



Semantic Interpretations of Existential *there* Constructions in an English Novel

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Abstract

This study investigated the semantic interpretations of existential *there* constructions in an English novel. While previous studies focused on the study of existential *there* constructions in academic texts, non-native English speakers, spoken language, different text varieties, and international corpora, this study contributes to the view of existential *there* constructions in an English novel, where it is accessible reading material for everyone. The data collection was the English novel *Crime and Punishment: The Gambler Notes from Underground* due to it being a best seller (amazon.com). The data collection was approximately 250,000 words, comprising 38 relevant sentences. The data analysis of semantic interpretations follows Jiang and Hyland (2020). The data validation in this study adopted the process of Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) where three experts in the field of English were asked to check the accuracy. The results show that the semantic interpretations of the existential *there* constructions in the novel are subjectivity, comparison, a list of things, reason, and descriptions. The use of existential *there* constructions in the novel is applicable to the *end-weight principle*, where heavier and longer information is placed at the end of sentences. It is hoped that the results of this study will be beneficial to learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) to take advantage to learn grammar from different text varieties.

Keywords: *Existential there constructions, semantic interpretations, English novel, end-weight principle*

1. Introduction

English has been used increasingly around the world. It has become an official language that most people use for communication. In English, knowing grammar is essential for English learners as grammar is regarded as the core of language to allow people to combine sentences. Grammatical learning also provides language users with a wide range of choices and adjustments in their use of sentence structure, leading one to their professional advancement in language use.

For these reasons, the study of grammar is so important to language learners as it could affect their creativity in different types of sentential structures (Radford, 2009). Another outcome of learning grammar is the development of own language ability for better usage. This helps English language learners to become more intelligent, well-educated, and professional. As a result, they may either achieve better grades from their English study in the classroom or their professional career advancement.

In addition to learners' progress of language skills, learning grammar also decreases the percentage of making mistakes when using language. For example, knowing grammar help eliminate errors in writing. Additionally, grammar is important to be able to analyze and improve language performance (Radford, 2009). Therefore, learning grammar can help learners gain proper fluency and understanding of language structure.

Although learning grammar is crucial, Lee (2011) strongly indicated that it is useful to study existential *there* constructions as it will be useful for ESL and EFL learners. Lee (2011) discovered that ESL and EFL learners have problems using existential *there* constructions in English. In his experiment, Lee (2011) used paralinguistic judgments with a 5-scale judgment, which are very good, good, ok, bad, and very bad. ESL and EFL learners are asked to judge the token as an existential *there* construction as in *there is a friend of yours at the door*. This judgment is a comparison between native English speakers and learners of ESL/EFL. The results show that the judgment scores between native and non-native speakers are 4.61 and 3.33 points, respectively. In addition, the subject of sentences in English normally appears at the beginning of the sentences. However, the NP subject in the existential *there* constructions appears in the final position



as in there are two apples, where two apples are the subject of the sentence. This makes language users of the English language get confusion regarding the subject-verb agreement. These results imply that ESL and EFL learners have the problem of using this construction in English.

Based on previous information, this study investigated the use of existential *there* constructions in an English novel as it is regarded as everyday reading material for English language learners. The background information leads to the following research question.

1. What is the frequency of the existential *there* constructions in an English novel?
2. What are the semantic interpretations of the existential *there* constructions in an English novel?

2. Literature Review

This section provides a literature review concerning explicit and implicit learning of grammar, syntactic functions, and semantic interpretations of existential *there* constructions, and existential *there* constructions in different text varieties.

