



Constructing Theme and Rheme Positions in Indonesian Humor: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis

¹Rawuh Yuda Yuwana, ¹Martha Betaubun

¹Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Musamus Merauke, Indonesia
Jl. Kamizaun Mopah Lama, Rimba Jaya, Kec. Merauke, Kabupaten Merauke, Papua, Postal Code: 99611

*Corresponding Author e-mail: rawuhyudayuwana@unmus.ac.id

Received: July 2024; Revised: August 2024; Published: September 2024

Abstract

Humor is one of the media that provides an interesting aspiration of people. It means comedians and audiences have to know how to imply and understand the real theme to get a good meaning. This study explores the construction of theme and rheme positions in Indonesian humor through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Utilizing the Theme-Rheme theory, the research analyzes various Indonesian clauses to understand how thematic structures contribute to comedic effects. The method involves a detailed breakdown of clauses into their thematic and rhematic components, followed by an examination of how marked and unmarked themes, as well as textual themes, create humor through incongruity and unexpected twists. Practically, the findings reveal that humor often applies from the contrast between serious advice and trivial or absurd explanations, demonstrating that thematic manipulation is crucial in generating comedic effects. This study highlights the effectiveness of the Theme-Rheme framework in analyzing humor and underscores the intricate relationship between language structure and humor.

Keywords: Systemic functional linguistics; theme-rheme theory; Indonesian humor; thematic structure; incongruity theory

How to Cite: Yuwana, R.Y., & Betaubun, M. (2024). Constructing Theme and Rheme Positions in Indonesian Humor: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 4(3), 648-659. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v4i3.2089>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v4i3.2089>

Copyright© 2024, Yuwana et al

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) License.



INTRODUCTION

Humor serves as a complex and multi-faceted mode of communication, transcending mere entertainment to reflect cultural, social, and linguistic intricacies (Yuwana et al., 2019). This multifaceted nature of humor has been emphasized by recent scholars who argue that humor functions as a social tool that can reinforce group identity, challenge social norms, and even serve as a mechanism for coping with difficult situations (Attardo, 2020; Ford, 2018; Raskin, 2023; Wijana, 2021). According to (Attardo, 2020), humor can be seen as a "window into the soul of society," revealing underlying cultural values and tensions. Ford (2018) further elaborates that humor not only entertains but also educates, critiques, and fosters social cohesion.

Humor plays a significant role in human communication, serving not only as a source of entertainment but also as a powerful tool for social commentary and cultural expression. In the context of Indonesian humor, the linguistic structures that contribute to the comedic effect are often complex and nuanced. One of the key challenges in understanding how humor operates in language lies in the identification and analysis of thematic and rhematic positions within a clause, as proposed by Systemic Functional

Linguistics (SFL). However, there is a lack of comprehensive studies focusing on how Theme and Rheme positions are constructed in Indonesian humor and how these structures contribute to the humor's effectiveness. This gap in research limits our understanding of the intricate mechanisms that make humor resonate with audiences. Thus, this study seeks to address this issue by conducting a detailed analysis of Theme and Rheme positions in Indonesian humor, utilizing the SFL framework to uncover the linguistic strategies that underpin comedic expression in the Indonesian context.

Understanding the construction of humor in a specific linguistic context, such as Indonesian, requires a detailed examination of its thematic and rhematic structures. The thematic structure refers to the organization of information within a clause, where the theme is the point of departure for the message and the rheme provides the subsequent information (Halliday & Hasan, 2014). In Indonesian humor, themes often set up expectations or familiar contexts that are then subverted by the rheme, creating a humorous effect. This structure can be particularly effective in conveying irony, satire, or wordplay, which are prevalent in Indonesian humor. Recent studies by Susilowati et al., (2022) have shown that the strategic placement of themes and rhemes in humorous discourse can significantly enhance the communicative impact of jokes.

