

## **The Topical Theme Depicted in the Talks of Education in the Indonesian TEDx: a Systemic Functional Linguistics Approach**

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### **Abstract:**

The education-related TEDx presentations delivered by Indonesian speakers are a distinct linguistic phenomenon. It is a language in use where the message is communicated entirely through speech. In light of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), this study examines the management of topical theme (TT) in relation to the message organisation of the talks of education (TE) in Indonesian TEDx. The aim of this study was to identify and describe the message's current theme in the TEDx format. Using the documentation method, the data was gathered from an official TEDx broadcaster online. Two methods of analysis have been used: transcription and detailed text fragmentation. Following the analysis, the findings were presented and their theoretical SFL-based interpretation was given. This study shows that the phrasal and clausal forms, which are the constructional units of language, have taken on the topical theme in TE of TEDx. Phrasal constructs can be categorised into four different categories: noun phrase (NP), verb phrase (VP), adjective phrase (AP), and prepositional phrase (PP). The topical theme has also been functionalized as a component of other themes and the chain for coherence. This study recommended more examination of the organisation of the other component of the message. To ensure that the entire description of the thematic structure of TE in TEDx is respected, the combinatory analysis of theme and rheme will be essential.

***Keywords: topical theme, talks of education, theme-rheme, Indonesian TEDx***

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The most recent developments in spoken performance are taking place not just on social media platforms but also on stages that are physically located in physical locations. TEDx is the one that is most well-liked among academics, regardless of the field they work in, who congregate to discuss challenging and forward-looking topics (López-Carril, Añó, & González-Serrano, 2020; Loya & Klemm, 2016; Taibi et al., 2015). It was initially thought that the festivities would be more of a thoughtful occasion rather than an enjoyable one because of the nature of the events (Banker & Gournelos, 2013; Rubenstein, 2012; Mikhailovna, 2017; Raffo, 2016). Even if discussions of education, which will be abbreviated as TE from here on out, have been identified as a potentially problematic factor for the state of mindfulness, the event itself continues to make use of the language (MacKrill et al., 2021). What this indicates is that the language was the major tool utilised in the fabrication of the event. From the point of view of systemic functional linguistics (Bloor et al., 2004; Halliday et al., 2014; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013), which will be

abbreviated to SFL from here on out, we may recognise the TEDx event that was about TE as a functionalization of language within a certain genre.

In the past, the TEDx event had been investigated by a number of academics, including the following. The first category has been interpreted as representing a pragmatic phenomenon (Cribble, Abuczki, Burkšaitienė, Furkó, Nedoluzhko, Rackevičienė, & Zikánová, 2019; Shuqi, 2022; Valeiras-Jurado & Bernad-Mechó, 2022). They asserted that the TEDx was developed by employing the concept of specific speech acts in order to communicate particular pragmatic meanings. The second type has been investigated at TEDx in the context of a discourse event (Compagnone, 2015; Mamalipurath, 2021, 2022; Mattiello, 2017; Pin, 2018). They came to the conclusion that the TEDx discourse has been construed not only through the language constituencies involved, but also, and more importantly, through the ideologies that lie beneath the surface. The most recent batch was exposed by TEDx as an example of applied linguistics, more specifically for educational purposes (Danilina & Shabunina, 2018; Humeniuk et al., 2021; Sidelnik, Lutsenko, & Germanovich, 2022; Puspita & Rosnaningsih, 2020; Prasetio, 2020). They came up with a conclusion about the suitability of the spoken performance to imitate the students' abilities in public speaking.

Furthermore, it is possible to conduct a study on TEDx TE utilising SFL as the primary theoretical framework. Every text of language, whether it be spoken or written, is the organisation of the message from the perspective of fundamental principles (Bartlett & O'Grady, 2017; Jerome & Ting, 2022; Steedman, 2000). This organisation, which serves as both the theme and the rheme (Calhoun, 2010; Krifka, 2008; Krifka & Musan, 2012), has been presented. To be accurate, the novelty of this study may be attributed to both the research object (RO) and the analysis design (AD). The RO is currently being discussed in detail on TEDxTE. Among TEDxTE, the Indonesian context presents a unique and significant challenge for this topic. With relation to the AD, the SFL is a distinguishing feature. Thus, this study will primarily concentrate on the message that organisation conveys. In particular, the purpose of this study was to locate and characterise the overarching topical theme that emerged from the TEDx TE by using SFL.

