

A Contrastive Study on the Thematic Structure Functions of English and Arabic Short Stories

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Abstract

Charles Dickens's (1909) "Little Dorrit" and Al Tayeb Saleh's (1997) "Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal" were the subject of this investigation. Using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) model of thematic categorizations and functions, this research paper examined thematic structure functions in relation to Dickens's and Saleh's short stories. Hence, 234 English and 304 Arabic clauses were manually extracted from the short stories and analyzed regarding the proposed framework. The findings revealed that the use of topical themes was the highest and the interpersonal was the lowest in frequency while the textual themes were at some point in between the topical and interpersonal ones. The comparison also had no bearing on the topical themes because they were identical, but the textual and interpersonal themes recorded distinct results. In Arabic, the utilization of textual themes was higher but the implementation of interpersonal themes was more employed and exercised in English. Each of which indicates multifarious reasons and functions to be regarded to the author's vantage point.

Keywords: Al Tayeb Saleh, Dickens, functions of themes, theme, thematic structure

1. Introduction

Hatem (1997) defines contrastive text linguistics as an expansion of fundamental linguistic analytic approaches that demonstrate the similarities and differences between two or more languages. When examining the concept of comparison and contrast from a textual standpoint, the major target of analysis involves stretches of language longer than the sentence. So, speech patterns are viewed in terms of specific contextual demands and how they are realized in text structure and texture across linguistic and cultural restrictions.

Stern (1983), accordingly, viewed contrastive analysis as the systematic examination of two languages with the objective of determining fundamental differences and similarities. Hence, Ellis (1994) showed that contrastive analysis was widely utilized in the area of second language acquisition (SLA) to elucidate why some elements of a target language were more difficult to learn than others. Language learning, according to the dominant behaviorist ideas of the time, was a matter of pattern development, which might be promoted or hindered by existing habits. Thus, the complexity in understanding specific structures in a second language (L2) was determined by the difference between the learners' mother tongue (L1) and the language they were attempting to acquire.

The concept of a clause is defined as "any syntactic unit whose structure is, or is seen as reduced form, that of a sentence" (Matthews, 2003). The line of meaning, according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), provides character as a message inside the clause. As a result, this line of meaning became known as the "thematic structure." A theme-rheme nexus is used to construct the thematic structure. The theme is the subject of the communication or the starting point for what the speaker will say. And the rheme is everything that comes after that in the sentence, which is what the speaker says about, or in relation to, the starting point of the utterance. Organization is a key issue in every act of communication that must be resolved if the conversation is to be efficient. Hence, the line of meaning would be hazy without the structuring principle of thematic structures.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) noted that themes, of which this paper scopes over, are divided into several types: topical, textual and interpersonal. Thematic structure is driven by the principle of the theme that has one or more of these experiential elements. This signifies that a clause's theme closes with the first constituent, which is either a participant, a circumstance, or a process. This constituent is known as the topical theme in its textual function. The term 'interpersonal theme' refers to an element that illustrates the relationship between the text's participants or the viewpoint or point of view expressed in the clause. 'Textual theme' is any combination of continuative, conjunction, and conjunctive adjunct; it demonstrates how texts or smaller constituents are related to one another.

2. Literature Review

This section is divided into two main subsections. The first subsection, *Theoretical Framework*, debates what this present paper is based on and how it is entirely run relying on authentic models of analysis. The second subsection, *Previous Studies*, outlines numerous former studies examined in the field that this paper aims to explore.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Meta-functions developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) combine textual, interpersonal, and experiential meaning. These three lines of meaning provide the clause its character as a message. Thematic structure is the structure that maintains this line of meaning. As a result, themes are classified as topical, interpersonal, or textual. In general, the clause constructs a fraction of human experience in its representational role. Processes are thus defined as a combination of three sorts of elements: the process itself, the participants in that process, and any contextual factors such as time, manner, or cause. Hence, the theme serves as the key criterion of thematic architecture.

