

Role of Theme-Rheme Analysis in Developing Academic Literacy Skills in Senior High School Students in Pringsewu

Tiara Noviarini

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Syariah Mitra Karya, Bekasi 17113, Indonesia

email : tiaranoviarini140315@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study aims to explore the implementation of Theme-Rheme in developing the writing ability of second-grade students at one of Senior high school in Pringsewu. Theme-Rheme, as part of systemic functional theory, provides a framework for analyzing the structure and flow of information within sentences. The research method used is qualitative descriptive with a text analysis approach to students' writings. The results show that understanding and applying Theme-Rheme significantly help students in organizing ideas and enhancing the cohesion and coherence of their writing. Additionally, this technique encourages students to be more critical in constructing arguments and developing well-structured paragraphs. These findings suggest that Theme-Rheme-based learning can be an effective strategy in improving students' writing abilities at high school level.

Keywords: *Theme-Rheme, Writing Ability, High School Students*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing ability is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in academic and professional success. In the context of language learning, developing proficiency in writing involves not only the mastery of grammar and vocabulary but also the understanding of discourse organization and coherence. Among the various linguistic frameworks utilized to enhance writing skills, Theme-Rheme analysis emerges as a significant tool, particularly in understanding the structure and flow of information within written texts. According to (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013), Theme-Rheme analysis, rooted in systemic functional linguistics, provides insights into how information is structured within sentences. Halliday describes Theme as the initial element that sets the scene or topic of a sentence, while Rheme refers to the subsequent element that provides new information or elaborates on the Theme. This structural analysis aids in organizing ideas cohesively and guiding readers through the writer's intended message. English, known as an international language, is a very important language for communicating in educational, social, economic, cultural, technological, health, political, and other aspects used by people in many countries. This means that if someone wants to communicate with others, they must be able to master English both orally and in writing. Therefore, in Indonesia, English is a subject that must be studied starting at the elementary school level and even up to college. Regarding the importance of English for communication, the Indonesian government has made efforts to improve the education system and human resource development in realizing national education goals, especially at the tertiary level. Every student from various study programs must take an English course, namely General English, as a compulsory university course. In the English curriculum, students are expected to learn and practice fluency in English in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This is based on the learning achievement of graduates (Febtiningsih, 2022).

Furthermore, research indicates a strong correlation between the implementation of Theme-Rheme analysis and the development of writing ability. As noted by Smith (2021),

integrating Theme-Rheme analysis into writing instruction enhances students' ability to organize their thoughts logically and convey them effectively. By focusing on the thematic progression and rhetorical structure of their writing, students can produce more coherent and cohesive texts. However, despite the theoretical underpinnings and empirical evidence supporting the efficacy of Theme-Rheme analysis in enhancing writing ability, there remains a gap in understanding its implementation and impact within specific educational contexts. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the implementation of Theme-Rheme in developing the writing ability of second-grade students at SMA Muhammadiyah Pringsewu.

This research seeks to delve into the practical application of Theme-Rheme analysis in the classroom setting. By examining how teachers integrate Theme-Rheme analysis into writing instruction and its effects on students' writing proficiency, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of Theme-Rheme as a pedagogical tool in enhancing writing abilities. Recent studies have shown promising results regarding the benefits of Theme-Rheme analysis in writing instruction. For instance, a study by Lee and Kim (2021) found that students who received explicit instruction on Theme-Rheme analysis demonstrated significant improvements in their writing coherence and organization compared to those who did not receive such instruction. Similarly, a study by Chen et al. (2022) revealed that incorporating Theme-Rheme analysis into writing tasks led to higher-quality written output among students.

Despite these global and regional studies, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding the application of Theme-Rheme analysis in Indonesian high schools. While some local studies have touched upon related aspects of writing instruction, none have specifically focused on Theme-Rheme analysis and its impact on students' writing skills in Pringsewu. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the implementation and outcomes of Theme-Rheme instruction in a senior high school in Pringsewu.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a specific educational context that has not been extensively explored in previous research. By analyzing the implementation of Theme-Rheme analysis in Pringsewu, this study aims to provide new insights into its effectiveness in improving students' writing skills in Indonesian high schools. Furthermore, this research seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of how Theme-Rheme analysis can be adapted and applied in different educational settings, thereby enriching the existing body of knowledge and offering practical implications for educators.

In conclusion, this study aims to bridge the gap in the literature by investigating the impact of Theme-Rheme analysis on students' writing skills in a senior high school in Pringsewu. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the global discourse on writing instruction and provide valuable insights for educators seeking to enhance their students' writing abilities through innovative pedagogical approaches.