2.1 Controversial Issues of Explicit and Implicit Learning of Grammar

Today, English is used as a medium of instruction around the world. In order to use English effectively, it is necessary for learners to know how to use grammar. Grammar is regarded as a key factor to achieve language skills. However, it has become controversially disputed that grammar should be learned explicitly and implicitly for ESL and EFL learners to gain an advantage at the proximal level (Jakobsson & Knutsson, 2020). Although both approaches have benefits and limitations, some people make an argument that an explicit style of learning grammar is easier for English language learners. On the other hand, implicit learning of grammar is not demonstrated as learners need to rely upon their study of grammar via a given context (Rahman & Rashid, 2017). This issue is not new, but it is an ongoing debate in pedagogical fields. According to Zheng and Zhang (2015), explicit learning of grammar is defined as the process of conscious and deliberate acquisition of grammar. Learners usually gain knowledge through their English classrooms and grammar references. In contrast, implicit learning of grammar in the process of learning without consciousness that learners are actually learning. This process happens regularly in everyday life, such as in reading magazines, newspapers, and novels. Numerous people think that explicit learning of grammar could be more efficient because it provides learners with clearer explanations and illustrations. Explicit learning of grammar often involves memorizing a series of facts, resulting in conscious knowledge. However, others believe that implicit learning of grammar is useful in that learners remain unaware of the learning that takes place. It is an effective way to promote language skills without depending upon language teachers or teaching in classrooms.

Although explicit learning of grammar is traditional, it is pointed out as the process of active learning with the conscious acquisition (Ling, 2015). It means that language learners are explicitly taught language which is known as form-based instruction. Learners are instructed to memorize grammatical structures separately from the context (Jakobsson & Knutsson, 2020). In this way, learners are taught specific grammatical forms so as to acquire grammar rules (Jakobsson & Knutsson, 2020). Although it is considered one of the best ways to learn grammar, learners are required to have high attention and patience to learn grammar in this way. If not, it can be boring. Implicit learning of grammar via authentic texts is viewed as more interesting as it allows learners to gain grammatical form hidden in texts with their subconscious advance of language skills. Implicit learning of grammar with authentic texts, such as novels, encourages learners to learn grammatical rules subconsciously (Ling, 2015).

When learning a language, it is unavoidable to learn grammar. With this importance, each person selects their own method to learn grammar for their own suitability, background knowledge, and age. According to Ziegler (2017), explicit learning of grammar requires more mental effort to make learners aware of rules. It is concrete knowledge that is obtained from the classroom or in textbooks. On the other hand, the term implicit learning or unconscious learning refers to the methods by that students must naturally acquire grammar through situations. If the purpose of learning a language is for the sake of communication, it is considered useless to learn only the rules of grammar, but not apply them in real life. Therefore, learning



grammar from a novel is beneficial to language learners as they could learn grammar, meaning, and use simultaneously.

Implicit learning of grammar provides context via written stories which can reduce students' boredom. Moreover, implicit learning takes place simply in everyday language use and it helps learners to see how grammar is used authentically. The rules and meaning of grammar will be understood by the learners on their own. For example, a learner can speak well using a simple English sentence such as *I went to the zoo, yesterday*, in which learners know that *went* is used in this context and they know that it happened *yesterday*. It means that an individual can tell if there is a grammatical error in the sentence, such as *I go to school, yesterday*.

Implicit learning of grammar is more flexible and dynamic which gives freedom to the learner to choose their texts of interest (Rahman & Rashid, (2017). Learners will practice how to apply grammar features that they need to use in different situations via different *text varieties*, referring to different types of genres, such as novels, academic texts, and newspapers. Jakobsson and Knutsson (2020) agreed with this point by stating that implicit learning helps learners spontaneously use language with meaning rather than only form.

We cannot deny that language is not only a communication tool but also a medium for developing human thinking. Learners who succeed with the explicit learning of grammar can be considered enthusiastic language learners. In other words, implicit teaching is considered a natural approach that helps learners to achieve their goal of communicating the target language and have the opportunity to use it in real-life situations (Ling, 2015).

In summary, for effective learning and teaching English, English teachers need to have a variety of grammar teaching methods and how to use grammar in different situations. This can create an atmosphere that encourages learners to be interested in what they are learning. Implicit and explicit learning may also have different effects on learning outcomes. Some people may say that if the teacher doesn't focus on grammar more than others, it will feel like they haven't learned the language. On the other hand, one point of view in favor of implicit learning is that it is teaching a core of a language because this kind of instruction focused on teaching about meaning. It is important to be aware that to have a true understanding of how each grammar item is used in different text varieties accurately and appropriately.

