Recount Text in EFL Vocational School: A Thematic Structure Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Recount text is a staple material taught in the first year of Indonesian secondary schools yet research on this dominant ELT unit is limited despite the common observation of many students struggling to produce a well-written recount text. To address this research gap and problem, this study conducted a textual meaning analysis in the texts written by tenth-grade Vocational School. This study aimed to figure out the types of themes shown in 14 recount texts written by 14 students from two different vocational schools with other majors. The approach used the content analysis method and belonged to descriptive qualitative research. Content analysis is used as the technique to analyse the data considering Eggins' 1994 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory. The analysis revealed that most of the themes used are Unmarked Topical Themes. Every student has a different way of delivering messages in the Recount text that they made. Moreover, the researchers found Marked Topical Theme, Mood Adjunct Interpersonal Theme, Conjunction Textual Theme, Conjunctive Textual Theme, Continuative Textual Theme, and Multiple Theme. The result of the present study is hoped to provide insights, gained from observing patterns of Theme and Rheme relations, for secondary English teachers' endeavours to help improve students' cohesion.

1. Introduction

Writing skill embraces all knowledge and abilities related to addressing the ideas through the written word. As a language student, to convey ideas in the form of writing, usually using a text. Delivering the ideas through reports is essential to students in the vocational school before entering any industry. Writing skills is challenging for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students because of the complication in the writing practice (Meiarista & Widhiyanto, 2020). Students need to regard any aspects to write a good composition. Many students from the tenth-grade Vocational School in Indonesia still have a problem achieving the minimum score because of their limited knowledge regarding the target language, English, especially in writing skills (Vernanda, Listia, & Febrianti, 2020). Many students deal with several difficulties in the beginning. To write a text, for example, the students face the problem of considering what context they will write first (Qomariah, 2021).

Moreover, the problem is the word choice they should use in their work because they cannot get the topic immediately. Also, there are a lot of errors or mistakes in their writing. The other problem in starting an essay is to correspond every clause into a cohesive and coherent text (Meiarista & Widhiyanto, 2020). Furthermore, the students face the problem of writing recount text in terms of content, organization, grammar, mechanic, and generic structure in orientation and re-orientation (Husna & Multazim, 2019). It

occurs because the students do not understand the Theme and Rheme enough. Thus, it becomes the teacher's job to help their students to make a good text so they can communicate their idea effectively. Furthermore, the students should exercise regularly in making a text to produce a good reader.

English at every level of education is very different. English in Vocational School belongs to English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which represents an approach to language teaching that combines the necessary of the learners (Muliyah & Aminatun, 2020). The level of Vocational is dissimilar from occupational it means that the teachers and the students should learn not only certain disciplinary but also specialist knowledge. Vocational students in tenth grade expect English material to support their future work, as highly recommended in the era of global competition (Asrifan et al., 2020). Before studying English, according to a specialist, it is essential to learn basic skills. The English subject syllabus in Indonesia was designed to develop English competency in written and spoken language through four language skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach is expanded by M.A.K. Halliday and his followers throughout the 1960s in the United Kingdom and later in Australia (O'Donnell in Almurashi, 2016). This approach influenced by sociologists such as Malinowski and Bernstein. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is an extension of

the work in systemics by Halliday's mentor, J.R. Firth. Furthermore, this approach refers to meaning-based theory of language that sees language as the realization of meaning in context (de Oliveira & Smith, 2019). Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has been used as a framework for implementing pedagogy in the classroom, especially in writing classroom. In the field of education, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) strongly influences the conception of language as social semiotic, in the analysis of texts in context, and in the understanding of language learning as a social process of learning (Thompson et al., 2019).

Formerly, the English curriculum in Indonesia was supported by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Genre Based Approach (GBA) to reinforce the correlation between the language and the function in social arrangement (Sayukti & Kurniawan, 2018). Genre-based approaches have a social and linguistic value in that the students learn the language and social context (Fatmawati, Irdiansyah & Sofyan, 2022). SFL strongly influences the field of education in the conception of language as social semiotic, in the analysis of texts in context, and in the understanding of language learning as a social process of learning (Thompson et al., 2019). The theory of SFL focuses on the language has three meanings of metafunctions: interpersonal meaning, ideational or experiential meaning, and textual meaning (Cakrawati, 2018).

One of the writing texts that vocational students must produce is recount text, which is a variety of text that retells an event or writer's impression in the past. Recount text is one of the more accessible types of text that students can make. This is one of the reasons why the recount text is learned for students in both junior and senior high school levels of education. There are still many students who cannot make the text well. The researcher wants to analyse the recount text of vocational students by using textual meaning. This meaning deals with the context of the text and how language is connected and coherent. Using textual meaning can help the teacher analyse the competence of vocational students in making recount text and know how the meaning is delivered based on the text.