2. METHOD

The aim of this research is to evaluate the implementation of Theme-Rheme analysis in writing instruction at a senior high school in Pringsewu. The primary focus is to identify how Theme-Rheme analysis impacts students' writing abilities and the challenges they face during the learning process. This study employs a qualitative observational design with a case study approach, involving direct observation of the teaching and learning process related to Theme-Rheme, as well as the analysis of student writing documents before and after the implementation of the method.

The participants in this study include an English teacher who teaches Theme-Rheme analysis and a group of students from the senior high school involved in the Theme-Rheme learning sessions. The procedure includes class observations conducted over six sessions, each focusing on different aspects of Theme-Rheme, such as introduction, practice, and reflection. Observations cover interactions between the teacher and students, as well as students' responses to the activities. Additionally, student writing documents are collected before and after Theme-Rheme instruction to analyze their structure and coherence. Interviews with the teacher provide insights into teaching adaptations and strategies to support students, while student reflections capture their experiences and the impact of Theme-Rheme on their writing process.

Data collection involves several instruments: observation notes for recording classroom activities, student writing documents analyzed based on Theme-Rheme criteria, structured interviews designed to explore the teacher's perspective on implementation and effectiveness, and student reflections documenting their views on the learning process and benefits of Theme-Rheme. Data analysis includes thematic analysis of observational and interview data to identify key patterns and themes related to Theme-Rheme implementation and its effects, evaluation of student writing to assess improvements in coherence and organization, and assessment of student perceptions regarding the difficulties and benefits experienced from Theme-Rheme learning.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The observation was conducted to answer the first research question about the implementation of teaching Theme-Rheme in a senior high school in Pringsewu. The researcher observed the English teacher and a group of students over six meetings. Results of observation in every meeting are presented below:

Session 1: Introduction to Theme-Rheme

In the initial session, students were introduced to the concept of Theme-Rheme through interactive classroom activities and discussions led by the teacher. Students showed curiosity and engagement as they explored the thematic structure of various sentences and paragraphs. Teachers expressed optimism about the potential of Theme-Rheme to improve students' writing coherence and organization.

Session 2: Theme-Rheme in Practice

During the second session, students were tasked with applying Theme-Rheme analysis to their own writing assignments. Observations revealed that students initially struggled with identifying Themes and Rhemes in their writing but gradually improved with guidance from the teacher. Some students expressed frustration at the complexity of the concept, while others found it helpful in organizing their ideas more effectively.

Session 3: Student Progress and Challenges

By the third session, students demonstrated noticeable progress in their understanding and application of Theme-Rheme analysis. Classroom observations indicated increased confidence and fluency in identifying Themes and Rhemes in both teacher-provided texts and their own writing. However, some students continued to face challenges in maintaining thematic coherence throughout their compositions, highlighting the need for ongoing support and scaffolding.

Session 4: Teacher Adaptations and Strategies

Teachers implemented various strategies to address students' challenges and reinforce Theme-Rheme concepts. These strategies included providing visual aids, offering mnemonic devices, and facilitating peer collaboration. Interviews with teachers revealed their satisfaction with students' improved engagement and writing organization, despite persistent difficulties for some students.

Session 5: Student Reflections and Insights

During the fifth session, students reflected on their experiences with Theme-Rheme and its impact on their writing process. Many students expressed appreciation for the clarity and structure that Theme-Rheme analysis brought to their compositions. They also acknowledged the importance of continued practice and feedback in mastering this concept.

Session 6: Benefits and Challenges

In the final session, both students and teachers discussed the benefits and challenges associated with learning Theme-Rheme. Students reported improved writing coherence and organization, as well as heightened awareness of sentence structure and thematic progression. However, challenges such as the complexity of the concept and the need for ongoing support were also acknowledged.

Overall, the findings from the six sessions highlight the potential of Theme-Rheme analysis in enhancing students' writing abilities. While students experienced initial difficulties and challenges, their progress and reflections over time underscored the benefits of integrating Theme-Rheme into writing instruction. Teachers played a crucial role in adapting their teaching strategies and providing support to ensure students' continued growth and development in writing proficiency.

The Difficulties Encountered by the Students when They Learned Theme-Rheme

During the Theme-Rheme learning process, students encountered several challenges that hindered their understanding and application of the concept. These difficulties were evident through both classroom observations and direct conversations between students and teachers.

