

# Development of Writing Learning Model Based on Theme-Rheme Theory

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**Abstract**—In the digital era, communication does not only take place verbally, but the more massive use of information technology-based communication tools, the stronger written communication is used. Nowadays learning English, especially in vocational schools, focuses on speaking skills and ignores writing skills. This study aims to develop writing learning model by which the learners may apply easily to apply by in the context of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. By implementing Research and Development model, this study will produce outcomes in the form of complete and integrated writing learning modules for polytechnic students or other vocational education. The urgency of the research is shown by the results of pre research with the questionnaire for English lecturers: strongly agree 60 percent, agree 40 percent, disagree 0 percent, and relating to significance: 70 percent strongly agree, 30 percent agree, 0 percent disagree. Regarding linguistic aspects which are considered the most difficult by students: grammar 30 percent, vocabulary 20 percent, theme development 50 percent. Based on results above, learning model for writing is developed by adopting Theme-Rheme Patterns delivered by Halliday in his Systemic Functional Linguistic Theory. According to this theory, the sentence or clause consists of two parts: the one originally called Theme as the subject being discussed, and followed by rheme as an explanation of the Theme. Having implemented three patterns developed in writing learning models for developing paragraph: Constant Progression, Linear Progression and Derivative Progression, test is done for learners to measure their writing skill on developing idea. The result is 45 percent excellent, 50 percent very good and 5 percent good.

**Keywords**—*theme-rheme, sentence patterns and learning models*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Age 4.0 characterized by the increasingly massive use of digital information technology in all lines of life has an impact on ways of communicating more effectively and efficiently. Digital communication media such as e-mail or social media such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and Line are able to traverse distance in an instant way. Such digital communication is mostly done in writing without having to meet face to face. This type of communication is not only in social life but also in workplace and business. Thus, writing skills are increasingly needed so that written communication can run effectively and efficiently to support one's professionalism [1].

As a vocational higher education institution carrying the mandate to prepare and produce Indonesian human

resources, especially the younger generation, Bali State Polytechnic (PNB) has set its vision "to be a vocational higher education institution producing professional graduates with international competitiveness in 2025". With the quality of graduates who are "internationally competitive" means that, in addition to mastering certain fields of competence (hard skills), English language proficiency becomes a necessity. However, the limitations of English lecture hours as mandated by the curriculum (2 credits per semester) make the focus of learning English more so on speaking skill with the application of a less proportional communicative approach. As a result, other skills such as writing are ignored even though in the world of work later, graduates are not only required to be able to speak but also have ability to write such as making presentations, reports, offers and assessments in writing. Such skill is called linguistic quotient as mention by Gardner [2]. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a practical writing learning model so that learning can be more effective and efficient - in a limited time students can develop optimally their abilities in the field of writing.

This article is a summary of the results of the study aiming to develop a model of writing learning by applying the Theme-Rheme sentence pattern as stated in Systemic Linguistic Theory.

## II. THEORETICAL GROUNDS

Learning model is defined as the overall delivery of teaching material that covers all aspects before, while, and after the teacher's learning and all related facilities that are used directly or indirectly in the teaching and learning process. Thus, the learning model serves as a guide for teachers to carry out the teaching and learning process because it is a unified whole and includes the approaches, methods, and strategies that will be used. Therefore the learning model has the characteristics: (i) has theoretical basics (rationale), (ii) the learning objectives to be achieved, (iii) the teaching strategies used, and (iv) the learning environment needed [3].

Norbert said that some writing learning models that can be developed including: brainstorming models, brain writing models, roundtable models, Brown models, and suggestive-imaginative models [4].

The term Theme was first introduced by Mathesius, a linguist from Prague, who said that a semantic clause consisted of Theme and Rheme. Then Halliday with his Systemic Functional Linguistic theory explains that Subjects in clauses are divided into three forms with respect to their

functions, namely: Psychological Subject regarding the message or what the author will convey through sentences; Grammatical Subject is "something that gets the title" with, thus the relationship of Subject and Predicate in pure sentence is grammatical; The logical subject is the acting party or Actor [5].

As an illustration of the three forms of the subject, here is an example:

TABLE I. TREE FORMS OF THE SUBJECT

This Teapot	My Aunt	Was Given by	The Duke
Psychological Subject (Theme)	Grammatical Subject (Subject)		Logical Subject (Actor)

In relation to its function, then the Psychological Subject is called Themes, Grammatical Subjects as Subjects, and Logical Subjects are called Actors. The theme in the sentence functions as "the point of departure of the message" which is followed by Rheme. Thus, the theme is always placed in front of the arrangement: Theme + Rheme. In relation to its function, then the Psychological Subject is called Themes, Grammatical Subjects as Subjects, and Logical Subjects are called Actors.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies the Research & Development (R&D) method that is oriented towards producing products in the form of modules for Theme-Rheme Theory-based writing learning models, as presented by Sugiyono with 10 steps are. Potential Problem; Data Collection; Product Design; Design Validation; Design Revision; Tryout of Product; Product Revision; Tryout of Usage; Revision; Mass Production [6].

