THE EPILOGUE OF DENNIS LEHANE'S *MYSTIC RIVER*:
A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The study aims to analyze the epilogue of Lehane's *Mystic River*. It employs syntactic approach, and it is qualitative in nature. Departing from the fact that novel is considered as a form of creative writing, syntax with its syntactic analysis then enables the researcher to go deeper into the epilogue of Lehane's to understand its creative use of language. The five sentences in the epilogue are studied to find out how Lehane produces his clause types and thematic relations in his novel. The results yield the five sentences in the epilogue are all finite clauses for they have a finite verb in each. In terms of thematic relations, each verb in the five sentences of Lehane's epilogue assigns different thematic roles. Each verb has different lexical representation. Verb *come* in Datum 1 assigns Agent and Source. Verb *pull* in Datum 2 assigns Agent and Theme. Verb *look* in Datum 3 assigns Agent and Location. Meanwhile Datum 4 has two thematic roles (Theme and Location). Datum 4 has no Agent in it. Verb *block* in Datum 5 assigns Agent, Theme, and Location. The four thematic roles have different state of percentage where Agent occupies the highest number of 36.36%. It is followed by both Theme and Location of 27.27% respectively. Source, in contrary, has the lowest number of 9.09%.

1. Introduction

Along with the development of reading society, novel plays an important role to actively engage its readers with the stories and messages it tries to convey. Apart from its interesting and intriguing plots, the manner by which the sentences are written by the author is worth exploring. Each author has freedom to express her/his literariness in the literary works.

In the world of literature, language becomes its medium. It entails the fact that literary texts, including sentences in a novel, can be analyzed linguistically. Fabb mentions that formal linguistic analysis of language can focus on how linguistic form is exploited in literary form (1997: 9). Exploring sentences written by an author in a novel is, for the most part, challenging. A challenging scientific manner in studying sentences in a novel is syntactic way.

Syntax, by definition, is rules; the rules governing sentences. In other words, how sentences are well-formed in order to have the creative use of language becomes the domain of it. Creative use of language is a complex task requiring complex language. As

Miller suggests, the complex task requires syntax (2002: xvi). Therefore, there is a reciprocal process among authors, readers, and researchers. Authors express their literariness through the use of clauses. They write to give effects to their readers. Pertiwi, et al. (2022) mention that authors select and combine sentence structures for effects. Readers find out the meaning and enjoy every single clause the authors produce; meanwhile, researchers study the clauses in a novel in syntactic manner.

As English becomes part of novel writing, it entails deep understanding on how an English author expresses her/his literariness through clauses. The technical term *clause* is used to address the unit to study in syntax as suggested by Kusumawardhani & Rakhmanita that English Syntax covers the study of English phrases and clauses (2022). This enables the researcher to talk about the verb and other elements in it. Besides, clause is also a useful linguistic unit to describe the relation between verb and other phrases in it (Miller, 2002: 6). This relation is realized through thematic roles. Carnie defines thematic roles as the role that the argument plays with respect to the predicate (2013: 229). In other words, they refer to the relation between predicate and its arguments. The significance of studying thematic roles is that thematic roles, according to Kallfass (2004), are used as the basis of deriving syntactic structures, as can be observed in the literary works.

A literary work to study in this research is Lehane's *Mystic River*. Great accomplishment was made that this novel is considered as a successful one. This novel won Dilys Award in 2002 (Ahaqir, 2022: para.1). It was adapted into a film and nominated for six Oscars and won two of them, i.e. best actor and best supporting actor (Novack, 2003, para.1). The epilogue of the novel is studied syntactically to find out the type of clause and thematic roles in it. The researcher chooses the epilogue since it is an important yet tricky part in a novel. Epilogue itself provides ideas to readers on what happens after the story ends. Only do few novels have epilogue. *Mystic River*, for the best reason, challenges readers by providing an epilogue. Epilogue in this novel consists of five sentences.

2. Literature Review

Syntacticians have long been dealing with clause, phrase, argument, constituent, and thematic relation. Clause, as Miller defines, is a unit consisting of a verb and its complements (2002: 6). He explains further (2002: 5-6) that a clause ideally contains a phrase referring to an action or state; people; matters involved in action or state; and place and time. In *My father gave a birthday cake to George in Harvest yesterday*, the phrase *my father* is the buyer. The verb *gave* is the action. *A birthday cake* refers to what is given. *To George* is the person who benefits from the action. The phrase *in Harvest* refers to the place and the last phrase *yesterday* refers to the time.

