

Theme and Rheme Analysis in Kurikulum Merdeka English Textbook of Junior High School

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 27-03-2024

Revised: 06-05-2024

Published: 19-05-2024

Volume: 7

Issue: 1

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.33019/berumpun.v4i2.146>

KEYWORDS

Systemic functional linguistic, theme and rheme analysis, qualitative method, Kurikulum Merdeka

ABSTRACT

This research is about theme and rheme analysis using Systemic Functional Linguistic approach by Halliday. The purpose of this research is to identify theme and rheme, classify the types and components of theme and rheme and also identify the thematic development. The method used in this research is qualitative method. The research data is taken from Kurikulum Merdeka textbooks of English subjects at the junior high school level. The results showed that there were three types of themes found in the data, namely topical, interpersonal, and textual themes. Topical theme appears in 55%, interpersonal theme appears in 34%, and textual theme appears in 10%. The appearance of type theme in each clause often coincides with other themes. It is very rare for one clause to have only one theme. Thematic development found in the data is multiple theme and zigzag theme. Some data bring up themes implicitly because the type of data is in the form of dialogue which often occurs word elimination.

1. INTRODUCTION

In addition to content and competency considerations, the text structure in textbooks also plays an important role in achieving learning objectives. Every curriculum change, which generally occurs during a change in government regime, will lead to new textbook products for students to consume, including the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which was recently established as the latest curriculum for education in Indonesia. The English textbooks used in *Kurikulum Merdeka* are slightly different from the textbooks in the previous curriculum. One of the differences that can be seen is that there is no division of material based on semester. Because the coverage of the material is determined by each teacher in accordance with the main concept of the curriculum, namely freedom in learning and teaching.

Analysing Themes and Thematic structure can reveal underlying concerns and priorities of the copywriter (Stoian & Dejica, 2016). Different person will potentially produce different theme and thematic progression on their writings. This leads to the fact that analysing theme-rheme and thematic progression has benefit to language teaching and learning. It mainly helps students get rid of illogical and disordered thread of thought (Yan, 2015).

Theme and Rheme topic has been researched in several studies, such as Dashela (2021) Meiarista (2020), Sinaga {Formatting Citation} Octaberlina&Muslimin (2020), and Mujahidi (2017). These researches also discuss the same topic as the previous researchers did, analyzing theme and rheme. Dashela research theme and rheme in short story Sleeping

Beauty using systemic functional approach. Meiarista researched theme and rheme in recount text produced by Indonesian EFL students. Sinaga took the Jakarta Post newspaper as the object of the research. Octaberlina analyse thematic progression in Joko Widodo's speech, and the last Mujahid took textbook Senior High School on the second semester in SMA Negeri 1 Susukan.

The different part of this research is on the text analysed. The researcher took *Kurikulum Merdeka* English textbook Junior High School. The textbook is taken whole since it is not parted into two semesters such as the previous curriculum 2013 English textbook. This study aims to analyze:

- 1) Types of theme in *Kurikulum Merdeka* English textbook and;
- 2) The thematic development pattern of the text.

The text to research is limited only on the dialogue in English textbook *Kurikulum Merdeka* of Junior High School. The researcher did not take other text data in the textbook such as instruction, definition, etc. to limit the research data. The limitation should be done to make it clear on what type of text is researched. This research on theme and rheme in English textbook of Junior High School is very important because it helps readers understand the language structure used in the text. By understanding the concepts of theme and rheme, readers can find the main or core message of each sentence or paragraph, which helps them understand the subject matter as a whole.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theme

The component that acts as the message's starting point is known as the theme (Panggabean, 2011). Theme is what the clause is about (Thompson, 2014). Theme is one of the clause structure components in the systemic functional linguistic approach that helps sentences make sense by arranging the information they contain. The element of the sentence that serves as the point of departure or introduction of the message is known as the theme. It is also referred to as the first point or starting point. It usually comes first in the phrase and establishes the context for the next elements. This is in accordance to Halliday. It is said that the Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context (Halliday, 2004). A clause's message structure consists of a Theme and a Rheme. The structure is indicated by the order, with the Theme being placed first.