Themes differ in function and come in a variety of forms. In its textual role, the topical theme is the initial element of a clause that is either a participant, circumstance, or process. The other two themes are elements with interpersonal or textual functions that have no influence on the experiential meaning of the clause. On the one hand, textual themes are supplemented by either continuatives, conjunctions, or conjunctive adjuncts. Interpersonal themes, on the other hand, are represented by modal/comment adjuncts, vocatives, or finite verbal operators. Sometimes, only one or two such components may be found in a single clause, but an example might be made to demonstrate a multiple theme encompassing each of these six types of non-topical components in thematic location, as in Halliday and Matthiessen’s example (2014; 107):

well	but	then	surely	Jean	wouldn’t	the best idea	be to join in
cont	stru	conj	modal	voc	finite	topical	
Theme						Rheme	

Each form of interpersonal and textual theme is divided into two subcategories. A textual continuative is one of a limited group of words that indicate a transition in the discourse, such as a response, a transition in interaction, or a fresh shift to the next point if the same speaker is proceeding. A textual conjunction is a word or group that either connects (paratactic) or bonds (hypotactic) the structurally similar clause to another clause. Adverbial groupings or prepositional phrases that bind the clause to the previous text are examples of textual conjunction adjuncts. An interpersonal vocative, alternatively, is any element that is utilized to address, ‘typically (but not necessarily)’ a particular name. Interpersonal modal adjuncts reflect the speaker’s or writer’s viewpoint or stance toward the message’s content. Interpersonal finite verbal operators are the small collection of finite auxiliary verbs that construct main tense or modality; they are the unmarked themes of yes/no interrogatives. The table below illustrates each theme category with exemplary instances.

Theme	Example
[textual] continuative	yes, no, well, oh, wow, etc.
[textual] conjunction	and, or, nor, when, while, in order to, etc.
[textual] conjunctive adjunct (‘discourse adjunct’)	that is, briefly, meanwhile, therefore, etc.
[interpersonal] vocative	sir, John, Dr. Herbert, darling, etc.
[interpersonal] modal/comment adjunct	probably, please, broadly speaking, etc.
[interpersonal] finite verbal operator	am, was, shall, should, etc.

The first two categories, continuatives and conjunctions, are intrinsically thematic: if they appear in the clause at all, they appear at the beginning. The rest are what may be termed as characteristically thematic; that is, they are mainly encountered in a thematic position (i.e., before the topical theme), although they can also be found elsewhere in the clause.

2.2 Previous Studies

This subsection lists the investigations that were formerly examined relating to the linguistic contrastive analysis field and in relation to the objective this paper attempts to achieve. Five critically-reviewed research papers are outlined below and they are chronologically arranged – i.e., coordinated in order of occurrence.

Rorvic (2003) explored theme development in Norwegian-English translations. The investigation focused on examining and contrasting theme progression in an English source text and five distinct interpretations of the same English text. Danes’ (1974) patterns of thematic development were adopted to analyse the collected data. Regardless of the fact that some of the texts appear to have a relatively large number of modifications in thematic progression, they share the pattern of the source text relatively accurately, with the exception of the overall tendency that the percentage of themes comprising new information is marginally greater in the target texts than in the source text. In other words, the frequency of sentences corresponding to each of Danes’ thematic progression patterns is about comparable. This is because Danes’ patterns of thematic progression, as applicable in this observation, do not make a distinction between themes originating in multiple portions of the same rheme (for instance), so even if the English and Norwegian sentences possess a distinct theme, it has not been examined as a transition in thematic progression if both themes originated in the same rheme.

Jalilifar (2009) studied thematic development and progression in English academic texts as well as their Persian construal manifestations. The data were collected from a corpus comprised of the first three pages of the first chapters of nine English applied linguistics textbooks, as well as their interpretation equivalents. As a result, the data were examined utilizing Halliday’s (1994) theme organization and McCabe’s (1999) thematic development. All patterns (linear, constant, and split rheme) were observed in original and translated texts, excluding split theme, and chi-square indicated significant variations. According to the findings, the frequency of linear patterns in Persian was higher. The investigation indicates that in order to utilize these instruments efficiently and generate more unified texts, both writers and translators must be aware of them.

Park and Lu (2015) investigated a computational framework for automated topic structure analysis in written English. The algorithm accepts an English text as input and returns an analysis of the thematic organization of each sentence in the text as output. The system is assessed

utilizing data from the Penn Tree-'The bank's Wall Street Journal' section and the British Academic Written English corpus. The data were examined using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) theme framework. In the 500 sentences, the annotators recognized 488 themes, whereas the analyser detected 468. Among the detected themes, 438 were determined to be similar, indicating that the annotators and the system agreed on the theme's boundaries.

Espindola (2016) examined the thematic structure of the Star Wars saga film's spoken speech, focusing on the character Yoda. The data gathered from Yoda's discourse were analysed employing Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) theme structure classification. The findings demonstrated the role of thematic organization to elucidating Yoda's characterization as a knowledgeable and strong character in the galaxy universe of Star Wars, both in the spoken source text and in the translated target text. Moreover, focused attention to the linguistic intricacy of subtitles demonstrated that the SFL analysis revealed Yoda's specific languaging mediating a separate world perspective.

