Exploring the metafunctions to improve EFL learners' writing ability in the perspective of systemic functional linguistics

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Abstract
Writing in academic English is challenging and complex to learn, the root reasons for the issue, may include differences in the cultural backgrounds of the students, a deficiency in critical thinking skills, and a deficiency in linguistic proficiency. This study set out to investigate how metafunctions may be used to enhance students' writing skills. A research approach incorporating a qualitative case study will be employed to assess ninth-grade students' text composition. The data were gathered through collecting student writing over the school year 2021/2022. The students' writings were the texts that were learnt in grade nine based on the curriculum. This study used Systemic Functional Linguistic theory and English texts to provide the framework for the text analysis. The texts were analyzed using the metafunction analysis in Hallidayan SFL to uncover the students' ability to write English text. The teacher applied the Genre-based Approach when instructing his or her students on how to write.

The results presented that metafunctions analysis was very important because there were ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. The ideational metafunction revealed the use of some processes in the students' writing (material, mental, relational, and verbal), interpersonal revealed the importance of mood and residue elements in students' writing and textual metafunction showed the importance of thematic progression pattern. This study indicated that to alleviate students' challenges and strengthen their academic writing and critical thinking capacity, teachers should have a better understanding of the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Keywords: academic genre, EFL, genre-based approach, metafunctions, writing skill

Public Interest Statement

The originality of this work resides in finding the beneficial of metafunctions' theory in improving students' skill in writing: First, from a theoretical perspective, this study provides a further step in the viewer's knowledge and how to relate the theory of metafunctions and teaching English skills in the field of Education. In the same way, it also shows to what extent the influence of metafunctions, such as ideational, interpersonal and textual, in shaping and give more options to teachers or educators in teaching model. Thirdly, for teachers, this finding of the research revealed that metafunctions also can be one reference for teaching model in implementing the creative and interesting teaching model in teaching English.

Introduction

For students who are learning a language, writing is extremely crucial. Students in Indonesian schools are required to learn to compose a variety of text types. Ninth graders should be familiar with the following types of text: recount, narrative, procedural, news item, and descriptive since all the text are the main topics for the students in the subject as the texts to be presented in the final examination (it was named National Examination/UN before). There is no doubt that Indonesian students may struggle with structure and context when learning English as a foreign language. In other words, interlanguage describes how a language learner constructs a linguistic system of his original language (L1) while studying the target language (L2) (Selinker, 1972; Fu and Wang, 2022). In a nutshell, it is a condition in which the L1 linguistic system influences the L2 linguistic system, resulting in an inaccuracy in portraying a proper target language. As a result, addressing this issue is crucial in order to develop instructional tools for teaching writing. Analyzing the students' text/writing is one method for determining pupils' knowledge of English. Analyzing students' texts is critical because it allows English teachers to learn about their students' writing abilities and limitations (Lock, 1996). Furthermore, Emilia (2005) claimed that conducting research on evaluating students' text is critical since knowing the students' challenges allows the teacher to assist the students in resolving their problems (Meirovitz, Russak, and Zur, 2022). It is critical to conduct research on students' abilities and issues in order to assist both teachers and students.

There are some reasons of why this research is interested to be discussed and conducted. First, students' capacity to communicate in both oral and written language is the primary goal of the English curriculum, which integrates reading, listening, writing, and speaking. The English curriculum was originally grounded by systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and a genre-based approach to enhance the relationship between language and its function in social settings (GBA). However, after the implementation of Curriculum 2013, it has shifted to a scientific approach with the assistance of communicative skills; as a result, the requirement for the teacher's creativity may increase. Unfortunately, many teachers lack knowledge of how to teach genres in the classroom (Nagao, 2022). According to Nagao (2022)'s research, teachers appear to emphasize the generic structure of genres, which frequently leads to misunderstanding.

Second, writing ability is important as one of the productive skills because it necessitates numerous phases or a continuum process' (Herman et. al., 2020). In spoken text, learners might overlook word interrelationships. In order to transfer information in written language, learners must explicitly describe the link between words. Aunurrahman, Hamied, and Emilia (2017) state that learners, as writers, must have important information and be able to effectively transmit it through non-talent-oriented writing styles (p.36). Because of the nature of their learning and the influence of augmented reality, EFL students

find it particularly difficult to exhibit those skills in writing. Since cognitively challenging assignments usually necessitate critical writing by EFL students, this is a common problem (Lukitasari, 2019). Because of these things, it is important for teachers to give students the right materials to help them improve their writing skills.