Clause has two types, finite and nonfinite clauses. Radford defines finite clause as a clause containing a finite verb or verb inflected for tense/agreement and nonfinite clause as a clause containing nonfinite verb or tenseless/agreementless verb (1988: 287). In other words, a clause is considered to be finite or nonfinite depending on the type of verb it contains. Finite verb is characterized by its morphological feature. English has two tenses i.e. past and present. This is evident in the verbs having different inflections. The morphological features attached in finite verbs are mentioned in Table 1 as follows.

Present Tense	Past Tense
-(e)s for third singular persons *She/He/It likes pizza* -Ø for other forms	-(e)d for all types of subject *I/You/We/They/He/She/It liked pizza*

(Ø means zero inflectional morpheme) *I/You/We/They like pizza*	

Table 1. Morphological Features Attached in Finite Verbs

Agreement is also marked using inflections. The inflection –(e)s, for instance, is only used when the subject is She/He/It or third singular person. It means that the inflection does not only indicate the Tense (Present), but also marks the Agreement with a third singular person. The same thing is also true to Past Tense. Agreement is also marked by -(e)d. In *She was happy*, for example, *was* marks the Agreement with a third singular person. On the contrary, *were* as in *They were happy*, marks the Agreement with other forms of subject.

Unlike the finite clause, nonfinite clause consists of nonfinite verb or Tenseless/ Agreementless verb. In English, nonfinite verb has three types as shown in Table 2 below.

No.	Types of Nonfinite Verb
1	uninflected infinitive form covering the base or stem of verb *I never see her to be impolite to her family members.*
2	gerund form covering base + -ing *You saw them crossing the street*.
3	present/perfect participle form *She had her hair cut at a beauty salon*.

Table 2. Types of Nonfinite Verb

Nonfinite verbs are Tenseless as well as Agrementless for they always have invariable forms in any clauses they appear. Therefore, they cannot mark nor carry Tense/Agreement.

The next matter syntacticians deal with is thematic relations. Appearing in plural form, Haegeman (1991: 41) defines thematic relations as semantic relations between verbs and their arguments. In other words, the relations are used to describe the role that the argument plays with respect to the predicate in a clause. Thematic relations are represented by nine thematic roles as agent, theme, experiencer, recipient, beneficiary, goal, source, instrument, and location (Carnie, 2013: 229-235). Table 3 below shows the detailed discussion on thematic roles.

Thematic Roles	Definition	Example
Agent	The doer or initiator of an action	*John* broke the vase
Experiencer	Arguments receiving, feeling or perceiving the action, appearing in various positions including subject and object	a. *Tim* saw the new car b. The ghost scares *Mark*
Theme	Entities that are moved, experienced, perceived the action or any entities that undergo action	a. He put *the book* on the table b. The ball hit *Sarah*
Goal	Location or entity towards which motion takes place	a. *She* was given a birthday present b. He is going to *Jakarta*
Recipient	Goal that only occurs with verbs that denote a change of possession	a. George gave *Peter* two novels b. *Daniel* received a letter from her

Source	Location or entity from which a motion originates	a. *Mike* gave her the original letter b. He just arrived from *Singapore*
Location	The place where the action occurs/happens	I am *on campus*
Instrument	Object with which an action is done	*The golden key* opens the main door
Beneficiary	Any benefiting from an action/event	They bought beautiful houses *for their daughters*

Table 3. Thematic Roles

Past studies in syntactic analyses on literary works prove that the literariness of authors is related to their creativity in exploring the language and style to be expressed in their literary works. Leláková & Belúchová (2020), Deborah & Qomariana (2018), and Efrizah (2019) analyze literary works syntactically. The three researches provide deeper understanding on how adverbials, clauses, and thematic roles appear in different literary works. By reading the results of the three researches, the researcher gains insights in terms of how each author employs different style of writing from the point of view of English Syntax.

Leláková & Belúchová (2020) analyze the use of disjuncts in *Jane Eyre*. The research yields 197 disjuncts classified into style and content disjuncts. Content disjuncts which focus on true condition appear the most in *Jane Eyre*. This becomes the style of conversational language in *Jane Eyre*.

Deborah & Qomariana (2018) study types and function of relative clause in *A Game of Thrones* novel. There are restrictive, non-restrictive, and free relative clauses in the novel. The relative clauses function as subjects, objects, object of preposition, possessive relative clause, relative clause in quantity and quality phrases, and relative adverb.

Efrizah (2019) analyzes the thematic roles of *Macbeth*. The study shows that among the eight roles (agent, patient, theme, experiencer, beneficiary/ benefactive, goal, source, and location), agent occupies the biggest percentage. Source, on the contrary, occupies the lowest portion.