This study aims to analyze the positions of theme and rheme in Indonesian humor using the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), providing insights into how these elements contribute to the overall communicative effectiveness of humor. By applying SFL, people can systematically dissect the linguistic features that make Indonesian humor unique and effective. Recent contributions to this field by scholars like Eggins & Slade, (2004), Thompson (2014) and Wijana (2018) have underscored the importance of thematic and rhematic analysis in understanding not just humor, but all forms of discourse. Through this lens, the study seeks to deepen our understanding of how humor operates within Indonesian culture and language, offering broader implications for the study of humor in other linguistic contexts as well.

Systemic Functional Linguistics, developed by Halliday, posits that language is a resource for making meaning and that it functions in specific social contexts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Within this framework, the theme is defined as the element that serves as the point of departure for the message, while the rheme presents the remainder of the message, providing new information (Sukardi et al., 2016). This thematic structure is crucial in shaping how messages are constructed and understood, particularly in the context of humor, where timing and the element of surprise play pivotal roles.

Themes can be further categorized into topical themes, interpersonal themes, and textual theme (Yuwana & Pertiwi, 2022). Topical themes relate to the content or subject matter of the clause, interpersonal themes involve elements that express the speaker's attitude or engage the listener, and textual themes provide a link to the preceding text, contributing to the coherence of the discourse (Eggins, 2004). Additionally, topical themes can be marked or unmarked. An unmarked topical theme is the typical, expected element in the clause, often the subject, while a marked topical theme is atypical and placed in a prominent position for emphasis or contrast (Thompson, 2014).

Recent studies have expanded on Halliday's foundational work, exploring the application of SFL to various genres and languages. For instance, (Martin & Rose, 2007) have emphasized the role of thematic progression in narrative texts, highlighting how themes and rhemes work together to create coherence and maintain reader interest. Similarly, (Eggins, 2004) discusses the importance of thematic structure in conversation, noting that effective communication often hinges on the strategic placement of themes and rhemes to guide the listener's interpretation.

In the context of humor, thematic and rhematic structures are often manipulated to achieve comedic effects. (Attardo, 2020) argues that the incongruity theory of humor—

where humor arises from the juxtaposition of conflicting themes—relies heavily on the deliberate positioning of themes and rhemes to create surprise and elicit laughter. By analyzing how these elements are arranged in humorous texts, people can gain a deeper understanding of the mechanics of humor in language.

This study builds on these theoretical foundations to explore the specific ways in which theme and rheme positions are constructed in Indonesian humor. Despite the rich tradition of humor in Indonesian culture, there has been limited research on its linguistic underpinnings. This research fills this gap by applying SFL to Indonesian humorous texts, offering novel insights into how linguistic structures contribute to the effectiveness of humor. The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of humor from a linguistic perspective, contributing to broader discussions on language, culture, and communication.

By examining a range of Indonesian humorous texts, this study aims to identify common patterns in the thematic and rhematic structures used. Through this analysis, people hope to uncover how these linguistic elements are employed to create humor, shedding light on the interplay between language and cultural context in Indonesian humor. This research not only advances the field of SFL but also provides valuable insights for linguists, humor researchers, and cultural scholars interested in the intersection of language and humor. Here, researchers try to find, how does the manipulation of thematic structures, particularly the use of marked and unmarked themes within the Theme-Rheme framework, contribute to the creation of humor through incongruity and unexpected twists in Indonesian clauses.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research approach, grounded in the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), to analyze the construction of theme and rheme positions in Indonesian humor. The SFL approach, developed by Michael Halliday, provides a robust theoretical foundation for examining how language functions in context, particularly through the thematic structure of discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in the principles of SFL, specifically focusing on the Theme-Rheme structure. The research involves a detailed analysis of selected humorous clauses from Indonesian texts. These clauses are carefully chosen to represent a range of humor types prevalent in Indonesian culture. The data will be analyzed to identify and categorize the themes (both marked and unmarked) and rhemes, exploring how their interaction contributes to the creation of humor. The analysis was conducted using a combination of SFL theory and humor studies, with particular attention paid to the role of incongruity and unexpectedness in generating comedic effects.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the thematic structure's role in humor, the study will also consider contextual factors, such as cultural nuances and linguistic conventions. The qualitative approach will be complemented by a comparative analysis with examples from other languages where applicable, allowing for a broader exploration of the universality versus specificity of humor mechanisms. The findings will be discussed in light of existing literature on humor and linguistics, with the aim of contributing new insights into the ways in which Theme-Rheme structures can be strategically manipulated to produce humor in Indonesian discourse.