Third, writing is an important talent to develop in the educational field (Jabali, 2018). Many academic goals that incorporate writing talents, such as papers, assignments, exercises, and theses, must be recognized (Ariyanti, 2016). As part of the new publication reform, Indonesia has decided that higher education graduates must publish their last leave project, such as an essay in a journal (Mukhroji, 2020). However, complications arise when attempting to implement the policy under particular scenarios. Learning to write in academic English is complicated and difficult. Furthermore, Orfan, Noori, and Akramy (2021) stated that students who regard English as a foreign language will have a more difficult time. Along with that theory, he indicated the causes of the problem, which could be due to variances in pupils' cultural backgrounds, a lack of critical thinking, and a lack of language ability. Furthermore, Torres and Medriano (2020) identified writing as the most challenging of the four English skills since it is culturally rooted. Because civilizations differ, there are differences in the acceptable or favored rhetorical rules and conventions from one culture to the next (Trang and Anh, 2022).

Hence, the last point is about language instruction; the paper's history and theoretical review illustrate how textual metafunction might help EFL. Textual metafunction theory can help teachers better educate EFL students while also learning that they need to be a discourse analyst when teaching writing (Gerot and Wignell, 1994). It proposes that teachers should develop students' writing resources and skills based on their requirements in order for them to generate good writing, particularly at the semantic and discourse levels (context).

Social philosophy of language is the meaning of systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994). All languages, according to SFL, have three metafunctions: textual, ideational, and interpersonal. Each function is performed using a unique language pattern. This work is concerned with textual metafuction, a unit of which is coherence, as reflected in the Theme system, which refers to what is in the foreground. A framework implements the Theme system, which splits the phrase into only two parts: a Theme and a Rheme. The initial part of a clause, or "what the clause is about," is the theme (Eggins, 1994). It is "the starting point of the message" (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004; Halliday, 1994). Meanwhile, the Rheme is described as "the portion of the phrase in which the Theme is developed or anything other than the Theme" (Eggins, 1994, p. 275). In terms of language metafunctions, topical, textual, and interpersonal themes are all sorts of Themes (related to interpersonal metafunction).

This study introduces pupils to SFL. Literature was used as a teaching tool, and students were trained to recognize theme progression and cohesion. Students will gain a better understanding of critical thinking by applying these two concepts to their own and other people's work. SFL offers a variety of approaches to help English learners enhance their writing abilities. Systemic functional linguistics, presents a philosophy of language based on purpose and choice. It suggests that mature English speakers and authors can use language appropriately at various times, for various causes, and with various purposes and possibilities (Butt et. al., 2000). SFL is a branch of linguistics that looks at language from two perspectives: systemic and functional (Herman, Sulistyani, Ngongo, Fatmawati and Saputra, 2022). Systemic in the sense of implying that language is a network of interconnected systems, or a collection of options for producing meaning. Functional, on the other hand, relates to the way people make use of language.

Table 1. Subject and adjunct as theme

Theme	Rheme
Last night	A man was helping police inquiries
In our classical collection	You will find many well-loved masterpieces
	Only one is a woman
Out of Britain's 37 most senior judges	Probably haven't heard of the SOU before
You	Yesterday opned her heart to the nation.
The Queen	

Source: (Thompson, 1996)

Thematic progression, as defined by Eggins (1994), is the transmission of information between subsequent Theme and Rheme pairings in a work. There are three primary types of thematic development, depending on the text type: constant, zig-zag, and multiple thematic patterns.
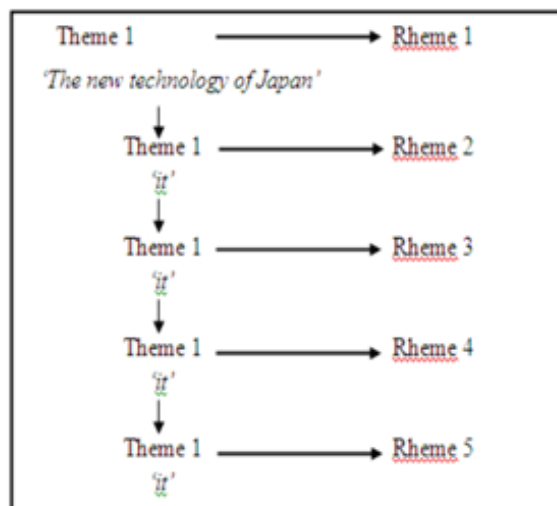