Apart from the previous three researches mentioned above, this research provides something new. As mentioned in the Introduction, *Mystic River* has epilogue in it. Only do few novels have epilogue. This research studies the epilogue syntactically. It offers a new perspective on how English Syntax can be employed to analyze a rare part of a novel.

3. Research Method

This study employs syntactic approach and conducted qualitatively. The results of the research are captured in words, images, or nonnumeric symbols (George, 2008: 7). The results of this research were in words and thoroughly explained in the Findings and Discussion section. The object of the study was the epilogue of Lehane's *Mystic River* containing five sentences as shown in Table 4 below.

Datum Number	Sentence
1	The drums and horns came from the band.
2	He pulled the shade.
3	He looked through the window.

4	It was a clean stripe under the bright sun.
5	Blue horses blocked access at every cross street.

Table 4. Object of the Study

The steps of data analysis are mentioned here. First, the five sentences above were analyzed to find out the type of clause each has. Second, in order to gain deeper analysis, a tree diagram for each clause was drawn. After that, the analysis was dedicated to find out the thematic roles. Finally, thematic roles each verb assigned were provided in a table. Each phrase marking the thematic role was italicized and written in bold.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1. Datum 1

Datum 1 *The drums and horns came from the band* consists of one main clause. It is able to stand alone and constitutes a full sentence. The clause is finite because it contains a finite verb *came*. This verb is inflected for Tense or Agreement. The *(-e)d* inflection in *came* marks the tense namely Past Tense. Another way to apply in order to prove that the verb is finite is by replacing the verb with a present tense verb form and then omit the subject which is plural into singular. The clause, then, becomes
a. The drums and horns come from the band.
b. The drum comes from the band.

In (a) and (b), the verb marks the present tense. In (a), the inflection is –Ø, i.e. no inflectional morpheme, because the subject is in plural form *The drums and horns* while in (b), the inflection of *–(e)s* is applied for third singular form of the subject *The drum*. Therefore, the inflection of *–(e)s* marks not only Tense but also Agreement because it is only used with a third singular subject. Another way to realize a clause is by drawing it in a tree diagram in Figure 1 below. It is then followed by Table 5 on thematic roles of Datum 1.
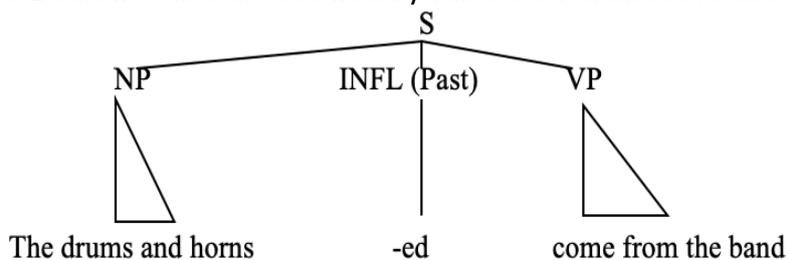

Figure 1. Tree Diagram of Datum 1

The drums and horns came ***from the band***	
Agent	Source
NP	PP

Table 5. Thematic Roles of Datum 1

The phrase *the drums and horns* becomes the Actor because it initiates the action of coming as expressed by the predicate (came). Meanwhile, *from the band* becomes the Source because it shows from which *the drums and horns* comes as the result of the activity expressed by the predicate (came). The representation above specifies that *came* assigns two thematic roles (Agent and Source).

4.2. Datum 2

Datum 2, *He pulled the shade,* consists of one main clause. This clause is said to be finite because it contains the finite verb *pulled*. The verb marks the tense (past tense). Like what is done to Datum 1, the same test can be done again to Datum 2 namely by replacing the verb with a present tense verb form. It becomes *He pulls the shade*. The inflection *–(e)s* is for the third singular form (He, she, it). Therefore, -Ø is applied for all other forms (I, you, we, they). All of these prove that the verb *pull* is finite inflecting Tense or Agreement. Now, this clause can be represented in Figure 2 and it will be followed by the discussion of its thematic roles in Table 6.
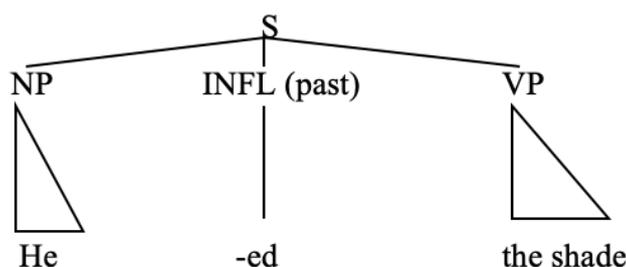

Figure 2. Tree Diagram of Datum 2

He	pulled	*the shade*
Agent		Theme
NP		NP

Table 6. Thematic Roles of Datum 2

He becomes the Agent because it initiates the action of pulling the Theme (the shade), whereas *the shade* becomes the Theme because it is the thing moved by the action expressed by the predicate, i.e. the action of pulling. The representation above specifies that *pulled* assigns two thematic roles (Agent and Theme).