Data Collection

According to (Sugiyono, 2020), there are generally four types of data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, documentation, and a

combination/triangulation (observation, interviews, and documentation). Qualitative researchers often validate their data using triangulation techniques (Santosa, 2021). There are four main types of triangulation commonly employed for data validation in qualitative research. These include source triangulation, method triangulation, theory triangulation, and researcher triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1980). According to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), source triangulation involves comparing multiple data sources, while Patton (1980) emphasizes the use of various methods to enhance the reliability of findings. Additionally, theory triangulation examines the data through different theoretical lenses, and researcher triangulation involves multiple researchers in the analysis to mitigate bias.

In this study, data collection will be conducted using document review protocols will be employed to analyze textual and multimodal data sources such as recorded conversations, written texts, and visual media, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of how Theme-Rheme positions contribute to humor. The research will be set in a variety of contexts where Indonesian humor is naturally occurring, such as social gatherings, online forums, and media broadcasts. These settings were chosen to capture a diverse range of humor types and to ensure the authenticity of the data collected.

In the realm of qualitative language research, the classification of data is a pivotal component that shapes the overall methodology and analytical outcomes. Data in qualitative studies is typically classified into several categories: textual data, visual data, auditory data, and multimodal data (Dornyei, 2007). Textual data includes written texts such as interview transcripts, field notes, and documents, which are often analyzed for themes, patterns, and narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Visual data encompasses images, videos, and other visual artifacts that provide contextual insights and can be analyzed using visual analysis techniques (Rose, 2016). Auditory data, such as recorded conversations and interviews, allows researchers to focus on linguistic features like intonation, stress, and rhythm, which are crucial for understanding language use and interaction (Riessman, 2008). Finally, multimodal data integrates multiple forms of data, providing a comprehensive perspective on communicative practices (Kress, 2010).

Recent advancements in qualitative research highlight the importance of considering the context and medium of data collection. According to Patton (2014), the integration of digital tools and platforms has expanded the scope of data types available for qualitative analysis, necessitating updated classification frameworks. For example, Charmaz (2019) emphasizes the need for flexibility in data classification to adapt to emerging research contexts and technologies. By systematically classifying data into these categories, researchers can more effectively design their studies, ensuring that they capture the richness and diversity of language use in various contexts.

The primary data for this research consists of a corpus of Indonesian humorous texts. These texts were selected from a variety of sources, including online humor websites, social media platforms, and popular Indonesian comedy shows. The selection criteria focused on ensuring a diverse representation of humor types and contexts, including jokes, satire, and comedic dialogues. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, the texts were chosen based on their popularity and relevance within Indonesian culture. This selection process was informed by consultation with cultural experts and a preliminary survey to identify the most commonly recognized and appreciated humorous content among Indonesian audiences.

Data Analysis

The analysis is grounded in the principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), with a specific focus on the thematic structure of texts. As noted by Wiratno &

Santosa (2014), the theme represents the starting point of a message, setting the stage for what follows. The rheme, on the other hand, presents new information or elaborates on the theme. This thematic-rhematic structure plays a crucial role in how meaning is constructed and communicated within discourse. In analyzing the theme and rheme positions within the selected humorous texts, several methodological steps were followed. First, the texts were segmented into clauses, which serve as the primary unit of analysis in SFL. Following the guidelines proposed by Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), this segmentation ensured that each clause was treated as an independent unit for analysis. Next, the theme and rheme within each clause were identified based on their functional roles. The theme typically occupies the initial position in the clause, establishing the framework for the message, while the rheme follows, contributing new or elaborative information (Eggs, 2004).