This research took just six steps because the output is not a tangible product such as tool or instrument but module and article. The last step is to try out the module of writing learning model to know whether the learner's writing skill develop after they practiced how to develop paragraph based on theme rheme theory.

### IV. DISCUSSION

This discussion will convey how the sentence patterns of the theme-rheme are applied in writing learning. Thomas (1999) maps thematic developments (progressions) forming three main patterns: constant progression, linear progression, and derived (derived) progression [7], as follows:

A. *Constant Progression:* T1 → R1  
T2 → R2  
T3 → R2

In this type of Constant Progression there are the same Themes even with different words (T1 = T2 = T3). Example:

*Joko Widodo is a simple person. The 7th President of Indonesia likes to go to villages to be integrated with the residents. He also does not use luxurious state facilities. This skinny man from Solo did not hesitate to eat at roadside stalls like ordinary citizens. President Joko*

*Widodo is a leader who deserves to be an example of us all.*

All the themes in the paragraph above point to the same subject, namely President Joko Widodo, T1 = T2 = T3 = T4 = T5 → President Joko Widodo

This Constant Progression pattern was applied in writing learning models with the main activities [8]:

1) In small groups, each student is given a variety of texts (there is one text that has a constant progression pattern), then students are asked to identify Theme-Rheme pattern in the texts, then discuss until finally they find a Constant Progression pattern.

2) Individually students are asked to write a brief description of their idol figures (can be movie stars, politicians, scientists, singers, etc.) using the Constant Progression pattern.

3) Returning to small groups, each student presents a description of the character of his idol, can be accompanied by a brief explanation. Followed by discussion or question and answer in groups.

B. *Linear Progression:* T1 → R1  
R1 (T2) → R2

In this type of Linear Progression, Rheme in the first sentence will be the Theme in the next sentence. Example:

*The Bali State Polytechnic succeeds in graduating middle-level experts who were professionals in their fields. These young people are ready to enter the increasingly challenging world of work. Tight competition in seizing employment opportunities is an unavoidable reality due to free markets, globalization, and especially technological disruption. Much of the work lost is replaced by more efficient and effective robots, machines and programs. To defeat such smart machines, graduates of the Bali State Polytechnic have been provided with education and training in both the hard skills and soft skills aspects.*

Theme- Rheme pattern in the text above, R1 → T2, R2 → T3, R3 → T4, R4 → T5. This Linear Progression Pattern may be applied in writing learning models with the main activities [9],[10]:

1) Group collaboration begins with giving one person a different sentence. Their job is to arrange the sentences into one paragraph with a Linear Progression pattern.

2) The result of the discussion will be presented in plenary together with other groups while explained.

3) Individual assignments, each student composes a paragraph patterned with Linear Progression with the first sentence "Bali State Polytechnic is the largest vocation institution in Bali".

### C. Derivative Progression

In Derivative Progression, Themes are derived from a higher Theme or called Hyper Theme. Example:

*Indonesia is one of the countries with the largest natural resources in the world. The coastline of the Indonesian archipelago is number two of the longest in the world, 99,093 km, making it an abundant source of animal protein (fish). The area of oil palm plantations in Indonesia is 14.03 million hectares. Indonesia's coal production is 557 million tons in 2018.*

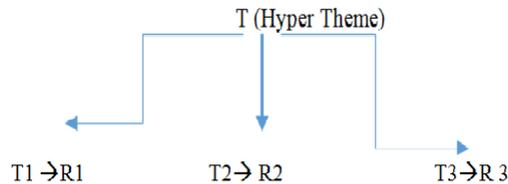


Fig. 1. Derivative progression.

Indonesia is the Highest Theme (Hyper Theme) which lowers themes: coastline length, palm oil area, and coal production. This derivation pattern can be applied in the writing learning model with the following main activities [11]:

- 1) *Brainstorming*: each student is asked to choose the theme of the writing they are interested most by giving reasons and explanations (the theme must be actual, being discussed by the public, and having benefits for the readers).
- 2) These themes are conveyed in group discussions until they agree to choose only one theme to be written.
- 3) Each student composes a paragraph with an agreed theme in the form of a Derivative Progression pattern.
- 4) Every student reads his writing in front of the class while the lecturer can give comments, input or correction.

### V. CONCLUSION

After the module is tested on students, then an evaluation (test) is carried out by giving writing assignments to the students in the form of short articles (one page). The evaluation results show improvements in relation to the students' writing ability, especially the ability to develop themes through the compilation of sentence patterns in each paragraph into one coherent and comprehensive text unit. The result is 45% excellent, 50% very good and 5% good. Thus, it can be concluded that implementation of writing learning may improve the writing skill.

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