2.2 Syntactic Functions of Existential *there* Constructions

In English, the subject is crucially important. The subject in English is required in all clauses. Without a subject, a clause could lead to ungrammaticality (**eats the cat*). The requirement of having the subject in English is to fulfill the *Extended Projection Principle*, interchangeably known as an EPP feature (Radford, 2009). Concerning existential *there* constructions, when the subject of the sentence is used as a postponed subject, the subject *there* must be filled in the TP position, to make the sentence grammatical (Radford, 2009).

(1)

(a) *A gift* is on the shelf.

(b) There is *a gift* on the shelf.

In (1a), the DP *a gift* is syntactically positioned in the *Spec T position*, grammatically known as the position of the subject (Radford, 2009). When the DP subject is postponed to the final position of a sentence, there must be a linguistic element to fill in this position to make a sentence grammatical. In addition, syntactically, Palacios Martínez & Martínez Inseam (2006) reported that existential *there* constructions are usually colligated with several kinds of syntactic structures, such as (2).

(2)

(a) There are other sports *that are far more brutal*.

(b) So there is a waste *of food* and a waste *of money*.

(c) There are a lot of things *to be taken into consideration*.

Several common syntactic structures are usually colligated with existential *there* constructions, such as restrictive relative clause, as in (2a), prepositional phrase, as in (2b), and *to*- infinitive clause, as in (2c).



Accordingly, this study focuses on existential *there* constructions with four variants including *there is*, *there's*, *there are*, and *there're*. The semantic interpretations of these four variants will be investigated.

2.3 Semantic Interpretation of Existential *there* Constructions

Semantic aspects play a crucial role in the existential *there* constructions regarding given and new information of the noun phrases (NP) as a postponed subject. Gregory and Birner (1995) address that the existential *there* construction is used to present new information that is not familiar to the listener or the readers, as in (3).

- (3) Come sit here. There is *a cup of tea for you*.

In (3), *a cup of tea* is interpreted as a description of new information for the listener. Its introduction by existential subject is to prepare a listener for a new piece of information. The existential *there* subject can be used for different semantic interpretations, such as a list of things, as in (4), and providing a reason, as in (5).

- (4) There's *the park, a very nice restaurant, and the library*.

- (5) (a) [...] we've canceled that ski trip we've been planning for months.

- (b) Why aren't you going?

- (a) We wanted to, but *there's the damned case, and it would make traveling difficult*.

(Gregory & Birner, 1995, p. 735)

In (4), *there's* provides a list of things, whereas *there's* in (5) gives a reason for canceling a ski trip. Semantically, *the postverbal DP* as introduced into *a cup of tea*, *the park*, and *the library* are classified into a list of things. However, the use of *there's the damned case, and it would make traveling difficult* is used with the sense of reason. In addition, example (6) is hearer-old entities that are treated as hearer-new as in (6).

(6) Mr. Rummer: Well didn't the designer of the orbiter, the manufacturer, develop maintenance requirements and documentation as part of the design obligation?

Mr. Collins: Yes, sir. And that is what we showed in the very first part, before the Pan Am study. There were *those orbiter maintenances and requirement specifications*.

(Gregory & Birner, 1995, p. 730)

Although the information as existential *there* has already been introduced at the start. The speaker assumes that the hearer has already forgotten, so it is treated as hearer new. Another classification is known as *hearer-new tokens of hearer-old type*. This category shows that the postverbal NP is a new instance of known information. It usually appears with the word *same*, *regular*, *usual*, *traditional*, and *expected*, as in (7).

- (7) There was *the usual crowd at the beach today*. They were there yesterday too.

The usual crowd in (7) comprises two references. The definite article *the* suggests the hearer-old information. On the other hand, existential *there* information is a hearer of new information. Therefore, it is called a *new token of old information*.

In addition to providing new information, when information is a list of long details, they are usually placed at the end of a sentence so as to comply with the end-weight principle, referring to long and heavy information at the end.

- (8)

- (a) Three colors of ribbons including red, golden, and pink are on the table.

