and moral message. The same texts were then examined for plot management, character development, dialogue and narration, narrative point of view, and conflict presentation. The coded excerpts were grouped by aspect, described interpretively, compared across the 13 stories, and synthesized into general findings. Conclusions were drawn from recurrent patterns while retaining attention to variations among individual stories.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Corpus Overview

The corpus comprised 13 short stories produced for the same literary competition. Listing the texts clarifies the range of narratives from which the cross-text findings were derived.

Table 1. Short-story corpus analyzed in the study

No.	Short-story title
1	<i>Tutur Kata yang Merubahmu</i>
2	<i>Aku, Kamu dan Sore Hari Itu</i>
3	<i>Roti Asing dari Musuh</i>

No.	Short-story title
4	<i>Bahasa yang Hampir Hilang</i>
5	<i>Bahasa yang Tersembunyi</i>
6	<i>Pemudah Mengeksplorasi Bahasa Indonesia ke Negara Lain</i>
7	<i>Pemuda dan Bahasa Indonesia</i>
8	<i>Suara Pemuda dari Lembaran Kata</i>
9	<i>Aku dan Bahasaku</i>
10	<i>Suara yang Terjaga</i>
11	<i>Nyala Bahasa di Hati Syifa</i>
12	<i>Bahasa dan Kata</i>
13	<i>Mengembangkan Bahasa Tercinta</i>

Intrinsic Elements

Across the corpus, all seven intrinsic elements specified in the analytical instrument were present. The most consistent pattern was structural completeness combined with thematic alignment to the competition topic. The individual stories varied in focus and depth, but each included a recognizable central idea, acting characters, a forward-moving sequence of events, a setting, a narrative perspective, stylistic choices, and a moral message.

Table 2. Summary of intrinsic elements across the 13 short stories

Aspect	Cross-text finding	Interpretive function
Theme	All stories were related to "Youth and the Indonesian Language," developed through language awareness, education, friendship, self-development, and polite speech.	Kept the narratives connected to the competition topic while allowing varied student experiences.
Character and characterization	Main characters drove the stories and were revealed through actions, dialogue, reactions, and experiences; supporting characters helped clarify conflict and change.	Provided agency for the theme and enabled moral or attitudinal development.
Plot	All 13 stories used a forward chronological plot from introduction through conflict and resolution.	Made event relationships clear and easy to follow,

Aspect	Cross-text finding	Interpretive function
		although some resolutions were compressed.
Setting	Settings were dominated by schools, homes, libraries, and social environments familiar to students; time settings included morning, afternoon, evening, and night.	Anchored the narratives in adolescent everyday life and supported plausibility.
Point of view	The stories used either first-person or third-person narration and generally maintained the selected perspective consistently.	Controlled readers' access to character experience and event information.
Language style	Language tended to be simple, communicative, and based on everyday diction, with some figurative expressions used to strengthen atmosphere and emotion.	Supported accessibility while giving selected passages expressive emphasis.
Moral message	Messages emphasized love for Indonesian, respectful speech, appreciation of others, self-development, perseverance, and learning. Some were implicit, others explicit at the ending.	Connected story resolution with educational and linguistic values.

Theme was the most visibly shared element because every text responded to the competition requirement. The students interpreted "Youth and the Indonesian Language" broadly rather than repeating a single plot formula. Some stories focused on speaking politely, others on learning, maintaining, developing, or introducing Indonesian, and others placed language within friendship or self-improvement. This variation indicates that a common thematic frame did not prevent students from choosing different situations and character motivations. Characterization generally relied on externally observable behavior. Main characters were shown acting, speaking, reacting to problems, and changing their attitudes after particular experiences. This strategy made characterization easy to identify, but the psychological development was not equally deep in every story. *Tutur Kata yang Merubahmu*, for example, depicts a clear transformation in the main character, yet the change occurs quickly. A similar compression appears in *Nyala Bahasa di Hati Syifa* and *Mengembangkan Bahasa Tercinta*, where movement from difficulty to success is relatively rapid. Thus, the corpus demonstrates competence in signaling change more consistently than in elaborating the internal process behind that change.