4.3. Datum 3

Datum 3, *He looked through the window,* also has a finite verb of *looked*. Therefore, it is said to be a finite clause. In the case of regular past tense form in English, Agreement is said to be covertly marked. Therefore, in order to prove it to be finite, its verb must be replaced by the verb with a present tense verb form and its subject must be replaced as well to show how the verb marks the Agreement. It, then, becomes the following constructions:
a. He/she/it looks through the window.
b. They/I/you/we look through the window.

From the present tense verb form, it is possible to write the relevant set of inflection of *–(e)s* into
- *(e)s* is for third singular forms
- Ø for all other forms.

From the set of inflection above, it can be concluded that the verb is finite for it marks not only the Tense but also the Agreement. Inflection *–(e)s* is only used with a third singular subject while -Ø represents a zero-inflectional morpheme and hence indicates that no overt ending is added to mark tense in the relevant forms. Therefore, if the subject is I, we, they, and you, the inflection is not required. As two other sentences in the previous

discussion, this construction also can be represented in Figure 3 below and it will be followed by the discusson on its thematic roles in Table 7.
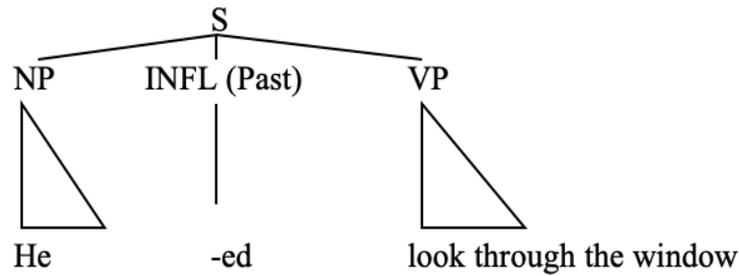

Figure 3. Tree Diagram of Datum 3

He	looked	*through the window*
Agent		Location
NP		PP

Table 7. Thematic Roles of Datum 3

He is the Actor because it initiates the action of looking. Meanwhile, *looked through the window* is the Location because it is the place through which the action of looking takes place. The representation above specifies that *looked* assigns two thematic roles (Agent and Location).

4.4. Datum 4

Datum 4, *It was a clean stripe under the bright sun,* has one main clause and it is finite. Unlike the regular past tense forms which covertly mark the Agreement, the irregular past tense forms of *be* overtly mark the Agreement which can be seen in two constructions below.
a. It was a clean stripe under the bright sun.
b. They were clean stripes under the bright sun.

The *was* form is used to mark Agreement with a first or third person singular subject, and the *were* form is used to mark Agreement with other subjects. After identifying its clause type, the tree diagram of Datum 4 is drawn in Figure 4. The discussion on its thematic roles is conducted next after presenting the figure.
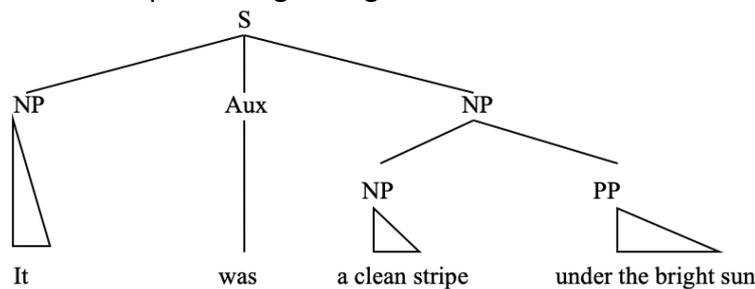

Figure 4. Tree Diagram of Datum 4

It	was a clean stripe	*under the bright sun*
Theme		Location
NP		PP

Table 8. Thematic Roles of Datum 4

It becomes the Theme for it is denoted by the predicate *was*. Meanwhile, *under the bright sun* becomes the Location because it is the place in which the state is situated. Therefore, the predicate *was* takes two thematic roles (Theme and Location).

4.5. Datum 5

Datum 5, *Blue horses blocked access at every cross street,* consists of one main clause for it is independent and constitutes a full sentence. This clause is a finite clause. It is proven by the occurrence of a finite verb *blocked* in the clause. Just like what is done to previous clauses, this clause can also be analyzed in terms of its finiteness by replacing its verb with a present tense verb form and its subject must be replaced as well to show how the verb marks the Agreement. The clause is then represented in two constructions below.

a. Blue horses block access at every cross street.

b. A blue horse blocks access at every cross street.