- (b) There are *three colors of ribbons including red, golden, and pink on the table*.

It is common in English to express longer and heavier details at the end of a sentence, as in (8b). The following section provides the semantic interpretations of existential *there* used in different text varieties.

2.4 Existential *there* Constructions in Text Varieties

This section provides information regarding previous studies on existential *there* constructions. Hilton (2017) collected the corpus of English spoken in California to study the three variants of existential constructions *there*: *there are/were*, *there is/ was* and *there's*, as in (9).



(9)

- (a) There are more new subdivisions on the south side of town.
- (b) There are basically no jobs in the industry.
- (c) There are only two thrift shops down there.

The variant *there are*, as in (9a), shows agreement between the delayed subject and the auxiliary verb *are*, whereas (9b) and (9c) do not show the agreement. Each variant is used with different sociolinguistic factors. The linguistic variant as in (9a) was commonly used with two groups of speakers. The first group of speakers was a group of older people. The second group of speakers is those who receive a higher education, such as university levels. In contrast, the variant in (9b) is productive among speakers with lower education. The linguistic variant as in (9c) is productive among speakers of younger ages. It is preferred by those speakers of younger ages to use contractions more than older people.

A year later, Hilton (2018) examined 900 American English speakers regarding the use of *there's* with a non-agreement subject, *there is* with a non-agreement subject and *there are* with agreement subject. The results show that these participants judge those who used *there's* with non-agreement subject as educated and intelligent users. However, those users of *there is* with non-agreement subjects receive *stigmatization*, referring to a language feature used among lower-class people. However, the user of *there are* with agreement subjects are perceived as users of *hyperstandardization*, referring to being extremely correct.

Tsushima and Miyake (2013) studied the preference for the use of existential *there* constructions in Japanese speakers of English. Via their investigation, it was found that Japanese speakers of English prefer the use of existential *there* constructions with proper nouns as in (10a). In addition to that, another common use of the existential *there* constructions among this group of speakers is the use of the existential *there* constructions with *if* clauses, as in (10b).

(10)

- (a) For example, there are *Nikon D3S*, *Canon 5D Mark II*, and *Pentax 645D*.
- (b) If there is a person who tries to cross the street, please warn him/her.

(Tsushima & Miyake, 2013, p. 70-71)

In (10a), the noun phrase *Nikon D3S*, *Canon 5D Mark II*, and *Pentax 645D* are proper nouns. On the other hand, *who tries to cross the street*, represents a relative clause.

Jiang and Hyland (2020) studied the use of existential *there* constructions in academic research. The results of their study show that existential *there* constructions are mostly used to introduce new information, as in (11).

(11) Although there are *drawbacks*, there are *three main advantages of using corpora in comparison with direct observation*.

(Jiang & Hyland, 2020, p. 5)

In (11) *drawbacks* and *three main advantages of using corpora [...]* are interpreted as new information. The existential *there are* is used to prepare readers when introducing new information. In addition, the existential *there* is also used as a rhetoric tool to introduce entities, referring to noun phrases to instigate action, such as *evidential*, referring to events and evidential cases as in (4).

(12) There is evidence to support this possibility in the recommendations stage of the larger corpus.

(Jiang & Hyland, 2020, p. 11)

The word *evidence* is a noun phrase to indicate entities as *evidential*.

Crawford (2005) studies the use of the existential *there* constructions in conversation via the Corpus of LGSWE with four variants including *there is*, *there's*, *there are*, and *there're*. The results show that their variant of *theirs* is used to summarize information as in (13).

(13) There's a line like that and another line that looks like that. So *there're two lines that connect the dots*.

In (13), the function of *there're two lines that connect the dots* is to summarize previous information. There are several syntactic patterns of *there's* that occur frequently in conversation, as in (14).



(14)

(a) Yeah, *there's a long list of groups* on the second page that you should have.

(b) I go runnin' back there to make sure there are *no little people anywhere*.

There's followed by the indefinite article *a* and *an* with the singular noun phrase. On the other hand, the syntactic structure of (14b) is the existential *there* followed by *no/not/* and *nothing*.