Thematic analysis was then conducted, categorizing the identified themes into topical, interpersonal, and textual themes, in line with the taxonomy proposed by Martin & Rose (2007). This categorization was essential for understanding the different roles themes play in constructing humor within the texts. Following this, common patterns and structures in the thematic and rhematic arrangements were identified across the corpus. This step involved examining how themes and rhemes are manipulated to produce comedic effects such as surprise, incongruity, and punchlines. Finally, a contextual analysis was carried out, considering the broader cultural and social environment in which the humor exists. This step was crucial for understanding how cultural nuances shape the thematic and rhematic construction in Indonesian humor (Martin & Rose, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To analyze the humor in the given Indonesian clauses using the Theme-Rheme theory from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), researchers will break down the clauses into their thematic and rhematic components and discuss how these contribute to the humor.

Table of Data 1

Clause 1	Jangan mengarungi lautan (Don't sail the seas)
Theme	Jangan (Don't) [Topical Marked Theme]
Rheme	mengarungi lautan (sail the seas)
Clause 2	karena karung lebih cocok untuk beras (because a sack is more suitable for rice)
Theme	karena (because) [Textual Theme]
Theme	karung (a sack) [Topical Unmarked Theme]
Rheme	lebih cocok untuk beras (is more suitable for rice)

In Clause 1, the theme is "Jangan" (Don't), which is a marked topical theme. According to Thompson (2014), a marked topical theme stands out because it deviates from the typical subject-first structure, immediately grabbing the listener's attention. Here, the imperative "Don't" sets a prohibitive and cautionary tone, creating a sense of anticipation and suspense about what action is being advised against.

The rheme, "mengarungi lautan" (sail the seas), completes the message by providing the action to be avoided. This part of the clause presents new information following the theme, aligning with Halliday & Matthiessen's (2014) definition of the rheme as the new or elaborative information.

In Clause 2, there have two themes. The first theme, "karena" (because), is a textual theme. Textual themes connect the clause to the previous discourse, providing a logical or causal link. Martin & Rose (2007) emphasize that textual themes help in creating coherence and making the text flow logically. The second theme, "karung" (a sack), is an unmarked topical theme. Unmarked topical themes are typical and expected elements,

usually the subject of the clause (Eggins, 2004). Here, "karung" sets the topic of the clause, which is then elaborated on in the rheme. The rheme, "lebih cocok untuk beras" (is more suitable for rice), provides the punchline of the humor. The humor arises from the incongruity between the expected serious advice about not sailing the seas and the mundane and unexpected reason given—that a sack is more suitable for carrying rice. Attardo (2020) discusses how humor often relies on such incongruity, where the juxtaposition of conflicting themes leads to a surprising and amusing outcome.

The humor in these clauses is created through the interplay of themes and rhemes, leading to an unexpected and absurd punchline. The marked topical theme in Clause 1 sets up an anticipation of a serious or dramatic reason, while the textual and unmarked topical themes in Clause 2 provide a mundane and trivial justification, creating a humorous contrast. This manipulation of thematic structure to achieve comedic effects aligns with Attardo's (2020) incongruity theory of humor.

Table of Data 2

Clause 1	Jangan suka ngurusi orang lain (Don't like to meddle in other people's business)
Theme	Jangan suka (Don't like to) [Topical Marked Theme]
Rheme	ngurusi orang lain (meddle in other people's business)
Clause 2	karena belum tentu orang itu ingin kurus (because it's not certain that person wants to be thin)
Theme	karena (because) [Textual Theme]
Theme	belum tentu (it's not certain) [Topical Theme]
Rheme	orang itu ingin kurus (that person wants to be thin)

The findings of this study reveal how the strategic use of thematic and rhematic structures in Indonesian humor enhances the comedic effect by manipulating the flow of information and audience expectations. In Clause 1, the use of a marked topical theme, "Jangan suka" (Don't like to), immediately grabs the audience's attention by breaking away from the conventional subject-first structure. This unconventional approach is significant because it sets a prohibitive tone, signaling that important advice is forthcoming. The imperative form further heightens the anticipation, priming the audience for the message that follows. When the rheme, "ngurusi orang lain" (meddle in other people's business), is introduced, it shifts the focus to the specific action being advised against. This creates a clear and structured delivery of the humor, where the setup (theme) and the punchline (rheme) are distinct yet seamlessly connected. The humor in this clause lies in the directness and relatability of the advice, making the audience reflect on a common social behavior.