Rahnemoon et al. (2017) deployed both descriptive and quantitative methods to explore the thematic structure of English news and its Persian interpretation. A total of 1000 English clauses and 1095 construed clauses were gathered and processed utilizing Halliday & Matthiessen's (2014) classification of theme construction. During the translation process, it was found that there were two main modifications to the thematic structure, including the overall tendency of transforming themes into rhemes or the opposite, which was achieved by various structural procedures. In the translation of English news material into Persian, all structural processes and a considerable variance in theme categories in both corpora demonstrated that the conventional form of Persian structure was chosen over retaining the English thematic structure.

2.3 Objective of the Study

This investigation objectivates examining the thematic structure functions in English and Arabic short stories. This is in accordance with Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) framework of types of theme. It deeply unfolds how the types of themes pervade the stories and what the intention of the author manifests behind this use. Hence, it demonstrates the distinct functions with regard to particular structures determining the topical, interpersonal, and textual meanings.

2.4 Significance of the Study

Through thematic progression, the insertion of distinct theme types indicates implicit functions. This is regarded to the author's viewpoint and what his/her intentions to imply. Consequently, the reason for which this investigation is significant is that it unwraps further meanings, outside the confines of language, behind the surface lines of meaning. That is, as long as theme types – i.e., topical, interpersonal, and textual – are multifariously functional, each of which indicates a certain type of function that would reflect the author's perspective of the short story.

2.5 Research Questions

This paper investigates, with accordance to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), the functions of theme types in English and Arabic short stories in order to draw a line between the functional similarities and differences. As a result, it compiles the following research questions:

- 1) What are the similarities and differences that are drawn on by the two languages?
- 2) What are the functions of the theme types found in the suggested stories? How would they differ in their reflection of the author's perspective?

3. Methodology

This section is divided into two subsections. The first subsection, *Data Collection*, elucidates the process and the style of gathering the data from the appropriate and authentic sources to support the research procedure. The second subsection, *Data Analysis*, copes with how the posited data is analyzed by means of the proposed theoretical framework. To accomplish this, the researcher is going to examine the study by means of a qualitative investigation.

3.1 Data Collection

The data of this investigation are qualitatively gathered. The data compile two short stories. Namely, the English story *Little Dorrit* (1909) written by Charles Dickens and the Arabic story *Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal* (1997) – that is, *A Palm beside the River* – written by Al Tayeb Saleh are the subject of this investigation. The choice of the stories falls in that they discuss real-life issues that would benefit the functional aim this investigation objectivates accomplishing. That is, the stories are enriched with numerous examples of thematic structures that this paper revolves around.

The plot of Charles Dickens's (ibid.) *Little Dorrit* centers around the protagonist Amy Dorrit. In the story, she is referred to as 'Little Dorrit,' and she is born and spends much of her life at the Marshalsea prison, where her father is jailed for bankruptcy. She and her siblings work for little wages outside the prison gates, returning to Marshalsea every night. *Little Dorrit* works as a dressmaker for Mrs. Clennam, whose son Arthur becomes interested in the Dorrit family and finally assists in the release of Mr. Dorrit from prison. In light of this analysis, 234 clauses from the story were manually extracted and classified according to thematic categorization.

The central character in Saleh's (ibid) *Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal* narrative is "Al Sheikh Mahjoub." The story depicts the reality of Sudan, selling the date crops and considering the 'Al-Asasif' – i.e., the palm – to be the most fruitful. In light of this reality, Sheikh Mahjoub lived in poverty until marrying and having a girl he named "Amnah." However, the arrival of drought differs from the nature of life and the nature of the crop. The sheikh is in a crisis, and Eid is approaching, but the arrival of Ibn Al Sheikh at the last moment will transform the nature of

the situation and bring pleasure back to the heart of the sorrowful father who will get the Eid’s lamb. Thus, in terms of clause extraction, 304 clauses were identified and categorized in accordance with the scope of this investigation.