## 2. METHOD

In light of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), a qualitative and descriptive methodology was utilised in the design of this study. The qualitative form of data was selected because it is the most common one, which led to the exclusion of any quantitative performance. The descriptive approach has been utilised throughout the process of carrying out the analysis that led to the production of the final results. This study has been conducted in three stages, following the pattern of a sequential procedure.

Table 1. *Identification of Data Sources*

Code	Title	Hyperlink
TET-01	TTOE	<a href="https://bit.ly/3UDut7k">https://bit.ly/3UDut7k</a>
TET-02	TAM	<a href="https://bit.ly/3AdyTJF">https://bit.ly/3AdyTJF</a>
TET-03	LUIF	<a href="https://bit.ly/3O2lTME">https://bit.ly/3O2lTME</a>
TET-04	SNAS	<a href="https://bit.ly/3DYhB4g">https://bit.ly/3DYhB4g</a>
TET-05	TSMH	<a href="https://bit.ly/3X0xgZz">https://bit.ly/3X0xgZz</a>
TET-06	HEA	<a href="https://bit.ly/3UzUp3D">https://bit.ly/3UzUp3D</a>
TET-07	WAQ	<a href="https://bit.ly/3AdzF9x">https://bit.ly/3AdzF9x</a>
TET-08	FZI	<a href="https://bit.ly/3E6Sf4h">https://bit.ly/3E6Sf4h</a>

The gathering of data constitutes the initial stage of the research. The information that will be used in this investigation comes from transcriptions of talks on education and other topics that are closely related to it. The official TEDx broadcasters on YouTube served as the sources for this information (see Table 1). Apple's Safari and the online transcription tools provided by YouTube were the primary instruments utilised throughout the process. There were three parameters that needed to be met in order to obtain the minimum standard of data sources: (i) the talks had to be free of any violence or hate speech in any form of spoken language; (ii) the talks needed to be shorter than five minutes; and (iii) the talks could be carried out in either English or Bahasa Indonesia, depending on which language was being used.

The analysis of the data constitutes the second part of this study. Adjustments to the transcription have been made as part of the analysis that has begun. In order to validate the content of the talks and to mark the punctuation of the talks, the adjustment has been used. After the adjustment has been made, the next step is the reduction of the data, which serves as a step to clear and separate reliable data from invalid data. In-depth textual fragmentation was the next step in the process. The constituents of speech were determined with the help of the analysis, which was based on the thematic structure. The constituencies were the locations of thematic patterns, which enabled us to distinguish between the patterns that are related to construction and those that are related to function. Analysis guidance is the instrument that is used for achieving these goals (derived according to SFL principles). In addition, the presentation of the findings constitutes the final part of this study. Both a condensed description and a schematic visualisation of the findings of this study have been prepared as a result of this research. In this section of the report, the discussion has been crafted by utilising the justification from the earlier research as well as the theoretical framework.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Constructions of topical theme in TE of TEDx

This study reveals that the topical theme in TE of TEDx has been manifested in the constructional units of language, specifically phrasal and clausal forms. There were four distinct kinds of phrasal constructions, which were denoted by the following abbreviations: noun phrase (NP), verb phrase (VP), adjective phrase (AP), and prepositional phrase (PP). In addition, the topical theme has been functionalized as a part of multiple themes and the chain in order to maintain the text's consistency. The following sections will go over these two primary results in greater detail.

Table 2. *Phrasal constructions of Topical Theme in TE of TEDx*

Category	Head	Sample
NP	noun	<i>two objects</i>
VP	verb	<i>to help</i>
AP	adjective	<i>the most important</i>
PP	preposition	<i>somewhere in this picture</i>

First, the TEDx TE topical theme is constructed. The phrasal construction was the first type of form for a topical theme. There were four options: NP as in (1), VP as in (2), AP as in (3), and PP as in (4). The following is the complete depiction and discussion.