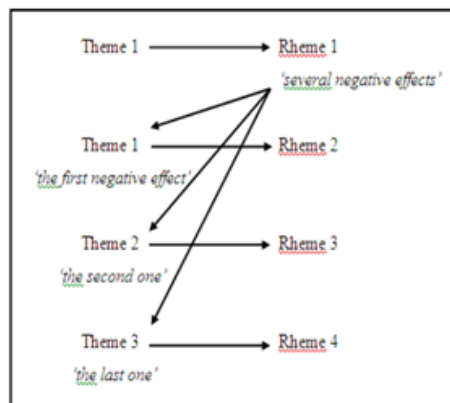**Figure 1**. Constant Thematic Pattern (Arunsirot, 2013, p. 168)

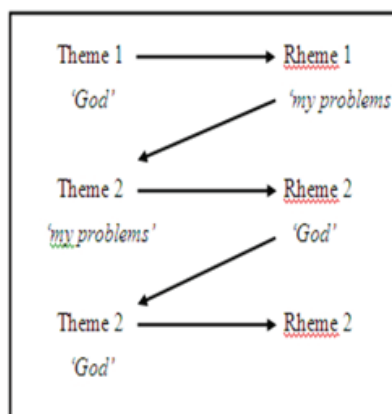**Figure 2**. Zig-zag Thematic Pattern (Arunsirot, 2013, p. 168)

Figure 3. Multiple Thematic Pattern (Arunsirot, 2013, p. 169)

Previous studies have primarily concentrated on analyzing recount text based on grammatical faults; however, this study proposes to analyze students' self-composed recount text in SFL perspectives and the consequences for the text's substance. As a result, a critical examination of the actual teaching outcome and learning aim is undertaken in the context of SFL views. Assessment of writing by SFL may also assist teachers in better understanding how students generate context meaning in their works. Consequently, the aim of this research is to investigate how students' recall writing might be integrated with lexicogrammar analysis (transitivity, theme, and mood). The findings are likely to contribute to the advancement of teaching writing through SFL views in the lesson plans of future teachers. Furthermore, the information in this study can be used as a source of alternative knowledge and as a guide for future research on the same topic.

Literature Review
Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)
Halliday (2004) introduced Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a method for learning how a language operates semantically and how it is operated in discourse. According to Halliday (2004), SFL is a process of meaning creation. It considers language to be a system of meaning. That is, when people speak, they make meaning and this is consistent with Thompson's (2004) observation that "meaning is associated with function". The goals of SFL are to investigate language users' communication choices and to demonstrate the production of meaning (Jomaa and Bidin, 2019). They also highlighted that SFL is primarily concerned with how meaning is realized across the entire text (rather than in lumpy paragraphs), and it views language as somewhat we perform (not somewhat we identify). Referring to the relation of meaning and text, Halliday (2004) in Lukitasari (2019) distributes language into three metafunctions, which Thompson (2004) considers to represent language meanings: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. These metafunctions are useful for assisting language learners in seeing language, whether throughout their understandings, interpersonal relationships, or vocal words inside situations. However, the focus of this research will be on the significance of metafunction as a core concept for enhancing EFL learners' writing tools and aids

The Importance of SFL to EFL Learners' Writing Needs

In light of the preceding ideas, it is evident that metafunction (under the purview of SFL) and its elements are significant in writing. This is as the concepts of Theme, Rheme, Cohesion, and Coherence will assist EFL learners in connecting and relating their clauses, phrases, and paragraphs into a well-structured text, allowing the meaning to be positively delivered to the reader(s). As a result, EFL learners must have an adequate comprehending of metafunction with the purpose of improving their writing skills, as they contain several processes and many derived skills that must be trained and improved.

In terms of language education, the paper's background and theoretical review describe how metafunction can aid EFL learners' writing educating process. Gerot and Wignell (1994) stated that educators can perform SFL models to better successfully educate EFL learners, but they must be a context analyzer when coaching writing. It implies that teachers should develop students' writing resources along with skills based on their requirements in order for them to generate good writing, mostly on the stage of semantics and discourse (context). As a result, in sequence to give English teachers with insights into writing instruction, this paper will explain the importance of metafunction theory and its components in developing EFL learners' writing tools and subsequent skills.

Methods

This research was conducted to explore the students' ability in writing which influenced through the perspective of SFL. Qualitative approach was implemented to answer the problems in this research. Herman et. al. (2022) state that the qualitative research method was a study procedure that produced descriptive data from people and observable behaviour in the form of written or vocal words. The pupils' writing data was gathered from the writing job they were assigned. The total students in this research were 223 which consisted from IX-A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The location was at SMP Methodist in Pematangsiantar city, North Sumatera Province. There are about 223 students doing the task during the academic year of 2021/2022. With a purposive sampling, the researchers deliberately chose some texts written by grade nine students of SMP Methodist Pematangsiantar, North Sumatera Province to be analyzed. They were given a topic and asked to write a paragraph about it. For the aims of this study, 10 students' paragraphs were chosen at random as the sample., independent of their score or level of writing ability. Following the selection of ten texts from the students, the sample was evaluated and diagnosed to determine its conformity with the theories underpinning the texts, beginning with the schematic structures, social function, and linguistic aspects from SFL viewpoints, namely experiential metafunction, textual metafunction, and interpersonal metafunction

Results

After conducting the text analysis through the SFL perspective, this section provided and represented some findings of students' writing in learning English.