Considering the explanation above, the thematic structure in paragraph is necessary for the success of students' writing recount text. As far as the researchers could found, only a few studies were conducted on the thematic structure analysis in students' writing recount text. Qomariah (2021) found that from 35 students' recount text in one of senior high school the most theme frequently used was the topical theme, and the often element of topical theme was the nominal group, and the student starts their recount text with a word or phrase as a subject and adjunct. Another study, Meiarista & Widhiyanto (2020), reported that unmarked topical theme was frequently use in

university students' recount text. Triggered by the scarcity of academic research onto this staple unit of English language teaching material, the researchers found it interesting to explore the theme and rheme in recount texts of vocational students. This research aims to observe patterns of theme and rheme in students' writing recount text to help improve cohesion in the text. After analysing the theme and rheme, we know the form of the organization of the clause as a message. In addition, we know how the students deliver the message in a text. Therefore, in realizing the need for further research on vocational students' recount text analysis of thematic structure. Accordingly, the research question is formulated below:

1. What is the theme realized in the recount text of tenth-grade vocational school?
2. How does the use of theme in clause of tenth grade vocational students recount text?

2. Literature Review

People use language to communicate each other in everyday life. They convey meaning in communication with spoken or written in the field of grammar and meaning. The study of language is learned as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Thompson et al. (2019) stated that the systemic functional approach looks at how the language purposes of making meaning in the context of the situation. The systemic functional grammar has three kinds of meaning that can be mentioned as metafunctions. Meaning is shown paradigmatically in terms of systems of choice related to what is being talked about, called Ideational, how those interacting relates to one another through what they say is called Interpersonal, and how Ideational and Interpersonal meanings are turned into discourse called Textual.

Textual meaning is the decision of a speaker or writer to produce by mixing ideas and reality that the author hopes to express, along with the relationship that they wish to project and develop (Bartlett & O'Grady, 2017). Textual meaning is conveying the message in a text relevant to context (Sitanggang, 2018). Halliday (1977) in Bartlett & O'Grady (2017) stated that the function of the textual meaning is producing a text difference between language in the abstract in use with other words, through the semantic of textual component that language comes to be relevant. Textual meaning includes factors of coherence and cohesion responsible for producing a linguistic utterance (Pereira, 2022). Hanafiah et al. (2017) pointed out textual meaning is understanding the clause as a message realized through Theme and Rheme. The Theme is the first element of the clause. The rest of the clause in which the Theme is developed is Rheme.

A clause should have two parts based on textual meaning. The first is a Theme, whereas the second is a Rheme. The element that marks the beginning of a clause,

the Theme, is what the clause is about. Following Theme, Rheme elaborates on what Theme is about to say to complete the clause's structure. As a result, the order always expresses the thematic structure of a clause. In particular, the Theme is presented first. People are also used to conversing with others, whether about well-known topics. The speakers and listeners are already familiar with the Theme because it serves as the message's first point. Rheme can communicate new knowledge based on this. Finally, the clause can convey the whole meaning. From this point on, it can be assumed that a clause's thematic structure will help the dialogue move without any problems.

Ideational or Topical Themes are related to students' understanding of background information regarding the topic (Nagao, 2020). The Topical Theme is divided into two types, and they have a Marked Theme and an Unmarked Theme. The Marked Theme is a more noticeable thing. This Theme makes the subject and Theme different. An Unmarked Theme is an element that has usual, ordinary, and neutral meanings. This Theme makes the subject and Theme the same.

Table 1. Example of Marked Theme

Theme	Rheme
On Sunday night,	I went to the hospital with my parents
Last week,	my uncle visited me
Once upon a time,	there lived a rich merchant who had a daughter

Table 2. Example of Unmarked Theme

Theme	Rheme
Rachel	has a good book
Sean	ran around the yard
Queen	has given my neighbor the prize

The Interpersonal Theme is a type of Theme that occurs in clause construction, Modal Adjuncts, Vocative, Finite, or WH-questions (Pasaribu, Sinambela & Manik, 2020). Interpersonal Theme functions as interpersonal elements preceding the Topical Theme (Mustika, Nurdin & Sakina, 2021). Modal Adjunct or Comment Adjuncts consist of the speaker or writer's judgment on attitude to the content of the message. Vocative typically a personal name used to address. Finite is an auxiliary verb in a sentence. In WH-questions, the WH-element is Theme. In addition, in Interpersonal Theme, a Theme shows yes or no in the act called Polarity Adjunct.