The theme is significant for comprehending how information is organized and presented in a sentence. The theme establishes the subject matter or topic of the phrase and aids the speaker or writer in deciding how to best arrange the clause to successfully convey their intended meaning. The theme can be expressed in systemic functional linguistics via a variety of grammatical structures, such as verb phrases, adverb phrases, and noun phrases. The selection of a theme can influence the discourse's flow and coherence, as well as be used to highlight or foreground particular material or to establish cohesiveness and coherence in a document.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (Halliday, 2004), there are three categories for the theme elements: ideational/topical, interpersonal, and textual. The first component that

is either a participant, a circumstance, or a process is the ideational or topical Theme. There are two categories: marked and unmarked topical Themes. In contrast to the marked topical Theme, which is Theme other than Subject, the unmarked topical Theme is Theme on to the subject. The ideational/topical Theme appears in every clause. Before the topical theme, there is an element called the interpersonal theme, which comprises the modal/comment adjunct, vocative, and finite verbal operator. Before the interpersonal or topical theme that connects the clause to its context, the textual theme is present. The continuative, conjunction, and conjunctive adjunct are all included. A theme with many elements is referred to as a multiple theme (Halliday et al., 2014).

The choice of mood affects which element is commonly used as the topical Theme in an English clause (Halliday et al., 2014). Topical Themes may be preceded by textual and/or interpersonal aspects; in such case, these elements are likewise a part of the theme. The textual Theme might be a combination of continuous, structural, and conjunctive elements (Halliday et al., 2014). While clause with a combination of vocative, modal, and mood-marking is categorized as interpersonal theme.

2.2. Rheme

The Rheme comes after the Theme. Rheme is a part of how new information is constructed in the text. The rheme, meanwhile, is seen as a component of the clause that develops the theme's material. The fresh or strange information in the rheme is not yet covered in the preceding clause or sentence. The rheme is the easiest approach to notice it by realizing that everything comes after the theme. Rheme can also be defined as the remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed, is called in Prague school terminology the Rheme. Halliday defined simply Rheme which is the section of the sentence where the theme is developed, can be defined as everything that is not the theme.

2.3. Thematic development

Thematic development describes how a clause's theme is formed. A clause's theme can derive from or repeat the meaning of the clause's preceding theme and rheme. The development process from Theme to Rheme demonstrates the information flow. To retain the cohesiveness and coherence of a document, it is usual to place new information immediately after an old piece of information (the information from the prior sentence or clause). According to Eggins (Eggins, 2004) thematic development is classified into three patterns. They are Theme reiteration, the zig-zag pattern, and multiple-Rheme pattern. In the theme reiteration, reiterating a theme element is a technique for maintaining a text's coherence or focus in the constant theme pattern. When the same Theme begins each clause on a regular basis, a pattern is present. The theme's repetition gives the text a distinct focus. The second pattern or thematic development is called zigzag/linear pattern. It is a pattern about what component mentioned in the Rheme of the previous clause becomes the next theme on the next clause. In this zigzag pattern building on the newly provided material helps a writing become cohesive. The third or the last pattern is named multiple-theme pattern that is a pattern where the rheme of the previous clause is parted into some of

different information. Each of those information comes as the Theme of other clause afterward.

2.4. English textbook of *Kurikulum Merdeka*

Cited from official website of Kemdikbud, *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a curriculum with diverse intra curricular learning where content will be optimized so that learners have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies (Pengelola Direktorat SMP, 2022). Teachers have the flexibility to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be tailored to the learning needs and interests of students. *Kurikulum Merdeka*, is an educational approach introduced that aims to empower students to become active learners, critical thinkers and independent individuals. English textbooks used in secondary schools as part of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* aim to reflect this approach by incorporating a variety of learner-centered socio-cultural elements.

3. METHODOLOGY

Halliday's model of textual analysis has been used in several content analysis study especially related to theme and rheme analysis of text (Stoian & Dejica, 2016). There are three levels of analysis in text analysis: the overall text level or said the whole text, sentence (clause) level, and word or phrase level (Miller, Tom, 1997). This is a research to analyze clauses of *Kurikulum Merdeka* English textbook Junior High School published by *Pusat Perbukuan*, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education Indonesia. The researcher chose this version of *Kurikulum Merdeka* textbook since it is the official textbook published by the government.

All the clauses in that textbook is analysed based on the types of theme and rheme. This study is a qualitative research method using systemic functional linguistics approach as well as many other content analysis study in several theme-rheme analysis of the previous studies (Apsari, 2019, Sinaga, 2019, Amin, 2021). Mauch (2003) states that qualitative research aims to give comprehensive and accurate accounts of phenomena in all of their complexity, makes an effort to identify and demonstrate the presumptions that underlie events or acts, and utilizes natural settings as the major source of data. The qualitative method is also a research process in which the data that is gathered is not produced using statistical methods.