Olofsson (2011) studied *there seems* and *there appears* in the corpus of BNC with the mode of written text. The results show that 86 percent is used with the acceptable pattern where *there seem* with a postponed plural noun phrase as in (15a). However, 14 percent of the users appear with the pattern *there seems* with plural noun phrases as in (15b).

(15)

(a) [...] *there seem to be fundamental differences* [...]

(b) [...] *there seem to be several species*.

(Olofsson, 2007, p. 36)

Olofsson's (2011) results of the study showed that the majority of *there seems* in the corpus of BNC occur with the acceptable pattern.

Adam (2012) studied existential *there* constructions in the novel *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and Wardrobe*. The results show that the existential *there* is used in different semantic classes of verbs, such as verb of appearance, as in (16a), and a verb of motion, as in (16b).

(16)

(a) And instantly *there appeared* a round box, tied with green silk ribbon [...]

(b) And at the same time, *there came* into his head that it seemed a perfectly lovely idea.

(Adam, 2012, p. 11)

In addition to the use of the existential *there* with verbs of appearance and motion, if there are adverbial phrases to be used, they normally occur at the beginning of the sentences.

Insua (1998) compared the use of existential *there* between two datasets which are literature and scientific data. The two datasets are made up of approximately 100,000 words each. The data of literature contains American and English literature, whereas the scientific data contain biology, chemistry, and pharmacy. The results of this study show that the existential *there* constructions in literary and scientific samples are 80 percent and 20 percent, respectively. Most of them are used with positive sentences, as in (17).

(17) There were many orchards of fruit trees.

(Insua, 1998, p. 114)

Syntactically, the structure that is frequently found to be used with existential *there* construction in both datasets is *conj.+there*, as in (18).

(18) If there were any rubber gloves in the village.

(Insua, 1998, p. 114)

As in (18), it is frequent for the use of conjunction to be located in the initial position of the sentence. Park (2014) studied the existential *there* constructions in spoken and written modes of communication via the corpus of BNC. There are two patterns of existential *there* constructions to be monitored in this study. The first one is *there+be+X+ the notional subject NP*, such as (19a). The second one is *there+be+ X + X + the notional subject NP*, such as (19b).

(19)

(a) There is *a room* for hybrids.

(b) There is *the slightest foundations* for these remarks.

In (19a), *a room* represents an X, whilst *the slightest foundation* represents X + X. With this method. The results show that only one element of the notional NP shows a concord with the copular *be* at 91.43 percent. However, the pattern of (19b) appears to be various. For example, the percentage of concord with the patterns of *a lot of NP*, *a range of NP*, and *a variety of NP* are 61.02, 19.53, and 50.04 percent, respectively.

Based on previous studies of existential *there* construction in English, most previous studies pay attention to this feature in the field of sociolinguistics and syntactic structures. To date, only a few studies



focus on the semantic interpretations of existential *there* constructions in novels. This information leads to the method as follows.

3. Methodology

The data in this study is from an English novel. English novels are a special type of written genre. Novels are made up of a particular format that is necessary for the writers to follow. For instance, novels contain orientation, which refers to the introduction of the setting, place, and plot of the stories. It also has the resolution, which is what happens at the end of the story. The writers are required to plan well before starting to write. The planning of the novel helps avoid the reader's confusion about the story (Norahmi & Asi, 2019).

With this interest in writing novels, the novel selected in this study is *Crime and Punishment: The Gambler Notes from Underground* due to its being a best seller and world classic library (amazon.com). This novel is written by Dostoevsky (2021), who is a well-known European writer. It is interesting because this is a novel that is suitable for everyone. The highlight of this novel is about human beings' good and bad conduct. The writer sharply depicts the human mind realistically. A total of 250,000 words consisted of 38 relevant sentences. The existential *there* constructions in this novel were gathered to examine their semantic interpretations. The data collection in this study is demonstrated as follows:

(20)

His position unravels over the course of the story, and the story raises timeless questions about human psychology and the nature of the soul. **There are also clear parallels with Dostoevsky's own life: his crime was meeting to discuss Western books; his punishment being put in prison and placed in front of a firing squad.**

