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THEMATIC CHOICES IN SPORTS TEXTS: A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The System of Theme belongs to the textual metafunction. Theme represents the writer's angle on the message and is mapped as the 'point of departure'(Halliday 1985, 1994). This study gives an overview of the thematic choices used in the sports genre of written texts. The Themes are qualitatively and quantitatively analysed and described in terms of types of Themes and Thematic structures. The theoretical foundation of Systemic Functional Linguistics is adapted for use in this study, specifically the framework for the analysis of Theme – Rheme espoused by M A K Halliday (1985, 1994) and Geoff Thompson (1996). The Theme – Rheme structures are first identified, then extracted for analysis and interpreted for the function of clause as message. The types of Themes identified are Textual, Interpersonal, Marked and Unmarked Topical Theme. This study finds that this kind of written sports texts has a high incidence of Topical Theme which carries the content of the message. The second highest is the Textual Theme comprising linkers and binders between clauses and the least used is the Interpersonal Theme. In addition to the types of Themes, the writers in these sports texts also deployed a wide range of Thematic Structures for specific emphasis or exclusiveness in the message. The kinds of structures identified range from Thematic equatives to Passive Theme. Passive clauses as Theme has the highest occurrence, followed by Preposed Theme and Predicated Theme. This study has shown that the writers' selection of either marked, unmarked or 'special Themes' is a context-dependent meaningful choice which satisfies

different discourse needs. Thus, knowledge on the system of Theme is vital for language learners as well as writers of this genre.

Abstrak

Sistem Theme digolongkan di bawah textual metafungsi. Theme mewakili sudut pandangan penulis mengenai mesej dan ianya juga ialah "point of departure". Kajian ini memberi gambaran secara meluas mengenai thematic choices dalam genre sukan. Theme dianalisa secara kualitatif dan kuantitatif dari segi "types of Themes" dan "Thematic Structures". Teori asas Systemic Functional Linguistics yang diasaskan oleh MAK Halliday (1985, 1994) dan Geoff Thompson (1996) diubahsuai dan digunakan untuk menganalisa Theme-Rheme. Pertama, struktur Theme-Rheme dikenalpasti, kemudian Theme-Rheme di analisa dan diinterpretasikan untuk "clause as message". Kajian ini mendapati bahawa "Topical Theme" mempunyai peratus yang tertinggi di dalam teks sukan dan ia juga mengandungi isi mesej teks. Kedua tinggi ialah Textual Theme iaitu penyambung ayat dan yang terendah ialah Interpersonal Theme. Di samping "types of Themes", penulis teks sukan juga menggunakan "Thematic Structures" dalam teks sukan untuk penekanan dan "exclusiveness" dalam mesej. "Passive clause" sebagai Theme merupakan peratusan yang tertinggi, diikuti dengan "Preposed Theme" dan "Predicated Theme". Kajian ini telah menunjukkan bagaimana penulis teks sukan menggunakan "resources Theme-Rheme" untuk menyampaikan mesej seperti yang dikehendaki. Oleh itu, pengetahuan tentang system Theme ini adalah penting bagi pelajar dan juga penulis teks sukan.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....ii

Abstract.....iii

Table of Contents.....vi

List of Figures x

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction.....1

1.1 Statement of the Research Area.....1

1.2 Purpose of the Study 3

1.3 Major Research Questions.....4

1.4 Significance of the Study 4

1.5 Rationale of the Study.....5

1.6 Limitations of the Study 7

1.7 Conclusion 8

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

2.0 Introduction 9

2.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics 9

2.2 History of Theme 13

2.3 Theme and Rheme 15

2.4 Text Analysis 21

2.5 Conclusion 26

Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

3.0 Introduction 27

3.1 Methodology.....27

3.1.1 Selection of Data 28

3.1.2 Description of Data 28

3.1.3 Analysis of Data 29

3.2 Definitions of Key Concepts 30

3.3 Theoretical Framework 34

3.3.1 Types of Themes.....38

3.3.1.1 Topical (Ideational) Theme.....38

3.3.1.2 Interpersonal Theme.....41

3.3.1.3 Textual Theme.....43

3.3.2 Thematising Structures.....44

3.3.2.1 Thematic Equatives 45

3.3.2.2 Predicated Theme 46

3.3.2.3 Thematised Comment 46

3.3.2.4 Preposed Theme 47

3.3.2.5 Passive clause as Theme 47

3.4 Conclusion 48

Chapter Four: Analysis and Discussion

4.0 Introduction 49

4.1 An Overview of Theme - Rheme Analysis.....50

4.2 Thematic Choices. 81

4.2.1 Metafunctional Categories.....81

4.2.1.1 Textual Theme.....82

4.2.1.2 Interpersonal Theme.....89

4.2.1.3 Topical Theme.....91

4.2.2 Simple Theme.....98

4.2.3 Multiple Theme.....100

4.3 Thematic Structure 106

4.3.1 Thematic Equatives 107

4.3.2 Predicated Theme 108

4.3.3 Thematised Comment 110

4.3.4 Preposed Theme 111

4.3.5 Passive clause as Theme 113

4.4 Discussion & Summary of Findings.....117

4.5 Conclusion 122

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.0 Recommendations 124

Bibliography 128

Appendix 1: Text One

Appendix 2: Text Two

Appendix 3: Text Three

Appendix 4: Text Four

Appendix 5: Text Five

Appendix 6: Text Six

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 Summary of Text Description.....29

Figure 3.2 Example of Theme Type Analysis.....30

Figure 3.3 Example of Grammatical Structure Analysis.....30

Figure 3.4 Simple Theme.....36

Figure 3.5 Multiple Theme.....36

Figure 4.1 Text 1.....51

Figure 4.2 Text 2.....55

Figure 4.3 Text 3.....61

Figure 4.4 Text 4.....67

Figure 4.5 Text 5.....72

Figure 4.6 Text 6.....77

Figure 4.7 Interpersonal and Textual Themes.....88

Figure 4.8 Topical Theme Element 91

Figure 4.9 Summary of Marked and Unmarked Topical Theme.....92

Figure 4.10 Summary of Types of Themes.....97

Figure 4.11 Summary of Combinations of Multiple Themes 101

Figure 4.12 Summary of Simple and Multiple Themes.....106

Figure 4.13 Thematic equatives.....107

Figure 4.14 Predicated Theme.....109

Figure 4.15 Frequency of Predicated Theme 109

Figure 4.16 Thematised comment.....110

Figure 4.17 Frequency of Thematised Comment 111

Figure 4.18 Preposed Theme.....112

Figure 4.19 Frequency of Preposed Theme 113

Figure 4.20 Frequency of Passive clause as Theme.....115

Figure 4.21 Summary of Thematising Structures.....116