Instead of collecting and arranging the data, this study also analyses and interprets the structure of the data. In this case the data is in form of clauses as the focus of the unit analysis. The data is in written form taken from English textbook *Kurikulum Merdeka* junior high school. After collecting the data, the researcher then identifies the theme and rheme of each clauses, determines the type of theme and rheme for each clauses and the thematic development of each clauses, and finally draws a conclusion.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Theme

Topical theme dominates the data of clause of *Kurikulum Merdeka* English textbook in Junior High school with 167 or about 55% of the data. Interpersonal theme takes second place with 101 or 34% of the data and the last is textual theme with 32 data or 10% of the data. The finding research data was drawn as follow:

Theme types	Amount theme	of %
Topical theme	167	55%
Interpersonal theme	101	34%
Textual theme	32	10%

4.1.1. Topical theme

Among 167 topical theme found in the text, the data is not fully represented as a single theme in a clause. In some circumstances, the topical issue is the only theme, while in many other cases, it appears alongside other themes. This is because the typical sentences in dialogue are different from the sentences in narration or description text. Sentences in dialogue tend to be shorten, in some cases, especially when answering a question.

Dialogues on Page 20.

Well, yes. It's great.		
Well, yes.	It's	Great
<i>Textual</i>	<i>Topical</i>	
<i>theme</i>		<i>Rheme</i>

I'm thirteen years old.	
I'm	Thirteen years old
<i>Topical theme</i>	<i>Rheme</i>

Dialogue on page 21

Oh, I like it, too.		
Oh	I	Like it, too
<i>Textual</i>	<i>Unmarked Topical</i>	
<i>Theme</i>		<i>Rheme</i>

The data found in chapter 1 of *Kurikulum Merdeka* English textbook of Junior High School shows the appearance of topical themes in several clauses. Topical themes in some of this data appears after textual themes in the form of continuity adjuncts. As a clause in a dialogue, this kind of thing is common and natural, because it is an expression of response to a statement in the previous text or clause.

In some cases, the textual theme also precedes the topical theme in the form of a conjunctive adjunct as shown in the following data:

But I can't wait to go home.		
But	I	Can't wait to go home.
<i>Textual</i>	<i>Unmarked topical</i>	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Rheme</i>	

A clause may appear incomplete as a form of conversation. As a normal type of conversation that is not strict or textual, the clause's subject is missing or unstated. This condition creates a variety of topical theme data where the topical theme is implied but not explicitly stated, as in the following clause.

Dialogue on Page 24.

Hi, Galang. How are you? Fine, thanks.		
(I'm)	Fine, thanks.	
<i>Topical theme</i>	<i>Rheme</i>	

4.1.2. Interpersonal theme

Interpersonal theme is the second most common theme in the research data. The occurrence of interpersonal theme can be more than one for a single clause, as seen in the following data: Dialogue on Page 24.

Hi, Galang, How are you?		
Hi, Galang.	How	Are you?
<i>Interpersonal 1</i>	<i>Interpersonal 2</i>	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Rheme</i>	

Dialogue on page 31

Hi, Galang. What's up?		
Hi, Galang	What's	up?
<i>Interpersonal 1</i>	<i>Interpersonal 2</i>	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Rheme</i>	

In other case, interpersonal theme appears to precede topical theme. Greeting is the most frequent data that appears as an interpersonal theme preceding the topical theme.

Hi, Monita. Nice to meet you.		
Hi, Monita.	(It's)	Nice to meet you.
<i>Interpersonal</i>	<i>Topical</i>	
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Rheme</i>	

Interpersonal theme in the form of a response to a question or statement also initiates the topical theme of a clause.

Dialogue on page 31

Yes. It's my hobby.		
Yes.	It's	my hobby.
<i>Interpersonal</i>	<i>Topical</i>	
<i>Theme</i>		<i>Rheme</i>

4.1.3. Textual theme

Dialogue on page 20.

Well, yes. It's great.		
Well, yes.	It's	Great.
<i>Textual</i>	<i>Topical</i>	
<i>Theme</i>		<i>rheme</i>

The word "well" is categorized as conjunction continuative. This is a character of word that is as a sign of textual theme. The word "well" is continuing the information mentioned in the previous clause "Hi. Are you enjoying the first day of school?". "Well" is a response to the question on the previous clause. The speaker is indicated answering the question using the word "well".

By the way. I'm Galang.		
By the way	I'm	Galang.
<i>Textual</i>	<i>Unmarked Topical</i>	
<i>Theme</i>		<i>rheme</i>

The clause "By the way, I'm Galang." is classified as textual theme. This clause begins with conjunction "by the way" then is continued by subject "I". This form indicates that the clause uses textual theme. This is in accordance to Tri Wiratno (2018) that textual theme is a theme that is realised through 1) conjunction and 2) continuatives. This analysis will be different if the conjunction "by the way" comes in the middle of the clause. That could be classified as rheme, not textual theme, in case the clause changes into *I'm by the way Galang*. This is in accordance to what Halliday and Matthiesen (Halliday, 2004) states that textual theme is a theme preceding the topical theme. Continuative, conjunction, and conjunctive adjunct are some elements that construct textual theme in clauses.