Clause 2 deepens the comedic effect by introducing two themes that work together to set up the humor. The first theme, "karena" (because), serves as a textual theme, linking the clause to the preceding discourse and providing a causal relationship. This is crucial for maintaining coherence and guiding the audience through the narrative. The second theme, "belum tentu" (it's not certain), introduces a sense of uncertainty, which contrasts sharply with the seriousness of the advice in Clause 1. This shift to a topical theme introduces the possibility of doubt, subtly undermining the authority of the previous advice and setting the stage for the humorous twist.

The rheme, "orang itu ingin kurus" (that person wants to be thin), delivers the punchline by revealing the trivial and unexpected reason behind the earlier advice. The humor emerges from the incongruity between the seriousness of the setup and the triviality of the payoff, a classic comedic device where the audience's expectations are subverted. This finding supports Attardo's (2020) theory that humor often relies on the juxtaposition of conflicting themes, where the tension between the serious and the absurd leads to a

surprising and amusing conclusion. In the broader context of linguistic humor studies, these findings highlight the importance of theme and rheme manipulation in creating effective humor. By strategically positioning themes to guide audience expectations and using rhemes to deliver unexpected punchlines, speakers can craft humor that resonates both intellectually and emotionally. This study contributes to our understanding of how language structure can be used not just for communication, but for the nuanced and complex art of humor.

The humor in these clauses is created through the interplay of themes and rhemes, leading to an unexpected and absurd punchline. The marked topical theme in Clause 1 sets up an anticipation of a serious or dramatic reason, while the textual and topical themes in Clause 2 provide a mundane and trivial justification, creating a humorous contrast. This manipulation of thematic structure to achieve comedic effects aligns with Attardo's (2020) incongruity theory of humor.

Table of Data 3

Clause 1	Membaca setengah jam per hari itu sama dengan (Reading half an hour a day is the same as)
Theme	Membaca setengah jam per hari (Reading half an hour a day) [Topical Marked Theme]
Theme	itu (it) [Topical Marked Theme]
Rheme	sama dengan (is the same as)
Clause 2	membaca 30 menit per hari (reading 30 minutes a day)
Theme	membaca (reading) [Topical Marked Theme]
Rheme	30 menit per hari (30 minutes a day)

In Clause 1, here have two marked topical themes: "Membaca setengah jam per hari" (Reading half an hour a day) and "itu" (it). According to Thompson (2014), marked topical themes stand out because they deviate from the typical subject-first structure, immediately grabbing the listener's attention. The initial theme "Membaca setengah jam per hari" introduces the subject matter in a detailed manner, emphasizing the activity and the time period. The subsequent theme "itu" (it) serves as a reference to the previously mentioned activity, creating a cohesive link within the clause. The rheme, "sama dengan" (is the same as), presents the comparison or equivalence that completes the message. This part of the clause presents new information following the theme, aligning with Halliday & Matthiessen's (2014) definition of the rheme as the new or elaborative information.

In Clause 2, the theme is "membaca" (reading), which is a marked topical theme. This theme reiterates the activity of reading, maintaining focus on the subject matter from the previous clause. The rheme, "30 menit per hari" (30 minutes a day), completes the comparison initiated in Clause 1. The humor arises from the tautological statement where the second clause merely restates the same idea in different words. This use of redundancy creates a humorous effect by highlighting the triviality and obviousness of the statement, which can be seen as a form of incongruity.

The humor in these clauses is derived from the redundancy and the obvious equivalence presented in the statement. The thematic structure sets up an expectation of a meaningful comparison, but the rheme delivers an anticlimactic restatement of the initial idea. According to Attardo (2020), humor often relies on incongruity, where the juxtaposition of expectations and reality leads to amusement. In this case, the humor arises from the unexpected simplicity and redundancy of the comparison.