(Dostoevsky, 2021, p. 8)

The token of existential *there* constructions in this study refers to sentences. Each sentence will be collected and counted their frequency and converted into percentages. Existential *there* construction, as in (20) is interpreted as hear-new information. The writer used the existential *there* construction to provide supplementary information to reflect on his own life whereby the story is narrated based upon the writer's true story. The data analysis in this study is demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Semantic Interpretations of Existential *there* Constructions in the Novel

(21)	
Interpretations	Examples
Subjectivity	(a). 'All that's nonsense,' he said hopefully, 'and there is nothing in it at all to worry about!
Comparison	(b) He looked at the old women and was in a hurry to get away, as though there was still something he wanted to do, but he did not himself quite know what.
Descriptions	(c) 'That's in Voskresensky,' put in Razamihin. ' There are two stories of rooms, let by a merchant called Yushin; I've been there. '
List of things	(d) Behind it probably was the bed. There was nothing in the room except two chairs and a sofa covered with American leather, full of holes before which stood an old deal kitchen table, unpainted and uncovered.
Reason	(e) There were various other reasons owing to which Dounia could not escape from that awful house for another six weeks. You know Dounia, of course; you know how clever she is and what a strong will she has.

The study follows Jiang and Hyland's (2020) framework who classifies the semantic interpretations of the existential *there* construction as follows: In (21a), *there is nothing in it at all to worry about* indicates *subjectivity* referring to comments and viewpoints toward an incident. In (21b), the use of existential *there* constructions provide a comparison of two events that happen simultaneously. (21c) presents the function of existential *there* construction concerning the description, referring to what can be seen. existential *there* construction as in (21d), there is a list of things such as *two chairs* and *a sofa covered with American leather*.



In (21e), existential *there* construction is used to provide reasons. The data analysis was then evaluated via Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) as in Table 2. The use of IOC in this study follows Wongkittiporn (2021) who took advantage of IOC for data validation.

Table 2 Data Validation Via IOC

Data Collection	Data Analysis	Data Validation					
		Expert 1		Expert 2		Expert 3	
		A	D	A	D	A	D
'All that's nonsense,' he said hopefully, 'and there is nothing in it at all to worry about!	Subjectivity	✓		✓		✓	
He looked at the old women, and was in a hurry to get away, as though there was still something he wanted to do, but he did not himself quite know what.	Comparison	✓		✓		✓	
'That's in Voskresensky,' put in Razamihin. ' There are two storeys of rooms, let by a merchant called Yushin; I've been there. '	Description	✓		✓		✓	
Behind it probably was the bed. There was nothing in the room except two chairs and a sofa covered with American leather, full of holes before which stood an old deal kitchen-table, unpainted and uncovered.	List of things	✓		✓		✓	
There were various other reasons owing to which Dounia could not escape from that awful house for another six weeks. You know Dounia, of course; you know how clever she is and what a strong will she has.	Reason	✓		✓		✓	

Table 2 presents the process of data validation via IOC. There are three experts in the field of English who were asked to validate the accuracy and the validity of the data interpretation. In Table 2, A represents *agree*, while D represents *disagree*. If two or three experts put a tick on column A, the semantic interpretation gains reliability. On the other hand, if zero or 1 expert puts a tick on column D, the data will be reinterpreted. With this method of study, the results and discussion are presented as follows:

4. Results

A total of 250,000 words consisted of 38 relevant sentences. The frequency and percentage of existential *there* constructions in the English novel are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3** Frequency and Percentage of Semantic Interpretations of Existential *there* Constructions in the English Novel