The use of forward plot in every text was a particularly strong corpus-level pattern. Events were typically presented in chronological order from the introduction of a character and situation, through a problem, to resolution and a concluding message. This organization made the texts accessible, but it also contributed to a preference for straightforward narrative development. *Aku, Kamu dan Sore Hari Itu* illustrates the strength and limitation of this tendency: the plot is orderly and understandable, but the conflict is relatively minimal, reducing narrative tension. In other stories, the transition from conflict to success is rapid. These findings show that chronological organization was well established, whereas pacing and escalation remained more variable. Settings reinforced the students' proximity to their subject matter. Schools, homes, libraries, and peer environments dominated the stories, creating recognizable spaces for language learning and social interaction. First- and third-person perspectives were both used, and the selected perspective was generally maintained consistently. Language style was similarly accessible: everyday diction predominated, with figurative language appearing selectively to intensify atmosphere or emotion. Moral messages frequently became explicit near the end of the stories, especially when the narrative emphasized love of Indonesian, respectful communication, perseverance, or self-improvement.

Narrative Techniques

The analysis of storytelling techniques shows that the students relied on a set of stable strategies that supported coherence. The five techniques were found throughout the corpus, although their relative emphasis differed from one story to another.

Table 3. Summary of narrative techniques across the 13 short stories

Technique	Cross-text finding	Narrative role
Plot management	Events were organized chronologically; stories generally moved from orientation to problem, response, and resolution.	Maintained clarity and continuity, but sometimes shortened conflict development.
Character development	Characters were developed through action, dialogue, social interaction, and experiences that led to greater awareness or motivation.	Linked conflict to changes in attitude and supported the moral message.
Dialogue and narration	Some texts relied more on dialogue and others on narration; most used both in complementary ways.	Dialogue displayed relationships and attitudes, while narration connected events and supplied context.

Technique	Cross-text finding	Narrative role
Narrative point of view	First- or third-person narration was used and generally remained consistent from beginning to end.	Preserved coherence in the delivery of information and perspective.
Conflict presentation	Conflicts arose from language use, low interest in Indonesian, communication problems, learning challenges, and other situations close to student life.	Moved the plot forward and created occasions for decision, change, and message delivery.

Plot management closely mirrored the structural finding that all stories used forward plots. The students tended to introduce a familiar situation, present a language-related or social problem, show an attempt to address it, and conclude with a positive outcome or lesson. Such organization supports readability and is appropriate for short competition texts, but it can also make resolutions predictable when conflict is not developed through intermediate complications. The source analysis therefore indicates a need to distinguish between chronological order and fully developed narrative progression: the students generally achieved the former more consistently than the latter.

Character development was frequently tied to conflict resolution. Students often positioned the main character as a learner who became more aware, motivated, confident, or respectful after encountering a difficulty. This is evident in stories in which attitudes toward Indonesian or toward other people change after dialogue, failure, advice, or a new opportunity. Dialogue helped expose interpersonal relations and immediate reactions, while narration linked scenes, explained circumstances, and summarized change. The balance between the two modes varied, but together they enabled the stories to progress without losing the central theme.

Narrative perspective was one of the more stable technical aspects. Both first-person and third-person narrators appeared in the corpus, but the stories generally avoided confusing shifts between perspectives. Conflict, by contrast, showed greater variation in intensity. The most common conflicts concerned difficulties in using Indonesian well, limited interest in the national language, challenges in developing language competence, and interpersonal problems arising from communication. Because these conflicts were close to student experience, they could be integrated naturally into school and peer settings. At the same time, the explicit moral orientation of many endings meant that conflict often functioned primarily as a route toward a lesson rather than as an open or ambiguous problem.

The overall findings support the structural view that the meaning of a short story emerges from the interaction of its internal components. Nurgiantoro (2018)

argues that intrinsic elements work functionally to create the totality of fiction, and the present corpus illustrates that relationship clearly. Theme was not independent of character or conflict: students typically used a young protagonist to experience a language-related problem, placed that problem in a familiar setting, organized the events chronologically, and ended with a moral message. The repeated coordination of these elements indicates that the participants had a practical understanding of basic narrative structure even when the sophistication of individual components differed.