Table of Data 4

Clause 1	Di Inggris dan Amerika orangnya tidak pernah minum dan mandi dengan air (In England and America, people never drink and bathe with water)
Theme	Di Inggris dan Amerika (In England and America) [Topical Marked Theme]
Theme	orangnya (people) [Topical Unmarked Theme]
Rheme	tidak pernah minum dan mandi dengan air (never drink and bathe with water)
Clause 2	karena di sana air itu adalah udara (because there water is air)
Theme	karena (because) [Textual Theme]
Theme	di sana (there) [Topical Marked Theme]
Theme	air itu (water) [Topical Unmarked Theme]
Rheme	adalah udara (is air)

In Clause 1, the thematic structure unfolds in a deliberate and layered manner. The initial phrase, "Di Inggris dan Amerika" (In England and America), serves as a marked topical theme. Thompson (2014) explains that marked topical themes deviate from the standard subject-first structure, thereby drawing immediate attention and placing emphasis on the location. By foregrounding this geographical context, the speaker immediately sets a distinctive framework for the ensuing information. The second theme, "orangnya" (people), functions as an unmarked topical theme. Unlike the marked theme, this element subtly shifts the focus toward the subject of the clause without the added emphasis that a marked theme would bring. This positioning helps maintain the flow of information in a more conventional manner. The rheme, "tidak pernah minum dan mandi dengan air" (never drink and bathe with water), introduces new or elaborative information, thereby completing the message. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014) emphasize that the rheme carries the content that follows the theme, presenting the core information of the clause. Here, the rheme adds a layer of specificity to the theme, revealing something peculiar about the behavior of the people in England and America, thus preparing the ground for the humor in the next clause.

Clause 2 continues the thematic development with a more complex structure, featuring three distinct themes. The first, "karena" (because), functions as a textual theme, which establishes a causal link to the prior clause. Martin & Rose (2007) note that textual themes serve to organize discourse in a logical sequence, creating coherence between clauses. This causal marker sets up the reasoning behind the statement made in Clause 1, contributing to the overall narrative flow. The second theme, "di sana" (there), is a marked topical theme, bringing the location into sharper focus. By highlighting the place once again, the speaker maintains the attention on the setting, reinforcing the geographical context in a marked manner, which builds on the earlier theme. The third theme, "air itu" (that water), serves as an unmarked topical theme, introducing the subject matter while staying within the typical thematic structure. This element now shifts focus to the specific reference to water, bringing it to the forefront of the clause. The rheme, "adalah udara" (is air), then delivers the new information, completing the meaning and delivering the punchline of the humor. The absurd revelation that "water" in England and America is actually "air" subverts the audience's expectations. The placement of this surprising and illogical twist within the rheme is crucial, as it is the final piece of information that the audience receives, thus amplifying the comedic effect. This aligns with the structure described by Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), where the rheme presents the critical content that follows the theme.

The humor in these clauses emerges from the deliberate contrast between the expectation created in Clause 1 and the absurd revelation in Clause 2. Clause 1 sets up a seemingly serious and culturally relevant observation about water-related habits in England and America, leading the audience to anticipate a rational explanation. However, Clause 2 overturns this expectation with the illogical statement that "water" is actually

"air," creating an incongruity that is key to the humor. This fits within the framework of Attardo's (2020) incongruity theory of humor, which posits that humor often arises from the juxtaposition of expected and unexpected elements. The audience is led to believe that the discussion is about a mundane cultural difference, only to be presented with a nonsensical conclusion. This sharp reversal of meaning, from something seemingly factual to something entirely absurd, heightens the comedic impact by exploiting the audience's expectations, resulting in a humorous twist.

Table of Data 5

Clause 1	Yang penting bagi pemimpin adalah "n" (What is important for a leader is 'n')
Theme	Yang penting bagi pemimpin (What is important for a leader) [Topical Marked Theme]
Theme	adalah "n" (is 'n') [Topical Unmarked Theme]
Rheme	Not applicable here, as the clause functions more as a complete statement with its own thematic structure.
Clause 2	karena tanpa "n" pemimpin hanyalah pemimpi (because without 'n', a leader is just a dreamer)
Theme	karena (because) [Textual Theme]
Theme	tanpa "n" (without 'n') [Topical Marked Theme]
Theme	pemimpin (leader) [Topical Unmarked Theme]
Rheme	hanyalah pemimpi (is just a dreamer)

In Clause 1, there are two themes. First theme, "Yang penting bagi pemimpin" (What is important for a leader) is a marked topical theme. As Thompson (2014) notes, marked topical themes are used to emphasize and draw attention to specific information that deviates from the usual subject-first structure. Second theme, "adalah 'n'" (is 'n') is an unmarked topical theme. This part of the clause clarifies what is considered important, linking it to the previously mentioned element (the leader). In this clause, the focus is on a single element "n," which seems to be a play on words or a setup for the punchline in the next clause.