Table 3. Example of Modal Adjunct

Theme	Rheme
Probably,	she will pass the exam
Unfortunately,	the popcorn didn't explode
Thankfully,	Goldilocks escaped from three bears

Table 4. Example of Vocatives

Theme	Rheme
Mia,	you must read novel that title is Harry Potter
Solomon,	do you want more soup?

Table 5. Example of Finite

Theme	Rheme
Could	she passes the exam?
Do	you give the blood?
Can	you take my bag for me?

Table 6. Example of WH-element

Theme	Rheme
Did you	sleep on the bed last night?
Where	are you heading to?

Table 7. Example of Polarity Adjunct

Theme	Rheme
Yes,	he is my youngest brother
No,	he is not. He is a teacher

There are three types of Textual Themes: Continuative, Conjunctive Adjunct, Conjunction, and Multiple Theme. The Textual Theme usually shows at the beginning of a clause and precedes the Interpersonal Theme (Mustika, Nurdin & Sakina, 2021). The Continuative theme used in spoken dialogue relates to what a previous speaker said. Moreover, Conjunctive Adjunct is an adverbial group of prepositional phrases that relates the clause to the preceding text by providing a logical link. The conjunction is a word that occurs structurally to another clause. Furthermore, Multiple Themes when in a sentence, there is two or more kind of themes.

Table 8. Example of Continuative

Theme	Rheme
Well,	he did a great job
Oh,	she gives you a cup of tea

Table 9. Example of Conjunctive Adjunct

Theme	Rheme
Nevertheless,	he is still part of the group
Moreover,	the new students also agrees that this regulation should be erased for good

Table 10. Example of Conjunction

Theme	Rheme
So,	We came to the garden
But,	No one was there
Since	You called her

Table 11. Example of Multiple Theme

Theme	Rheme
But Maria, I think he	did not know how to drive
No, well I mean they	are going to be away

This study uses the systemic functional approach Recount text to understand the textual meaning conveyed in the themes and rhemes of the recount text. Recount is a genre text type that refers to experience to inform or amuse the readers. In recount text, students tell some story or matters that have been finished in the past, such as vacation, weekend activities, or previous experiences (Qomariah, 2021). Moreover, the other types of recount text are personal, factual, autobiographical, biographical, historical, and literary (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). The purpose of a personal recount is to give some details of a unique experience. While factual recount report on events not experienced personally by the writer. The autobiographical recount is aimed at recounting someone's life. Differently, a biographical recount is telling another person's life. The other types are historical recounts that explain important events in the society's past and literary recounts that retell a factual event with aesthetic features.

The structure of recount text consists of orientation, series of events, and re-orientation. (Cakrawati, 2018). In the orientation section, the author presents the details about who was involved, where it happened, and when it happened in the story. In this section, the author must introduce the participant that is shown in the story, the time and place of the story to the readers. The following structure is a series of events telling the story's happened. In this part, the author needs to advise the readers about the events that occurred in their past, from the beginning to the last, ordered in a chronological sequence. The last part is re-orientation to conclude the story's result. It generally contains the writer's feelings or opinion about the story.

3. Method

This study uses qualitative research to explore how Vocational Students' writing recount text is analysed by textual meaning through the perspectives of Systemic Functional Linguistics. The object of the study is the students' recount texts, including content analysis. Bengtsson (2016) stated that content analysis is a method for objectively and methodically describing the manifest substance of the communication. Using content analysis, the researchers can analyse the presence of certain words or Themes within some given qualitative data. The content analysis approach was used to analyse the thematic structure. As a result, we can see how the form recounted text made by students and what types of theme showed often. The researchers used the qualitative method in this research because this research should be investigated inductively. In addition, in this recent research, the researcher utilized a qualitative approach that is content analysis because it focuses on describing the data of textual meaning discovered in students' recount writings. Shortly, this research design explained explicitly how the first year of vocational students' competence in building textual meaning in writing recount text.

In this recent study, the researcher will investigate the recount text of an EFL student from the tenth grade of vocational school in Indonesia. For the relevance of the data needed, the researcher collected 14 recount texts written by two different Vocational Students. The text was deliberately chosen from 11 female students and 3 male students. The participants are representative from each major so that valid data is obtained. From the first Vocational School, there were 2 students from major Food and Horticulture Crops Agribusiness, Motorcycle Engineering and Business, Agribusiness Processing and Agricultural Products, and a student from major Computer Network Engineering. Moreover, from the second Vocational School, the researchers collect the 7 recount texts from Modeling Design and Building Information.