3.2 Data Analysis

In this subsection, the core concentration is on the process of examining or evaluating the collected data through measuring the results by using scientific tools that determine on distinct aspects of inspection. Consequently, this study applies one main analytic instrument that is briefly discussed in the following paragraphs.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) divided themes into three fundamental categories: topical, interpersonal, and textual themes. At first, topical themes are the first experiential element of a clause, whether participant, circumstance, or process, as in “Wisdom is better than gold or silver”. Second, interpersonal themes are used to refer to a strategy to establish and maintain social relationship. This is done by using vocatives, as in “dear”, modal/comment adjuncts, as in “please”, or finite verbal operators, as in using modal verbs or primary tenses. Third, textual themes are used to refer to a strategy to create ‘texture’ and to make language operationally relevant. In other words, using continuatives, as “yes” or “oh”, conjunctions, as in “and” or “because”, or conjunctive adjuncts, as in “for instance” or “instead” would textually benefit the thematic structure in order to make it cohesive and straightforward. Those three theme types are to be applied on the suggested short stories in the following manner.

Each story is gone through three fundamental processes. First, the introspection process manifests and differentiates themes than others – i.e., rhemes. Second, the themes found are to be compared regarding the adopted analytical instrument. Third, the data that are analyzed out of the two languages – i.e., the English and Arabic – are to be similarized and differed according the remarked functions. In the third process, the research is reliant upon his own intuition of being a native speaker of Arabic and an expert of English. These processes are applied in order to come up with fine and eloquent conclusions.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section includes the analysis of the collected data according to the framework adopted to achieve the aim of this investigation. For the purpose of accuracy and organization, the section is divided into three subsections: *Thematic Analysis of ‘Little Dorrit’*, *Thematic Analysis of ‘Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal’* and *Implications of the Thematic Structures*. Each of which describes the findings along with their discussion and comparison.

4.1 Thematic Analysis of ‘Little Dorrit’

The clause analysis is concerned with the arrangement and architecture of the clause, as well as the specification of the theme/rheme system. Table (1) highlights the results of the theme occurrence in the English story ‘Little Dorrit,’ knowing that 234 clauses were extracted, and shows the frequency and percentage of the three categories of theme - topical, textual, and interpersonal.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of themes in Little Dorrit

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Topical	124	52.9%
Textual	72	30.7%
Interpersonal	38	16.2%

According to Table (1), the topical theme was the highest, the interpersonal was the lowest, and the textual theme was in-between topical and interpersonal themes in frequency in the story ‘Little Dorrit’. The number of topical themes was 124 scoring 52.9%, the number of textual themes was 72 scoring 30.7%, and the number of interpersonal themes was 38 scoring 16.2%. The following three extracts contain examples on each thematic type found in the short story.

Extract (1)	Topical theme	Page in the short story
Example 1	“The family stayed so long in the prison...etc.”	35
Example 2	“The success of this beginning, which led...etc.”	36
Example 3	“The turnkey now began to speak to the lawyers...etc.”	40

Extract (1) – Topical themes found in ‘Little Dorrit’.

As seen in Extract (1), topical themes can be identified by participants, circumstances, or processes. In Example “1”, the topical theme “The family” is considered and functioned as a participant in the clause. In Example “2”, the topical theme “The success” is distributed as a process in the clause. Also, in Example “3”, the topical theme “The turnkey” is distributed as a participant in the clause.

Extract (2)	Textual theme	Page in the short story
Example 1	“Nevertheless, the brave little creature did so fix...etc.’	41
Example 2	““Oh Maggie”, said Amy, ‘what a clumsy child you are!’”	45
Example 3	“As Amy did not wish to disturb them...etc.”	46

Extract (2) – Textual themes found in ‘Little Dorrit’.

According to Extract (2), textual themes can be spotted regarding its continuative, conjunction, or conjunctive adjunct elements. In Example “1”, the textual theme “Nevertheless” is employed in the clause as a conjunctive adjunct. This adverbial binds the clause to the previous one. In Example “2”, the textual theme “Oh Maggie” is inserted as a continuative textual theme in the clause. It is used to indicate a transition in the discourse as a fresh shift to the next point. And in Example “3”, the textual theme “As” is distributed in the clause as a hypotactic conjunction that bonds the structurally similar clause that follows.

Extract (3)	Interpersonal theme	Page in the short story
Example 1	"Are you quite sure and certain, Bob?"	34
Example 2	"Lovely, full of flowers, there's buttercups...etc."	34
Example 3	"Amy, I have got a situation."	41

Extract (3) – Interpersonal themes found in 'Little Dorrit'.