The present tense verb form of *block* shows us that it marks the tense as well as the Agreement. The tense it marks is present tense while Agreement it marks is with a third person singular subject (indicated by inflection *–(e)s*). Thus, the relevant set of inflection of *–(e)s* can be written as follows.

-(e)s is for third singular forms

-Ø for all other forms.

Figure 5 below is drawn to represent the tree diagram of Datum 5. After drawing Figure 5, Table 9 is presented to discuss the thematic roles of Datum 5.
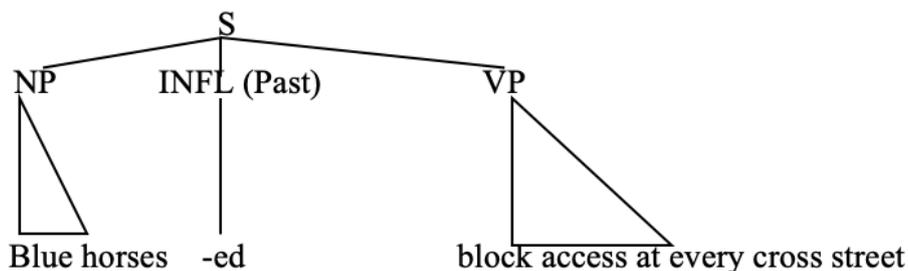

Figure 5. Tree Diagram of Datum 5

Blue horses blocked	***access***	***at every cross street***
Agent	Theme	Location
NP	NP	PP

Table 9. Thematic Roles of Datum 5

Blue horses are the Actor for it initiates the action (of blocking); *access* is the Theme because it is a thing blocked by the actor; and *at every cross street* is the Location for it marks the place in which the thing is situated. The representation above specifies that *blocked* assigns three thematic roles (Agent, Theme, and Location).

After discussing the type of clause and thematic roles, the occurrence of each thematic role is counted and presented. Sequentially, Table 10 and Chart 1 present the percentage of thematic role's occurrence. The provision of Table 10 and Chart 1 is important in order to observe the degree of occurrence. By presenting and observing those, the language style of Lehane as the author of *Mystic River* especially in the epilogue is evident. Table 10 and Chart 1 are shown below.

Thematic Role	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agent	4	36.36
Theme	3	27.27
Location	3	27.27
Source	1	9.09

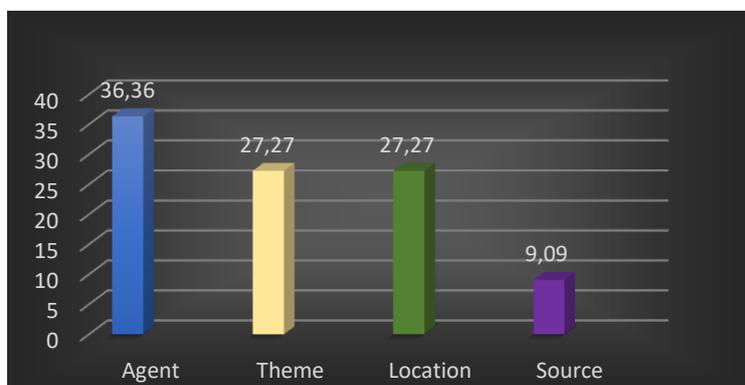Table 10. The Occurance of Each Thematic Role

Chart 1. The Percentage of Thematic Role's Occurrence

5. Conclusion

Analyzing the epilogue of Lehane's *Mystic River* syntactically gains two matters: the epilogue's type of clause and thematic roles in each clause. All five clauses in the epilogue are finite. It means that they contain finite verbs. Besides being finite, all five verbs in five clauses also assign different thematic roles. Datum 1 (verb *came*) assigns Agent and Source. Datum 2 (verb *pulled*) assigns Agent and Theme. Datum 3 (verb *looked*) assigns Agent and Location. Datum 4 (verb *was*) assigns Theme and Location. Finally, Datum 5 (verb *blocked*) assigns Agent, Theme, and Location.

Understanding the style of Lehane in writing his novel's epilogue is also possible by reading the chart of thematic role's occurrence. Statistically, Lehane's epilogue is dominated by Agent, occurring four times out of eleven or it occupies the highest percentage of 36.36%. It is then followed by both Theme and Location having 27.27% each. The lowest percentage is occupied by Source for it has 9.09%.

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