4. Results

This section describes the results of the analysis of Vocational students' recount text. The data showed the results of the Theme that ushered in the text. Moreover, the researchers analysed every student's text based on content analysis.

Table 12. Kind of Theme

Kind of Theme	Sum of Analysed Theme	Percentage
Marked Topical	32	16%
Unmarked Topical	93	46%
Comment Adjunct Interpersonal	5	2%
Mood Adjunct Interpersonal	1	1%
Finite Interpersonal	1	1%
Conjuction Textual	25	11%
Conjunctive Textual	1	1%
Continuative Textual	4	2%
Multiple Themes	41	20%

Regarding **Table 12** shows that types of theme which occurs in the students' recount text are Topical theme, Interpersonal Theme, and Textual theme.The Topical (Unmarked and Marked) Theme is dominant in the text. The dominant used of Topical theme interpret that the students are less imaginative in presenting their ideas (Anwar & Amri, 2020). There are 93 Themes (46%) that are the Unmarked Theme. It indicates that most students mention the topic in earlier text using a noun. In addition, the students use complex sentences in their Recount text. This is evidenced by the use of Multiple Themes, around 41 (20%). Besides, the students give a good transition for their writing organization and emphasis a part of the clause. The table shows that 25 Themes (11%) are Conjunction. Furthermore, the students rarely used Interpersonal Themes. It means they are not focusing on the interaction between the speaker, the writer, and the listener or the reader.

The most dominant used of theme in students' recount text is Unmarked theme. The used of Unmarked theme in the students' text indicates that the students need to pay attention to construct grammatically correct clauses in their text (Putri & Rosa, 2020). The Unmarked theme appears when the theme conflates with the mood structure constituent that typically occurs in the first position in the clause of that mood class (Hanafiah, Yusuf & Aswani, 2018). The example of transitivity analysis of Unmarked theme consists of pronoun is explicated the following excerpt.

"I watched tutorial videos and read many art blogs."

Excerpt 1

I	watched	tutorial videos and read many art blogs
Actor	Pr: material	Goal
Topical		
Theme	**Rheme**	

As illustrated in **Excerpt 1**, the word "I" as the theme of the clause. In this clause, the Unmarked theme is the pronoun as the head. In functional grammar theory, the pronoun in the first element in the clause belongs to a nominal group.

"Sewing used clothes and towels very fun."

Excerpt 2

Sewing	Used	clothes	And	Towels	very fun
Actor	Pr: material	Noun	Adj: conjunction	Noun	Circ
Topical					
Theme	**Rheme**				

Another example of transitivity analysis of Unmarked theme consists of common noun is shown in **Excerpt 2**. The word "Sewing" in the second clause as the theme of the clause. The second clause used common noun as a head to be theme. The theme has a function of being a subject in the clause.

Furthermore, the second Topical theme that appeared in the students' recount text is Marked theme. This theme is unusual and uncommon expected to find as the theme to catch attention (Anggraeni & Mahdi, 2020). The example of transitivity analysis of Marked theme consists of adverb is explicated in **Excerpt 3** as follows:

"There I and several other classes also participated in the competition."

Excerpt 3

There	I and several other classes	also participated	in the competition
Adverb	Actor (noun)	Pr: material	Goal
Topical	Topical		
Theme		**Rheme**	

As illustrated in **Excerpt 3**, it can be seen that the clause is categorised as Marked theme because it is composed of an adverb. The word "There" in the first clause is the adverb that function as the adjunct in the clause.

5. Discussion

Identifying textual meaning is essential to clearly distinguish between the Theme and Rheme (Yunita, 2018). Theme explains what the writer wants taking about, and rheme tells what the writer was saying (Ananda, Ginting & Hasibuan, 2019). The theme realized in the students' recount text is the unmarked theme. In other words, an unmarked topical theme appears when the theme conflates with the mood structure constituent that typically occurs in the first position in the clause of that mood class (Hanafiah, Yusuf & Aswani, 2018). Mostly, the theme that appears is nominal. It means that when the elements of Transitivity that is either participant, circumstance, or process can be assigned occur in the first position in the clause (Febriyana, et al., 2018). In that clause, the theme also has a function of being subject. The theme is not always the subject of a sentence but the left-most important constituent of the sentence (Sayukti & Kurniawan, 2018). The second Topical theme that finds was the marked theme. The students explain the chronological time of their story or activities using the adverb time. The most common marked theme is the adverbial group, which functions as an adjunct and complement to the clause (Mustika, Nurdin & Sakina, 2021). The theme gives a transition in writing organization. The analysis of markedness becomes essential since it can affect readers' interpretation (Supriani, et al., 2018).