In one instance, a student expressed confusion, saying, "Bu, saya bingung apa itu tema dan rhema dalam kalimat. Saya sulit membedakannya." (Ma'am, I'm confused about what theme and rheme are in sentences. I find it difficult to distinguish them.) This sentiment echoed the sentiments of several other students who struggled to grasp the distinction between theme and rheme, as observed during classroom discussions.

The teacher acknowledged these challenges, responding, "Memang, membedakan tema dan rhema bisa sulit pada awalnya. Tapi kita akan terus latihan agar lebih paham." (Indeed, distinguishing theme and rheme can be challenging at first. But we will continue to practice so that you can understand better.) This dialogue illustrates the teacher's awareness of students' struggles and their commitment to providing ongoing support and guidance.

Another common difficulty students encountered was applying Theme-Rheme analysis to their own writing. One student remarked, "Saya tidak tahu harus mulai dari mana ketika menulis. Tema dan rhema sulit diidentifikasi dalam tulisan saya." (I don't

know where to start when writing. Theme and rheme are difficult to identify in my writing.) This sentiment was echoed by several peers who found it challenging to integrate Theme-Rheme analysis into their writing process.

In response, the teacher provided guidance, saying, "Kita akan melihat contoh-contoh lebih banyak dan mencoba menerapkannya dalam tulisan kita sendiri. Jangan khawatir, kita akan mengatasi masalah ini bersama-sama." (We will look at more examples and try to apply them in our own writing. Don't worry, we will overcome this issue together.) This interaction underscores the teacher's role in offering reassurance and practical strategies to help students overcome their difficulties.

Overall, the difficulties encountered by students in learning Theme-Rheme highlight the complexity of the concept and the need for targeted instruction and support. Through direct conversations between students and teachers, these challenges were acknowledged and addressed, emphasizing the importance of ongoing guidance and practice in mastering Theme-Rheme analysis.

The Benefits of Learning Theme-Rheme

As students delved deeper into learning Theme-Rheme, they began to reap a multitude of benefits that enhanced their writing abilities and comprehension of textual structure. Through direct conversations with students and insights from teachers, the positive impacts of Theme-Rheme instruction became evident.

The implementation of Theme-Rheme analysis in writing instruction has yielded significant benefits for students. Through systematic observations and analysis, several key advantages were identified. Students demonstrated enhanced coherence and organization in their writing, as seen in Student 1's writing sample: "The rising sun casts a warm glow over the horizon. This light awakens the bustling city, which then begins its daily activities" (Student 1, Writing Sample A). This example shows the student's ability to effectively structure information using Theme-Rheme principles. Students also became more aware of how sentence structure affects the clarity and flow of their writing. For instance, Student 2 wrote, "Rain pattered against the window. This sound created a soothing rhythm that helped me concentrate on my studies" (Student 2, Writing Sample B), demonstrating the use of Theme-Rheme to create a logical progression of ideas. Additionally, through Theme-Rheme analysis, students developed critical thinking skills that allowed them to analyze and improve their writing. Student 3's reflection highlights this growth: "The book's protagonist faces many challenges. These challenges shape her into a resilient and resourceful individual" (Student 3, Writing Sample C).

Moreover, students reported increased metacognitive awareness and autonomy in their writing processes. Student 4 commented, "I now think more about how I present my ideas. This consideration has made my writing clearer and more effective" (Student 4, Reflection D), underscoring the growth in self-directed learning and writing. The use of Theme-Rheme analysis also positively impacted students' engagement and motivation. Student 5 noted, "Learning Theme-Rheme was challenging at first, but it made writing more interesting. Now, I enjoy finding ways to improve my sentences" (Student 5, Reflection E), reflecting the increased motivation and interest in writing.

Overall, these findings underscore the transformative potential of Theme-Rheme analysis in enhancing students' writing abilities and fostering deeper engagement with texts. By integrating Theme-Rheme analysis into writing instruction, educators can empower students to become more effective communicators, analytical thinkers, and self-directed learners, preparing them for success in academic and professional contexts. As

research in this area continues to evolve, further exploration of Theme-Rheme analysis holds promise for advancing writing pedagogy and promoting literacy development.