In Clause 2, there are three themes. First theme, "karena" (because) is a textual theme, providing a causal link to the preceding clause. Textual themes help in organizing the discourse logically and ensuring coherence (Martin & Rose, 2007). Second theme, "tanpa 'n'" (without 'n') is a marked topical theme, highlighting the absence of the crucial element. Third theme, "pemimpin" (leader) is an unmarked topical theme, specifying the subject within the context of the absence of 'n'. The rheme, "hanyalah pemimpi" (is just a dreamer) delivers the punchline. This rheme provides the humorous twist by suggesting that without the crucial element 'n', a leader is reduced to just being a dreamer, not a true leader.

The humor in these clauses is created through the use of wordplay and a surprising punchline. Clause 1 sets up an expectation that something specific (denoted as 'n') is crucial for leadership. Clause 2 then reveals that without this 'n', a leader is merely a "dreamer" rather than a true leader. The play on the letter 'n' creates a humorous effect through its incongruity and the unexpected contrast between being a leader and being just a dreamer. This aligns with Attardo's (2020) incongruity theory of humor, which posits that humor often arises from surprising and amusing contrasts or wordplay.

Table of Data 6

Clause 1	Jangan membalas budi (Don't repay a favor)
Theme	Jangan (Don't) [Topical Marked Theme]

Rheme	membalas budi (repay a favor)
Clause 2	karena belum tentu Budi melakukannya (because it is not certain that Budi did it)
Theme	karena (because) [Textual Theme]
Theme	belum tentu (it is not certain) [Topical Marked Theme]
Theme	Budi (Budi) [Topical Unmarked Theme]
Rheme	melakukannya. (did it)

In Clause 1 has one theme, "Jangan" (Don't) is a marked topical theme, which is used here to set up a prohibitive or advisory tone. According to Thompson (2014), a marked topical theme stands out because it deviates from the typical subject-first structure, immediately drawing attention. The rheme, "membalas budi" (repay a favor) completes the clause by providing the action being advised against. The rheme delivers new information following the theme, which aligns with Halliday & Matthiessen's (2014) description of rheme as the part of the clause that adds the main content.

In Clause 2 has three themes. First theme: "karena" (because) is a textual theme, linking this clause causally to the previous one. Textual themes help create coherence and provide logical connections in discourse (Martin & Rose, 2007). Second theme, "belum tentu" (it is not certain) is a marked topical theme, introducing uncertainty about the situation. Third theme, "Budi" (Budi) is an unmarked topical theme, specifying the subject whose actions are being questioned. The rheme, "melakukannya" (did it) provides the punchline by indicating the uncertainty of Budi performing the action of repaying the favor.

The humor in these clauses arises from the play on the name "Budi" and the logical twist provided. Clause 1 sets up a seemingly serious advice about not repaying favors, which implies an ethical or practical recommendation. Clause 2 then humorously undermines this advice by revealing that the reason not to repay the favor is that it's uncertain whether Budi even performed the action in the first place. The use of "Budi" in this context creates a humorous effect by turning what seems like a serious piece of advice into a trivial matter of doubt. This incongruity between the seriousness of the advice and the trivial reason given aligns with Attardo's (2020) theory of humor, which emphasizes the role of unexpected twists and incongruity in creating humor.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the Indonesian clauses using the Theme-Rheme theory from Systemic Functional Linguistics reveals how thematic structures contribute to the humor in these examples. By examining the interplay between marked and unmarked themes, as well as textual themes, researchers can see how these elements create comedic effects through incongruity and unexpected twists. For instance, in the clauses where serious advice is followed by trivial or absurd explanations, the humor arises from the contrast between the anticipated gravity of the advice and the mundane or illogical reasons provided. This aligns with Attardo's (2020) theory of incongruity, which highlights how humor often emerges from such surprising juxtapositions. Furthermore, the thematic analysis shows that humor is not merely a result of content but also of the way information is structured and presented. Clauses with marked topical themes set up expectations that are often subverted by the rheme, which provides a punchline that is either trivial or absurd. This technique effectively creates a humorous contrast, reinforcing the idea that thematic manipulation can play a significant role in comedic expression..