Extract (3) shows the interpersonal themes that can be distinguished regarding its vocative, modal/comment adjunctive, or finite verbal operator use. In Example "1", the interpersonal theme "Are you...etc." is distributed as finite verbal operator 'are' that is utilized to construct main tense or modality. In Example "2", the interpersonal theme "Lovely" is employed as a comment adjunct that reflect the speaker's or writer's viewpoint or stance toward the message's content. Furthermore, in Example (3), the interpersonal theme "Amy" is a vocative that is utilized to attract the addressee's attention.

4.2 Thematic Analysis of 'Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal'

In terms of sentence structure, the distribution of themes and rhemes in Arabic differs from that in English. According to Hatem (1997), Arabic grammarians commonly differentiate two fundamental sentence types. The first is Nominal, in which the subject comes before the predicate, and the second is Verbal, in which the predicate comes before the subject. The arrangement of the sentence according to theme and rheme has become known as functional sentence perspective (FSP). The term refers to how sentence components work from the standpoint of communicative relevance. Regarding this investigation, the themes, or 'subjects', are emphasized and analyzed regardless of whether the sentence is verbal or nominal. Table (2) outlines the results of the theme occurrence in the Arabic story 'Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal', knowing that 304 clauses were extracted.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of themes in Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Topical	131	43%
Textual	109	35.8%
Interpersonal	64	21.1%

As seen in Table (2), in the story 'Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal', the topical theme had the most frequency, the interpersonal theme had the lowest, and the textual theme was in-between the topical and interpersonal themes. The number of topical themes was 131, with a score of 43%, the number of textual themes was 109, with a score of 35.8 percent, and the number of interpersonal themes was 64, with a score of 21.1 percent. The following three extracts contain examples on each thematic type found in the short story.

Extract (4)	Topical theme	Page in the short story
Example 1	"هذه النخلة لا تساوي عشرة جنبيهاث."	7
Example 2	"سارت الحياة رغدا كأنما استجاب الله دعاءه...الخ."	14
Example 3	"يطغى الأمل بين حناياه مرة على اليأس تارة فيغرق الأمل."	17

Extract (4) – Topical themes found in 'Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal'.

Extract (4) shows the topical themes that can be identified by the participants, the circumstances, or the processes. In Example "1", the topical theme "النخلة" is considered and functioned as a participant in the clause. In Example "2", the topical theme "الحياة" is distributed as a process in the clause. Furthermore, in Example "3", the topical theme "الأمل" is distributed also as a process in the clause.

Extract (5)	Textual theme	Page in the short story
Example 1	"أجل، غدا عيد الأضحى حنيما يخرج الناس مع شروق الشمس...الخ."	9
Example 2	"بعد ستة أشهر فقط من غرس (النخلة) تزوج ابنة عمه...الخ."	10
Example 3	"لكن ريحا قوية هبت تتلاعب بجريد النخلة...الخ."	16

Extract (5) – Textual themes found in 'Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal'.

As seen in Extract (5), the extract outlines the textual themes that were found. The textual theme "أجل" in Example "1" is continuative that indicates a fresh shift to the next point in the interaction. In Example "2", the textual theme "طالما" is a hypotactic conjunction that bonds the structurally similar clause to the clause that follows it. Instead, the textual theme "لكن" distributed in Example "3" is paratactic conjunction that connects the clause with the one that follows it.

Extract (6)	Interpersonal theme	Page in the short story
Example 1	"هل رأيت أمنة"	11
Example 2	"الزول ان أباك خليه وأقتع منه، وكلم الله من دفن الجنى وفات منه"	12
Example 3	"يا رجل ساكت زي الأبله مالك؟ ما تدينا كلمة واحدة خلينا نمشي؟"	16

Extract (6) – Interpersonal themes found in 'Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal'.

According to Extract (6), the extract lists the interpersonal themes examples found in the short story. Interpersonal themes, again, can be identified by the use of vocatives, modal/comment adjuncts, or finite verbal operators. In Example "1", the interpersonal theme is distributed by the finite verbal operator "هل" that constructs main tense as an interrogative. The interpersonal theme "الزول" in Example (2) is a comment adjunct that reflects the speaker's perspective toward the topic discussed. Moreover, the interpersonal theme in Example (3) is the vocative "يا رجل" that is utilized to get the addressee's attention to the conversation under discussion.

The analysis of the themes and thematic structure in both short stories manifests identical results. Regardless of the varying number of clauses in each story, the study shows that the topical theme recorded the highest in occurrence and the interpersonal theme was the lowest in frequency. The textual theme recorded a frequency between the topical and the interpersonal ones. The study also remarks that the

utilization of themes in Arabic differs than the one in English. The reason for which this to happen is that the Arabic language has two main structures: Nominal and Verbal. Consequently, this difference had no influence on the extraction and analysis of thematic structures. The following section illustrates the similarities and differences in thematic structures between both languages and their functions.