1. The Students' Writing after being Taught by Theme-Rheme

The Results of Document-Based Data

Documents are the students' writing from the first session until the last session after learning about Theme-Rheme. Based on the researcher's analyses, some of the results of the students' writings are presented follow:

Table 2 *Analysis of Students' Writing Based on Theme-Rheme Implementation*

Respondents		Textual theme	Interpersonal Theme	Theme Selection
Student A	Yesterday, I got a typing task from my teacher.	+	-	Marked
	I think my old laptop was broken.	-	+	Unmarked
	I must buy a new laptop for finishing my task.	-	+	Unmarked
	Next week, I am going to buy a new laptop.	+	-	Marked
Student B	I have many homework from school.	+	-	Unmarked
	So that, I must have the laptop to get it.			Marked
	My father promises me that he wants to buy a laptop for me.	+		Unmarked
	Next week, I am going to buy a new laptop.			Marked
Students C	There are many universities in the world.			Marked
	But, I want to search a good university for my education.			Marked
	I have two options.	+		Unmarked
	There are Oxford and Harvard University.			Unmarked
	I think I should continue my study in Oxford University.		+	Unmarked
Student D	Next week, I am going to buy a new laptop.			Marked
	I want to go to Tanjungpandan with my mom.	+		Unmarked
	We will buy complete laptop with mouse and flash disk.	+		Unmarked
	I am very happy with my new laptop.	+		Unmarked
	I want to buy Acer.	+		Unmarked
	I will learn with my laptop, for example for searching something from website.	+		Unmarked
Student E	I have good classmates.	+		Unmarked
	They are Mega and Annisa.			Unmarked
	They both are my friends since 1 st grade.	+		Unmarked
	They have been a friend to confide me if I have a problem because they always resolve my problems.	+		Unmarked
Student F	I have mom and dad.	+	-	Unmarked
	My mom is a beautiful woman.	+	-	Unmarked
	My daddy is a handsome man.	+	-	Unmarked
	I love mom and dad.	+	-	Unmarked
	They are angel.	+	-	Unmarked
	I love my family	+	-	Unmarked
	My family is everything for me.	+	-	Unmarked
Student G	I have mom and dad.	+		Unmarked
	They are the best parents in my life.	+		Unmarked
	My mom is like an angel and my dad is like a	+		Unmarked

	superhero.			
	They are everything for me for today, tomorrow, and forever.	+		Unmarked
	I love my parents.	+		Unmarked
Student H	My idol is Habibie.	+	-	Unmarked
	He is a good figure.	+	-	Unmarked
	I want to be the best people in the world like Habibie.	+	-	Unmarked
	Habibie could give mirracle to Indonesia.	+	-	Unmarked
	Indonesia must be proud of Habibie.	+	-	Unmarked
Student I	My classmate is Cristine Novita.	+	-	Unmarked
	Christine Novita is a good friend.	+	-	Unmarked
	She is very beautiful.	+	-	Unmarked
	She is my best friend.	+	-	Unmarked
	She will always be my best friend.	+	-	Unmarked
Student J	I live in Belitung island.	+	-	Unmarked
	It is a very beautiful island.	+	-	Unmarked
	Belitung island has a unique characteristics.	+	-	Unmarked
	Many tourists come to Belitung island.	+	-	Unmarked

Discussion

Results of Theme-Rheme Implementation

The implementation of Theme-Rheme analysis in a senior high school in Pringsewu revealed significant improvements in students' writing skills over six observed sessions. Initially, students were introduced to Theme-Rheme analysis, a concept that (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) emphasize as crucial for improving textual coherence. This findings supported by Wang (2007) Using a university student's work as an example, the study shows how this method may be used to highlight how the student's textual cohesiveness might be enhanced. In the similar result from Saeed et al., (2021) that using the thematic progression approach to teach coherence and cohesiveness assisted the students to raise the quality of their essays. On the other hand, genre pedagogy had a significant effect on students' organization of argumentative writing. This research found genre pedagogy as a useful instructional technique, which can improve teaching and learning writing skills at the tertiary level in Pakistan (Gill & Janjua, 2020; Surbakti, 2020).

On the other side, the process of learning Theme-Rheme analysis posed several challenges for students. Initially, students struggled with the abstract nature of Theme-Rheme concepts, particularly distinguishing between theme and rheme. This difficulty in comprehension often led to confusion and frustration among students. For instance, as noted by Brown and Wang (2021), the abstract nature of Theme-Rheme can be a significant hurdle for students, especially those with limited prior exposure to linguistic analysis .

Students also found it challenging to integrate Theme-Rheme analysis into their writing. Despite understanding the theoretical aspects, applying these concepts practically to enhance thematic coherence and rhetorical structure in their compositions was difficult. This aligns with findings by Smith and Johnson (2021), who observed that while students could identify themes and rhemes in isolation, integrating them into cohesive writing required more practice and guidance .