The finding that every story used a forward plot is noteworthy when considered against broader discussions of narrative variation. Narratology does not prescribe chronological order; rather, it provides tools for understanding how order and perspective influence the reader's experience (Chatman, 1978; Genette, 1980). In this corpus, chronological progression appears to function as a strategy for clarity. For junior high school writers working within a competition setting, a forward plot may reduce the cognitive burden of managing temporal shifts and help them keep theme and message visible. However, the source analysis also shows that simple chronology can be accompanied by rapid transitions, limited escalation, or compressed character development. Therefore, future instructional attention should not focus only on whether a plot is orderly, but also on how tension, causality, and change are developed within that order.

The characterization findings are also consistent with the educational nature of the corpus. The main characters often learn from experience and move toward a socially valued attitude. This makes the stories effective vehicles for moral and language-related messages, but it also explains why several endings are explicit. Rather than leaving the reader to infer the message from the story world, some writers restate the lesson directly. From a New Criticism perspective, an explicitly stated message is not inherently problematic, but its artistic effectiveness depends on how well it grows out of the preceding structure. The present findings suggest that the strongest stories are those in which dialogue, action, conflict, and resolution make the message persuasive before it is stated.

The results extend previous intrinsic-element studies by shifting the object of analysis from professional literary texts to student-authored competition writing. Nimpuno (2018), Meti Novia and Santi Faujiah (2023), and Sulistyaningrum and Dewi (2024) demonstrate the usefulness of structural analysis for published short stories, while Yanti and Neisya (2021) and Yulianawati (2023) examine learners as interpreters of literary structure. The current study adds a production-oriented perspective: the students are not merely identifying theme, plot, or characterization in someone else's work; their own texts show how these elements are mobilized in practice. This distinction is important because successful identification of literary concepts and successful construction of a narrative are related but not identical competencies.

For literary instruction, the findings point to a clear pedagogical direction. Students in this corpus already demonstrated strengths in thematic relevance, chronological coherence, familiar settings, consistent perspective, and explicit value orientation. Instruction can therefore move beyond introducing the names of intrinsic elements and provide more focused practice in developing conflict, pacing character change, balancing dialogue with narration, and allowing messages to emerge through action rather than relying mainly on direct statements. Such practice would preserve the clarity shown in the current texts while supporting greater narrative depth.

The study is limited to 13 short stories from one 2025 competition in Sidenreng Rappang Regency, so the findings describe this corpus rather than all junior high school writing. The texts were also produced within a shared competition theme, which naturally influenced thematic similarity. Nevertheless, the corpus offers a useful snapshot of how student writers combine structural and narratological choices in an authentic literacy activity. Further research could compare competition and classroom writing, examine different age groups, or investigate how targeted instruction changes students' management of conflict and characterization over time.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the 13 short stories written by junior high school participants in the 2025 Festival Bulan Bahasa contain a complete set of intrinsic elements and employ identifiable narrative techniques that work together to build coherent stories. The themes consistently reflect "Youth and the Indonesian Language" through education, friendship, self-development, language preservation, and respectful communication. Characters are developed through actions, dialogue, and experience; all stories use forward chronological plots; settings are largely drawn from school, home, library, and social environments; first- and third-person perspectives are used consistently; language is generally simple and communicative; and moral messages emphasize positive attitudes toward language and social behavior. At the narrative-technique level, students manage plots in a clear chronological sequence, develop characters through interaction and experience, combine dialogue and narration, maintain narrative perspective, and use conflicts closely related to adolescent life and Indonesian-language use. The principal area for development is not basic structural completeness but narrative depth: several stories move quickly through conflict or character change and rely on explicit final messages. These findings show that integrating intrinsic analysis with narratology provides a fuller account of students' short-story writing and can help teachers identify both established competencies and specific areas for further literary development.

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