4.1.4. Theme and text development

Clauses that make up a text are developed with several patterns. In relation to theme and rheme analysis, theme development can be done in three patterns: reiteration theme, zigzag theme, and multiple rheme.

Multiple theme

Dialogue on page 16.

Hi,	My name's	Hi, my name's Galang
	I'm	I'm from Kalimantan.
	I	I live on Jalan Sumatera.
	I'm	I'm thirteen years old.
	I	I go to SMP Merdeka.

The theme in the text above is developed using a multiple rheme pattern. It can be seen from how the second clause is developed from the rheme in the previous clause, "Galang". The theme in the second clause and so on is the development of the rheme in the first clause. This kind of theme development model aims to provide comprehensive information related to the topic discussed in the text. In relation to the clause, the rheme in the first clause is Galang. The author then develops information on who Galang is, what his activities are, where he lives and other information that is important to convey to the readers.

Dialogue between Monita and Galang on page 62.

Monita:	What are you having?
Galang:	It's fried rice for my breakfast.
Monita:	It's late for breakfast now.
Galang:	I woke up late
What	are you having?
It's	fried rice for my breakfast.
It's	late for breakfast now.
I	woke up late.

Zigzag theme

Dialogue between Andre and Galang on Page 30.

Hi.	are you	enjoying the first day of school?
Well. yes.	It's	great
By the way.	I'm	Galang. What's your name?
	I'm	Andre.
	Where	do you live?
		live on Jalan Begawan.

In the dialogue between Andre and Galang, there is a zigzag type of theme development. The zigzag type development can be seen from how Galang answers every question asked by Andre. Galang's answer is always related to the rheme in Andre's question. Each of Andre's answers is a development of the question asked by Galang. The clauses are coherent with each other and are still on the same topic. There are no clauses that deviate from the dialogue.

5. CONCLUSION

Theme development in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* English textbook of Junior High School is divided into zigzag theme, multiple rheme, and reiteration theme. All three appear in almost all chapters in the book. Each theme development model has its own character. Based on the results of data analysis, there is no theme development that comes out of the three types of themes. This indicates that the English textbook has cohesion and coherence in its text development. Meanwhile, related to the types of themes in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* English textbook of Junior High School, topical theme is the dominating theme appears in the textbook with 55% which unmarked topical theme pretty much dominates its appearance in the English textbook. This indicates that the textbook is indeed suitable as a junior high school textbook where the main purpose of the textbook is to provide students with knowledge and understanding of various subject matter. By using topical themes, textbooks can provide a clear emphasis on specific figures or topics, helping students to internalize and understand key concepts.

Generally, Research's analysis of the theme and rheme in the junior high school textbook for the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is significant for a number of reasons. It offers information on how language is utilized in instructional materials to express meaning and

organize knowledge, first and foremost. We may learn more about how ideas and concepts are arranged and presented in the textbook by looking at the use of theme and rheme. This insight can help us better comprehend the pedagogical techniques used in the liberated curriculum. Secondly, by examining the linguistic components of the textbook and their possible influence on students' critical thinking abilities, this research makes a contribution to the fields of linguistics and education. We can discover how language is utilized to engage pupils in analytical thinking, motivate them to question and confront ideas, and foster social awareness by spotting themes and rheme patterns. Last but not least, this study has applications for educators, teachers, and curriculum designers that work on developing and implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* in junior high schools. This research can offer useful insights for refining curriculum materials and instructional practices, which will ultimately increase students' learning outcomes, by looking at the linguistic characteristics of the textbook.

As a result, understanding the theme and rheme in the junior high school textbook of *Kurikulum Merdeka* offers important insights into how language is employed in educational materials to transmit meaning, organize knowledge, and foster critical thinking abilities. This study advances knowledge of the textbook's linguistic elements and their possible influence on students' educational experiences. This research intends to inform curriculum developers, instructors, and educators on how language may be used to cultivate critical thinking and enhance social consciousness among young learners by shining light on the function of theme and rheme in the textbook of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Kurikulum Merdeka is the latest curriculum recently launched by the minister of education and culture as the official curriculum used by all primary and secondary education institutions. The researcher suggests that more research related to textbooks provided by the government be researched both from the linguistic aspect and the content so that there is input information for the developer of the book for improvement.

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