Language barriers and gaps in prior knowledge further compounded these challenges. Students with limited exposure to academic language or complex grammatical concepts found it particularly hard to grasp the nuances of Theme-Rheme analysis. According to Martinez et al. (2023), students with a solid foundation in linguistic principles were better

able to apply Theme-Rheme concepts effectively, highlighting the importance of foundational knowledge in overcoming these obstacles .

Despite the evident benefits, students encountered several difficulties during the learning process of Theme-Rheme analysis. In the initial stages of instruction, students grappled with understanding the abstract nature of Theme-Rheme concepts, particularly the distinction between theme and rheme. Many students struggled to internalize these concepts and apply them effectively in their writing, leading to feelings of confusion and frustration.

Furthermore, students faced challenges in integrating Theme-Rheme analysis into their writing process. While they may have understood the theoretical aspects of Theme-Rheme analysis, translating these concepts into practical writing strategies proved challenging. Students often struggled to maintain thematic coherence and rhetorical structure throughout their compositions, resulting in inconsistencies and disjointedness in their writing.

Language barriers and prior knowledge gaps also posed significant obstacles for students learning Theme-Rheme analysis. For students with limited exposure to academic language or complex grammatical concepts, understanding the nuances of thematic progression proved particularly challenging. Similarly, students with limited prior knowledge of linguistic analysis struggled to apply Theme-Rheme concepts effectively in their writing, hindering their overall comprehension and application of the material.

Research Discussion: Benefits of Learning Theme-Rheme

Despite these challenges, the benefits of learning Theme-Rheme analysis were substantial. Students developed a deeper understanding of textual structure and rhetorical strategies through guided instruction and practice. They learned to recognize the thematic elements that underpin effective communication, which in turn improved their coherence and persuasiveness in writing. Li and Jones (2020) found that students who received Theme-Rheme instruction showed marked improvements in their ability to organize their ideas logically and cohesively .

Theme-Rheme analysis also fostered critical thinking skills. By analyzing and evaluating the structure and content of texts, students became more discerning readers and writers. This critical engagement with texts enabled them to produce more sophisticated compositions. As noted by Smith et al. (2021), this analytical approach helps students to not only improve their writing but also enhances their overall comprehension and engagement with complex texts .

Moreover, Theme-Rheme analysis promoted metacognitive awareness among students. Reflecting on their writing process and making intentional choices to enhance clarity and coherence, students became more self-directed learners. Through self-assessment and peer feedback, they refined their writing skills and developed a greater sense of ownership over their compositions. This is supported by findings from Wang and Li (2021), who reported that students who engaged in Theme-Rheme analysis demonstrated increased autonomy and metacognitive skills in their writing processes .

In summary, while learning Theme-Rheme analysis initially presented difficulties, the long-term benefits outweighed these challenges. By integrating Theme-Rheme analysis into writing instruction, educators can empower students to become more effective communicators and analytical thinkers. This instructional approach prepares students for success in both academic and professional contexts, as evidenced by numerous studies

highlighting the transformative potential of Theme-Rheme analysis in enhancing writing proficiency and critical thinking skills .

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of Theme-Rheme analysis in writing instruction at a senior high school in Pringsewu has demonstrated significant benefits for students' writing skills. Specifically, students showed marked improvements in coherence, organization, and the logical progression of ideas in their writing. These improvements are attributed to the structured approach of Theme-Rheme analysis, which helps students understand and apply textual coherence principles effectively.

Students' enhanced writing skills were evident through their ability to create more cohesive and structured compositions, as supported by systematic classroom observations and reflective feedback from both students and teachers. Moreover, the process fostered critical thinking and metacognitive awareness, allowing students to analyze and improve their writing autonomously. Teachers also observed increased student engagement and motivation, which further contributed to the positive outcomes.

The promise of Theme-Rheme analysis lies in its ability to provide students with a robust framework for organizing their thoughts and presenting their ideas clearly and logically. This methodological approach not only improves writing skills but also equips students with essential tools for academic and professional success. By integrating Theme-Rheme analysis into writing instruction, educators can cultivate students' analytical and communicative abilities, thereby enhancing their overall literacy development.

Further research in this area is warranted to explore additional applications and long-term effects of Theme-Rheme analysis in diverse educational contexts. The findings of this study underscore the potential of Theme-Rheme analysis as a transformative tool in writing pedagogy, with significant implications for enhancing literacy and communication skills among students.

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