- (1) Two objects are moving toward each other.

<i>two objects</i>	<i>are moving</i>	<i>toward each other</i>
NP	FV	PP
Topical Theme		Rheme

It has been decided that the topical theme in the TE of TEDx would be manifested in the NP as its venue of manifestation. The NP has been viewed as a constituent of the utterance along with the noun that is headed at the place where a topical theme could arise (Herriman, 2011; Wei, 2015). The specific phrase “two objects” (also written as TT-01) serves as the topical theme in example (1), and there is a specific requirement that it cannot be interchanged with any other phrase. There is no ability to alter either the structure used for topical messages or the organisation of the complete message. If we make an effort to remove the TT-01, the thematic structure will be lost because there will be no expression of a topical issue at that point. Additionally, the organisation of the message will shift if we decide to make a change to the phrasal type. This indicates that the NP as a structure for a topical theme is a fixed pair to some degree.

- (2) To help the children go to from hopeless to hopeful

<i>to help the children</i>	<i>go to</i>	<i>from hopeless to hopeful</i>
VP	VP	PP
Topical Theme		Rheme

In addition to being a topical theme in the VP, the rule of uninterchangeability is also present there. The VP has been understood to be a component of the utterance along with the verb-headed portion, within which a topical theme may emerge (Danis, 2022; Siahaan et al., 2022). The VP has been highlighted in the TE of TEDx as the construction for the topical theme being discussed there. In the same way that the NP in Sample 1 was organised to manifest the topical theme, the VP “to help the children” (also written as TT-02) was organised in the same way. The verb serves as the head of this construction. Since there is more than one verbal construction in the same utterance, one functioning as rheme and the other as theme, the identification is not as straightforward as it might otherwise be. In this situation, having knowledge of syntax can be of great assistance. Never use the very important person (VP) of a trending topic as a predicate or predication in a sentence. The construction work will invariably serve as the topic of discussion. Message organisation is dependent on semantic and syntactic considerations, which is another reason for the rule of topical theme uninterchangeability.

- (3) But the most important is the point of victory. They must reach the last circle.

<i>But</i>	<i>the most important</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>the point of victory</i>	<i>they must reach the last circle</i>
PP	AP	VP	NP	CC
Textual Theme	Topical Theme	Rheme		Entailment
Multiple Theme			Multiple Rheme	

Beside, there is another kind of phrasal construction, which is known as the adjective phrase (AP). The noun phrase has been interpreted as a constituent of the utterance with the adjective-headed location where a topical theme might occur (Domínguez et al., 2017; Domínguez et al., 2022). The AP “the most important” (also written as TT-03) has been

used in the TE of TEDx as the place of manifestation for a topical theme. The AP, in contrast to the NP and VP, is neither common nor frequently used. According to the findings of the investigation, there is at least one plausible explanation for this phenomenon: the adjective-based construction is semantically fruitful in meaning and has a tendency to rhyme when it is spoken. It's possible that the AP followed the same rule as the NP and VP by being indistinguishable from the other two positions. There is no possible modification that could be introduced into AP that would qualify as a TEDx topical theme of TE.

- (4) If you look closely, somewhere in this picture is me.

<i>if you look closely</i>	<i>somewhere in this picture</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>me</i>
CC	PP	VP	NP
Textual Theme	Topical Theme	Rheme	
Multiple Theme			

Moreover, there is evidence of the function word for topical theme, which can be found alongside the content word that appears in NP, VP, and AP. Another type of construction that can be used for a topical theme is the use of prepositional phrases as the function word, such as in the phrase “somewhere in this picture” (also written as TT-04). The PP has been interpreted as an utterance constituent with the preposition-headed where a topical theme may occur (Alhumaid, 2022; Pavavijarn, 2022). This view is supported by previous research. Few phrasal constructions can be derived from function words due to their limited availability. Only two kinds were discovered by us. During the TEDx TE, the PP served as the site of manifestation for a timely topic that was discussed.