Semantic Interpretations	Frequency	Percentage
Subjectivity (i.e., But I don't think <i>there is any considerable danger</i> .)	19	50.00
Description (i.e., 'That's in Voskresensky,' put in Razamihin. ' <i>There are two storeys of rooms, let by a merchant called Yushin; I've been there.</i> ')	8	21.05
Comparison (i.e., But no one shared his enjoyment: his silent companion looked with positive hostility and mistrust at all these manifestations. <i>There was another man in the room who looked somewhat like a retired government clerk.</i>)	4	10.53
List of things (i.e.,) A candle was burning down on the table; <i>there were wine-glasses, a nearly empty bottle of vodka, bread and cucumber, and glasses with dregs of stale tea.</i>	3	7.89
Reason (i.e., No, it would be shameful to be afraid of it. Since you have taken such a step, you much harden your heart. <i>There is justice in it.</i>)	3	7.89
Surprise (i.e., 'You don't say <i>there's no one at home</i> ,' the new-comer cried in a cheerful, ringing voice, addressing the first visitor, who still went on pulling the bell.)	1	2.63
Total	38	100

Table 3 reveals the frequency and percentage of the semantic interpretations of existential *there* constructions in the English novel. The highest frequency is the interpretation of subjectivity at 50 percent. The semantic interpretation of description and comparison appear at 21.05 percent and 10.53 percent, respectively. The semantic interpretation of the list of things and reason appear equally at 7.89 percent. The semantic interpretation of surprise appears lowest at 2.63 percent. The percentage of existential *there* constructions lead to the following discussion.

5. Discussion

This section provides a discussion of the results above. The results of this study also go along the same line as Jiang and Hyland (2020) where existential *there* construction is used to provide a reason as in *there were various other reasons owing to which Dounia could not escape from that awful house for another six weeks. You know Dounia, of course; you know how clever she is and what a strong will she has.*

As shown in the result of the study, the highest frequency of existential *there* constructions appears with the semantic interpretations of *subjectivity*, referring to providing comments. When the writer presents their attitudes, subjectivity plays an important role in doing it. *Subjectivity* refers to the speaker's comments or judgment toward information (Vartanen, 2013). The speakers could present themselves in covert or overt manners as in (22).

(22)

(a) 'I'm confused, and *there's a lot I don't understand*.

(b) If *there's anything wrong*, I swear I'll bring you here myself, but it's all right, you go to bed.

(c) 'All that's nonsense,' he said hopefully, 'and *there is nothing in it at all to worry about!*'

(d) He rushed to the window. *There was light enough*, and he began hurriedly looking himself all over from head to foot, all his clothes; were there no traces?

The subjectivity in existential *there* constructions in (22) appears with the phrases *nothing in it at all*, *light enough*, *not worthless persons*, *anything wrong*, and *a lot I don't understand*. Evaluation of the events or situations makes the stories vivid and interesting. It also allows the reader to know the protagonist's



opinions via the writer's comments. For example, the writer tries to comment on one protagonist's lack of understanding of something. The writer adds additional details in regard to the protagonist's confusion. A similar concept is applicable to (22b) -(22c), where a character tries to evaluate a situation. In contrast, the evaluation is given toward a scene in a story to let the readers visualize the scene. Accordingly, subjectivity is so crucial in the narration as it allows the writer to evaluate different scenes and protagonists' opinions toward different situations.

The use of a list of objects in existential *there* as in (23) goes along the same line with the cognitive linguistic theories of the *end-weight principle*, referring to placing heavy information at the end of sentences.

(23)

(a) Behind it probably was the bed. *There was nothing in the room except two chairs and a sofa covered with American leather, full of hold before which stood an old deal kitchen table, unpainted and uncovered.*

(b) A peculiar circumstance attracted his attention: there seemed to be some kind of festivity going on, *there were crowds of gaily dressed townspeople, peasant woman, their husbands, and riffraff of all sorts, all singing and all more or less drunk.*

(c) A candle was burning down on the table; *there were wine glasses, a nearly empty bottle of vodka, bread and cucumber, and glasses with dregs of stale tea.*

Sentences (23a) -(23c) received the semantic interpretation of lists of things. The writer provides things with their long details, which are placed at the end of sentences.

Example (24) presented the use of existential *there* as a comparison. According to Stuhrrommereim (2010), using comparison could help the reader see pictures of the stories clearer and they also gain a better understanding of narration. Especially, if readers are not native speakers of the language they are reading, using a comparison is considered more useful than translation. This could be a reason for using comparison in novels that is to provide the readers with more detail to stimulate the imagination.