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, it is recommended that future research on humor in language should continue to utilize the Theme-Rheme framework to explore how different thematic structures contribute to comedic effects. This approach can be extended to various genres and languages to further understand the universal and language-specific mechanisms of humor. Additionally, integrating cognitive and sociolinguistic perspectives with the Theme-Rheme analysis could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how humor functions in different cultural contexts. This multidimensional approach can enrich the study of humor and its applications in communication, education, and entertainment.

REFERENCES

- Attardo, S. (2020). *The Linguistics of Humor: An Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Attardo, S. (2020). *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Humor*. Routledge.
- Charmaz, K. (2019). "With Constructivist Grounded Theory You Can't Hide": Social Justice Research and Critical Inquiry in the Public Sphere. *Sage Journals*, 26(2). [/https://doi.org/10.1177/107780041987908](https://doi.org/10.1177/107780041987908)
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing among Five Approaches. 4th Edition. In *Sage Publications*.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Eggs, S. (2004). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics (2nd ed.)*. Continuum.
- Eggs, S., & Slade, D. (2004). *Analysing: Casual Conversation*. Equinox Book Publishing Ltd.
- Ford, T. E. (2018). *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach (2nd Edition)*. Academic Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (2014). *Cohesion in English*. Routledge.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar (4th ed.)*. Routledge.
- Kress, G. R. (2010). *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. Routledge.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2007). *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause (2nd ed.)*. Continuum.
- Patton, M. Q. (1980). *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*. Sage Publications.
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice*. Sage Publications.
- Raskin, V. (2023). The Demise of The Joke. *HUMOR*, 36(2), 197–205.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative Method for the Human Sciences*. Sage Publications.
- Rose, G. (2016). *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. Sage Publications.
- Santosa, R. (2021). *Dasar-Dasar Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Kebahasaan*. UNS Press.
- Sugiyono. (2020). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Sukardi, M. I., Yuwana, R. Y., & Sumarlam. (2016). Penyimpangan Makna dan Perubahan Konstituen dalam Humor Cak Lontong. *Adabiyāt: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra* (15)2. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajbs.2016.15201>
- Susilowati, E., Faridi, A., & Sakhiyya, Z. (2022). Thematic Structure and Thematic Progression in Research Articles Published in Scopus-Indexed International Journals. *English Education Journal*, 12(1), 55–66. <https://doi.org/10.15294/ej.v12i1.53229>
- Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing Functional Grammar (3rd ed.)*. Routledge.
- Wijana, I. D. P. (2018). Pemertahanan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian

- Language Maintenance and Development). *Widyaparwa*, 46(1), 91–98.
<https://doi.org/10.26499/wdprw.v46i1.166>
- Wijana, I. D. P. (2021). *Pengantar Sociolinguistik*. UGM Press.
- Wiratno, T., & Santosa, R. (2014). *Bahasa, Fungsi Bahasa, dan Konteks Sosial*.
- Yuwana, R. Y., & Pertiwi, S. A. (2022). The Perspective Of Language Culture In The Domination Of The Theme Of The National Song “Bagimu Negeri.” *Journal Sampurasun : Interdisciplinary Studies for Cultural Heritage*, 8(Sampurasun Vol. 8 No. 2-2022). <https://doi.org/10.23969/sampurasun.v8i2.6264>
- Yuwana, R. Y., Santosa, R., & Sumarlam, S. (2019). Dasar-Dasar Strategi Humor Indonesia Memanfaatkan Pengalaman Berbahasa Cak Lontong. *Bahasa Dan Seni: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, Dan Pengajarannya*, 47(1), 44–57.
<https://doi.org/10.17977/um015v47i12019p044>