The all-phrasal constructions that were discussed earlier reveal that the NP construction is the type that is utilised the most frequently across almost the entirety of TEDx. It indicates that there is a tendency for topical themes to be manifested in the NP rather than other types of phrasal construction, which is the preferred tendency. It is likely the case because the semantics of construction have a significant impact on the organisation of the message. When we take into account semantics, we find that the grammatical meaning of the text is completely integrated with the structure of the message. And nouns, or phrases consisting of nouns, are universals for anything that is named, both in the physical world and in the mental representation of that world. Therefore, because of this, the NP is a common construction for a subject that is currently topical.

In addition, clausal constructions, also abbreviated as CC, are another type of construction that can be used in TEDx TE to address a topical theme. This construction is longer than the phrasal one because it contains both the subject and the predicative constituents, whereas the phrasal one only contains the subject. What this indicates is that the topical theme clause in the particular sentence most likely took the form of a subclause. Several TEDx talks have touched on the possibility of this happening. Regarding the request for an explanation, we kindly ask that you consider the topical theme in (5).

- (5) If you don't want to fall, hold on to the One on the top “The Divine”.

<i>If you don't want to fall</i>	<i>hold on</i>	<i>to the One on the top “The Divine”</i>
CC	VP	PP
Topical theme	Rheme	

When we consider the syntactic and semantic parameters, we can deduce, on the basis of the utterance (5), that the topical theme may be expressed in either a brief or an extended construction, depending on our preferences. It's possible that the manifestation isn't entirely coincidental. There was a fundamental principle that underpinned all of the incarnations of a central theme, and that principle was linearization. This rule applies in a message organisation where it is always indicated by a construction that there are topical themes that are being discussed. There is a rule underlying the utterance, as in (5), which says “if you don't want to fall” (also written as TT-05).

- (6) What I found was that apparently there are 7 boxes. And those 7 boxes symbolizes Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday.

<i>what I found</i>	<i>was</i>	<i>that apparently there are 7 boxes</i>	<i>and those 7 boxes symbolizes Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday.</i>
CC	VP	NP	CC
Topical Theme	Rheme		Entailment
			Multiple Rheme

In the end, there is a further type of clausal construction known as the W-clause, which can be used. Previously, in the utterance number (5), we came across the construction of an if clause. Because of its versatility, the Wh-clause was chosen to serve as the manifestation form for a topical theme. It has been brought to our attention in utterance number six that there is a wh-clause that has been positioned as the topical theme. Through the use of mechanisms for message organisation, the “what I found” (also written as TT-06) has been interpreted. The selection of the building method was not a fortuitous occurrence. A linearization rule was in place that went beyond the forms of topical themes. If we are looking for the TT-06 while attempting to modify or remove the wh-clause from the utterance (6), we will not be successful. That there is no way to change the structure of the message after it has been well-established in an utterance that is fixed is what it indicates when someone says that. In the event that there is a need for any changes, it is the responsibility of the person who is speaking to make those changes. It indicates that the deed needs to be completed before the declaration can be made. This, however, is not possible because of a concept known as the unretractable principle. What is it that the speaker claims will take place even if there are no conditions? After the message has been organised, there will be no more opportunities to make any modifications to it.

### 3.2 Functionalizations of topical theme in TE of TEDx

This subsection has been written to provide an overview of, as well as a discussion on, the operationalization of the central theme that can be found in TEDx. The term "functionalization" refers to the way in which topical themes function in relation to other categories of themes within the same overarching message organisation (Bartlett & O'Grady, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2017; Schiffer, 2005; Thomasson, 2022). Finding the role required analysing it in relation to the textual theme that was present in the same multiple theme. In addition, the comparison took into account the surrounding message organisation in order to establish whether or not there is a connection between various topical themes. According to the findings of the investigation, there were at least two primary functions: the chain for coherence, as well as the multiple themes. The following is a description of each of the two roles that have been provided

- (7) Six months after they were trained, they could master grade 1 to grade 6 level math in six months.