(24)

(a) [...] all in one bunch on a steel ring ... And there's *one key there, three times as big as all the others, with deep notches; that can't be the key of the chest of drawers.*

(b) He looked at the old women and was in a hurry to get away, as though there was *still something he wanted to do, but he did not himself quite know what.*

(c) But no one shared his enjoyment: his silent companion looked with positive hostility and mistrust at all these manifestations. There was *another man in the room who looked somewhat like a retired government clerk.*

(d) 'You keep on laughing and very inappropriately, allow me to tell you. You don't understand! *There is no such role in a community.*

In (24a), it is comparing one key with the others. In (24b), it is comparing the feeling of wanting to get away with the feeling of having something else to do. In (24c), it is comparing the man in the room with the look of a retired government clerk. In (24d), it is comparing the idea of a role with the reality of a community.

In addition, existential *there* constructions are used for the descriptions of people and places (Jiang & Hyland, 2020).

(25)

(a) *There was a look of poignant discomfort on her face* as though Avdotya Romanovna's courtesy and attention were oppressive and painful to her.

(b) *There was a strange expression on her face.*

(c) 'That's in Voskresensky,' put in Razamihin. '*There are two storeys of rooms, let by a merchant called Yushin; I've been there.*'

In (25a) -(25c), the writer uses existential *there* constructions to describe the protagonist's facial expression of being strange and uncomfortable. In (25c), the writer provides a description of architecture to allow the readers to see the setting of a scene.



In terms of text varieties, the results of this study show some similarities to previous studies regarding the semantic interpretations of subjectivity, as found in Olofsson's (2007) study in the corpus of BNC study. In addition, the result of this study also shows similarity to Tsushima & Miyake's (2013) study of Japanese EFL learners in regard to the list of things. This study contributes to the field in that the researchers could explore more semantic interpretations of the existential *there* construction in novels as in surprise, reason, and description.

6. Pedagogical Implications of Implicit learning of grammar

The results of this study show that learners can take advantage of learning grammar implicitly for the text variety they enjoyed reading. They could study form, meaning, and use them at the same time. As found in this study, the majority of existential *there* construction in novels is particularly used with the semantic denotation of the subjectivity, representation, comments, opinions, and thoughts of the authors. Moreover, it could avoid learners' boredom when compared to learning explicit grammar inside classrooms.

7. Conclusion

The investigation of existential *there* constructions in the novel reveals certain semantic interpretations of this construction. *There's*, *there is*, *there are*, and *there're* are used in the novel to delay the subject by presenting new information. It is used to present a description of places in a scene as in *there are two storeys of rooms*. This activates the readers' imagination of each scene they are reading. After providing a description of the architecture, the writer uses existential *there* construction as the protagonist's evaluation of the description as they have said in a previous discourse as in, *he rushed to the window. There was light enough, and he began hurriedly looking himself all over from head to foot*. It is an evaluation of the scene in a story. In addition to description and evaluation, existential *there* construction is used to provide a reason as in *No, it would be shameful to be afraid of it. Since you have taken such a step, you much harden your heart. There is justice in it*. The use of existential *there* constructions comply with the end-eight principle in English where heavier information goes to the final position as in *there were wine glasses, a nearly empty bottle of vodka, bread and cucumber, and glasses with dregs of stale tea*. It is also interesting to find that existential *there* constructions are used for the sake of compassion to help readers gain better visualization of scenes in a story as in *there was another man in the room who looked somewhat like a retired government clerk*. Although this study provides insight into the semantic interpretations of existential *there* constructions in a novel, further studies of existential *there* constructions in other types of texts, such as academic text, newspapers, and textbooks would be useful to the field. Therefore, generalizing the results of this study to other types of texts would not be applicable to the optimal level. This study also has some limitations regarding the number of data collection due to the limited time of the study. The results of this study could be helpful to those who are interested to write English novels and literature on how to use grammar to be suitable for this genre.

8. References

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