4.3 Implications of the Thematic Structures

The employment of distinct themes may be represented and illustrated by Halliday's (1978) semiotic representations of field, mode, and tenor. Field is contrasted using the ideational component, which collects cultural experience and conveys what is occurring in the setting. Texture devices are provided by the textual component, which create ideational representations cohesive and coherent in a particular textual context. Furthermore, the interpersonal aspect assists communicants in expressing opinions and interpreting what is going on around and through them.

Consequently, the implementation of the thematic structures in the short stories works on the same level. That is, the insertion of a topical theme as in "the success" or "الأمل" provides a description about the situation at a particular setting. The use of a textual theme as in "nevertheless" or "بعده" illustrates and manifests how a text hangs together and is well-structured. Finally, utilizing interpersonal themes as in "lovely" or "يا رجل" shows the attitude or stance of the addresser and his/her reaction or response regarding a certain situation. The comparison of theme types with semiotic representations led to interconnected conclusions.

Drawing on the results of the investigation, a small number of similarities and differences was encountered in the analysis. Regardless of the varying number of the thematic structures in the short stories, the use of topical themes appeared to be parallel in both languages. The employment of textual and interpersonal thematic structures was not identical. That is, the use of interpersonal vocatives was prevailing in Dickens's 'Little Dorrit'; otherwise, the insertion of comment adjuncts in Al Tayeb Saleh's 'Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal' was higher than in English. On the same level, the Arabic short story emphasized on manifesting the structure of the story as well fixed and constructed as possible using textual themes unlike English. That is, Al Tayeb Saleh employed more conjunctions and conjunctive adjuncts than Dickens in their short stories. These manifestations of themes mirror the attitude of the writer in writing their work of art.

Through the analysis of the thematic structures, both writers lay their own implicit functions in writing their work, so the utilization of themes in such a way has a function and a reflection of the writer himself. Apart from that both authors employed equal implementation of topical themes, they differed in using the textual and interpersonal themes. This is evident in their viewpoint of what to foreground and what to background. The foregrounding of textual themes, on the one hand, illustrates the viewpoint of understanding the message itself and architecting it as coherent and cohesive as possible. This is what Al Tayeb Saleh represented in his short story. On the other hand, the foregrounding of interpersonal themes exemplifies and demonstrates the comprehension and characterization of the participants in the short story and how the characters reflect each other and on each other. This is what Dickens represented in his short story. Regardless of the similarities in topical themes, the differences led to multifarious distinctions between the English and Arabic short stories.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating the thematic structure functions of English and Arabic short stories. Namely, Dickens's (1909) short story "Little Dorrit" and Saleh's (1997) short story "Nakhla Ala Al Jadwal" were chosen to be tested for the purpose of this research. The selected stories were to be analyzed according to Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) model of themes and their categorization of functions. 304 Arabic and 234 English clauses were manually extracted and analyzed from both short stories. The analysis led to varying similarities and differences as well as distinct functions.

The study revealed that the use of the topical themes recorded the highest occurrence, the textual themes were less than the topicals, and the least was the interpersonal themes in both stories. The comparison of themes in both stories separately showed some similarities and differences. The employment of topical themes was identical in both stories, but the other themes showed different results. That is, the implementation of textual themes was overt and excessive in the Arabic short story but the English short story downplayed the moderate use of textual thematic structures. Instead, the English short story disclosed intentional and extravagant employment of interpersonal thematic structures more than in the Arabic short story. Surely, this is accompanied by a valid explanation regarding the intention of the author.

The viewpoint of the author is the vantage point where themes were presented either textually or interpersonally. The overtness and excessiveness of the use of textual thematic structures, on the one hand, showed that the author laid more emphasis on making the short story hang together as much as possible. This provides the notion that if the text is well-structured and properly maintained, the message is obvious and ordered. On the other hand, the intention and extravagance of using interpersonal themes revealed that the author intended to make the reader concentrate on the relationships between the characters and how they react to each other from the writer's own perspective. The functions employed in each story lead to where the author himself wants the reader to be and what to think of.

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Authors contributions

Wafa Abu Hatab and Mohammad Khaleel were responsible for study design and revision. Mohammed Al-Badawi was responsible for data collection. Alalddin Al-Tarawneh drafted the manuscript and revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript where they contributed equally to the study.

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