The interpersonal theme in the clause above explained the writer's judgment or attitude to the content of the message. Moreover, interpersonal meaning represents the speaker's meaning potential that takes into account the nature of the relation between the addresser (speaker) and the addressee (listener) (Qomariah, 2021). The interpersonal theme may consist of finite in the form of auxiliary verb, wh-element, vocative, or adjunct, generally in the form of adverb (Mubarak, 2021).

From the clauses above, the textual theme realized is a Conjunction, Continuative and Textual Theme. Continuative is the expression of sound, word, or phrases, creating one meaning and context (Sitanggang, 2018). Using conjunctions is the easy way to link a clause to another element (Meiarista & Widhiyanto, 2020). Their frequent use of the Textual theme indicates the writer's ability to develop the logical relationship between clauses that make their texts more cohesive and coherent (Susilowati, Faridi & Sakhiyya, 2022).

According to the recount text that was analyzed before, the quality of the recount text is medium. Students still make errors in making their recount text. Error plays an essential role in English language learning because it points out that a language learner is not successfully grasping the target language (Mustafa, 2021). Some aspects of errors made by students are generic structures. Many students have a problem with the generic structure of recount text due to online and video learning in the Covid-19 pandemic era (Utami, Hadi & Aswir, 2022). The generic analysis structure of recount text conducted by Maryam, Mustika & Yugafiati (2020) showed that students find a problem organizing the idea at any stage of recount text. The previous research from Sartika, Khairinisaak & Asmara (2022) reported that 15 students (68.18%) were significantly less in the organizational structure of recount text. This problem also appears in the results of Vocational students' recount text.

Furthermore, the recount text is written by Participant 8, Participant 10, and Participant 11, and Participant 13 did not register re-orientation. They focus only on the orientation and events of the story. In the last paragraph, students just ended the story and did not tell their feelings or opinion about their story. The essential elements in writing recount text are orientation and the events (Yulianawati, 2018). Some people said that the part of re-orientation in recount text is optional (Cakrawati, 2018). It would be better if students write recount text in a structured way. After identifying the generic structure of the recount text made by students can increase their vocabulary and knowledge about the place, time, and participant in the recount text (Aiman & Fitrawati, 2019).

The researcher also finds that students have a problem with their vocabulary. The students were not fully aware of grammar and the choice of words. Vocabulary is an essential thing in writing activities. A good writer needs a comprehensive knowledge of vocabulary to increase the clarity and accuracy of his writing (Barus & Panjaitan, 2022). Students need to learn the specific purpose of English to improve their speaking and writing skills, followed by listening, reading, grammar, and vocabulary (Sari & Wirza, 2021). In addition, other aspects also affect the text to be not cohesive. Recount texts made by students were not cohesive, did not follow a particular pattern, and did not have thematic progression (Anggini & Kurniawan, 2020).

Therefore, it becomes a big challenge for teachers to teach writing. In vocational school, the teacher used Genre Based Approach to teach recount text in class. Systemic functional linguistics represents how language works and performs as the expression of meaning involving ideas (Siregar, 2019). Teacher plays an essential role in the success of learning writing in the classroom. The teacher, as the teaching designer in the class, should have enough knowledge of the teaching approach and method to conduct the class, reach the lesson goal, and control students' different characteristics (Fatmawati, Irdiyansyah & Sofyan,

2022). The materials, concepts, and teaching and learning processes must be planned according to the students' level of English mastery (Salam, Putri & Gustiani, 2022). The results of this study can be used as evaluation material for teachers to improve the quality of writing classes in the classroom. The teacher can analyze and evaluate the student's work at the discourse level, beyond the prescriptive instruction on orthography and syntax at the sentence level (Hanh, 2021). Besides the teacher, students also must improve their writing performance by practicing. Little practices to produce a coherent text can start with making coherent sentences, short paragraphs, and a text (Priyatmojo, 2021). In that way, a successful writing class will be created.

6. Conclusion

This study was conducted since the previous research analysed the text of senior high school and university students. The researchers analysed the textual meaning in recount text of the tenth-grade vocational school. It investigates Thematic Structure that is shown in the students' text. The researchers revealed two critical findings related to the Theme and generic structure of recount text, which is that students tend to produce an Unmarked Theme, where they placed the subject, the noun, at the beginning of the clause. Textual Theme is the second highest dominant theme, indicating that the students made sufficient use of complex sentences to tell their stories, and Interpersonal Theme is rarely used for a Recount text. In general, they displayed enough competence in producing written texts, although the researchers have observed instances of misunderstanding in reorientation and the language structure and English-Indonesian translation issues, which can be addressed by the teacher in the future.

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