<i>six months after they were trained</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>could master</i>	<i>grade 1 to grade 6 level math in six months.</i>
PP	NP	VP	NP
Textual Theme	Topical Theme		Rheme
Multiple Theme			

The primary role that a topical theme plays in the TE of TEDx is to participate in the development of multiple other themes. The multiple theme is a condition in which the theme is not placed in a single structural unit; rather, it may be placed in two or more different constructions at the same time (Nugraha, 2017; 2020a). The use of multiple themes is common in speeches that call for additional information in order to properly organise the delivery of the message. A pair of textual themes and a topical theme make up the standard format for multiple themes to be presented in the TE of TEDx talks. The chain for coherence is typically indicated by the topical theme, while the chain for cohesion is typically indicated by the textual theme. The use of the topical theme “they” as a component of the multiple theme is demonstrated by the fact that (7) is presented to us. As a result, the textual themes and the topical themes each have their own distinct priority. There is no requirement that the textual theme be included as a type in the message organisation.

On the other hand, the topical theme is an obligatory type that must be included in a message organisation. If there is both a textual theme and a topical theme within the same message organisation, then it must be considered a multiple theme (Nugraha, 2022a). This logical possibility is contingent on the rule of serialisation, which states as follows: (i) there is no serialisation from textual theme to topical theme; (ii) there is a compulsory serialisation from topical theme to textual theme; and (iii) there is a mandatory serialisation from a combination of topical and textual themes to message organisation.

- (8) Finally, once they know the wind is from one direction, they fly the kite from another.

<i>Finally, once they know the wind is from one direction,</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>fly</i>	<i>the kite from another</i>
CC	NP	VP	NP
Textual Theme	Topical Theme		Rheme
Multiple Theme			

The chain for coherence is the second functionalization that can be applied to topical themes. The use of a topical theme to maintain the same mood of one utterance amongst other utterances in an organisation of a message is referred to as a ‘chain for coherence’ . If we consider the entire conversation to be a spoken discourse, then it is possible to identify this role. We used utterance (8) as our sample, and within it, we discovered the topical theme “they” (also written as TT-08), which served as the chain for coherence. How does the claim come to be made? In point of fact, the TT-08 serves as the topical theme not only for the eighth utterance but also for the utterances that surround it. The term “surrounding utterance” refers to both the utterance that came before it (as in 8a), as well as the utterance that came after it (as in 8b). Please also take note of the constituents that are in bold type in both (8a) and (8b) to indicate that they are relevant to the topic at hand. To bring coherence and unity to the discourse, the TT-08 has been selected as the coherence chain. The topical theme has traditionally served as the chain for coherence in spoken discourse, making it essential to the unification of spoken discourse.

- (8a) **Children** can easily get to know the wind. lick **their** index finger, put it up and “oh, its right there”.  
 (8b) Now, what do **they** do? **They** just try to fly it from everywhere!

To provide a brief overview, the topical theme of TEDx is a message that can only be deduced through the use of linguistic constructions. The organisation of the theme and rheme cannot be detached because there has been no construction (Nugraha, 2020b; 2022b; 2022c). In the same vein, there is no function if the language construction, regardless of the type, has not been used for the manifestation of the topical theme. The fundamental principle of linearization and serialisation underlies the structural component as well as the message organisation that can be found in TEDx TE.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In light of the findings and the preceding discussion, there is a clear inference to be drawn regarding the fact that TEDx featured a topical theme that manifested itself in a variety of different ways. When it comes to the constructions, the topical theme has been construed in forms that are phrase-based as well as clause-based. In addition to this, the topical theme has been functionalized as a component of multiple themes, as well as the TE coherence chain, in the context of TEDx as a spoken discourse. It was impossible to identify the topical theme of TE in TEDx without any construction or functionalization taking place. Hearers and listeners were unable to understand the discourse being presented, such as at TEDx TE. It indicates that the structure of the message cannot be disassociated from the verbal discourse. The other limitation relates to the perception of the speeches' audiences or listeners. This research could only reach the boundaries from the speaker's perspective. It would be intriguing to comprehend the listeners' perspectives on a current issue. As a conclusion part, this study recommended conducting additional research on the TE of TEDx presentations in order to determine whether or not the organisation of the message as a whole is impacted by sentence structure. Rheme structure is a potentially fascinating topic that could be investigated in a subsequent study. Furthermore, the recommendation is aimed at a pedagogical goal. The findings of this study could be useful as material enrichment for public speaking activities. These useful resources will help with the teaching and learning of public speaking skills.

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