Thematic Progression Pattern (TPP)

A text is also put together using the ideas of theme and rheme. Thematic progression is when a clause's theme picks up or repeats an idea from a theme or rheme that came before it.

Table 2. Types of Thematic Patterns used in the students' writing

No	Thematic Progressions Patterns	Students who use the patterns	Total	Percentage
1	Multiple	1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10	44	32,1
2	Zig-zag	1, 3, 4, 5, 9	20	14,5
3	Constant	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	73	53,2
TOTAL			137	99,8

Notes: FS (student 1), HS (student 2), FN (student 3), JW (student 4), JP (stident 5), NWS (student 6), FL (student 7), FLC (student 8), LK (student 9), EC (student 10)

Table 2 above was clear that constant pattern of thematic as the most dominant pattern to be found in students' writing. This happened because of the students' way of writing to do the repetition theme from every clause at the beginning of their writing. They liked to repeat the theme from one to another.

Metafunction Analysis in Students' Writing
Ideational Metafunction Analysis
Ideological meaning refers to what is going on around us, as well as the thoughts and feelings that make up our own inner reality (Lock, 1996). A theory of human experience is provided by languages, according to Halliday (2014). The lexicogrammar is ascribed to the specific function that is accomplished in a certain field.

Based on the students' text writing, the researchers found that material processes were the most dominant clauses for 43%, followed by mental processes 24%, relational processes 19% and verbal processes 14%. The following table 3 was the sample of material processes taken from the students' writing.

Table 3. The analysis of Ideational metafunction in a text

Soon	I	Went back	To the hotel	With my parents
Circ. Time	Participant I – Actor	Process: material	Circ. Place	Participant II – Goal

The table 3 above showed that the writer (student) described her chronological order event by retelling her past events by using one of the language feature, simple past tense. This showed that the writer (student) understand how to use the language feature correctly along with the social function of the text.

4.2.2. Textual Metafunction Analysis
Textual meaning is how language is organized in its context and what role it plays in that context, as shown in the mode system (Halliday and Matthiesen, 2004, p. 328).

To make a cup of sweet tea	is easy.
Theme 1	Rheme 1

These	are some steps how to do it.
Theme 2	Rheme 2

First, you	must prepare some materials such as a cup, hot water, a tea, spoon and a glass
Theme 3	Rheme 3

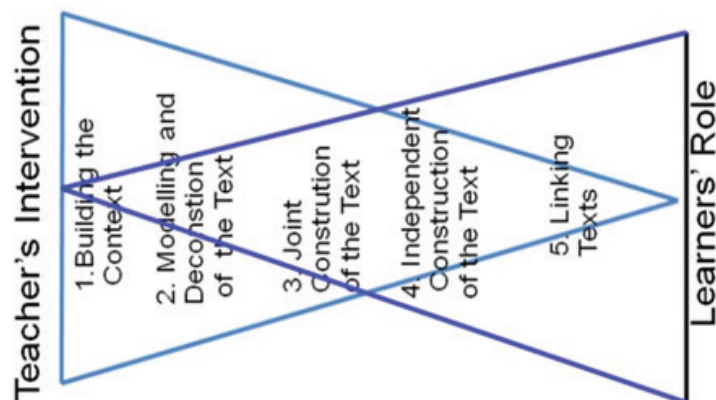**Figure 4**. Thematic Pattern in students' writing text

Figure 4 above is a part from student's writing about procedure text. The pattern showed that the student used the zig-zag theme pattern. The lesson about the thematic pattern is very important to be taught to the students in order to let them know how to create a good sentence into a correct order and how each clause can connect to others.

4.2.3. Interpersonal Metafunction Analysis

We can see this in how we give and request information, how we get others to do things, and even in our offers to do things for them. We can also see it in how we express our beliefs about the likelihood, necessity, and desirability of various events, all of which are based on language and the realization is based on tenor (Lock, 1996).

Table 4. Interpersonal metafunction analysis on student's writing

A year ago	We	Were	Hit	With a virus
Circ. Adjunct :Time	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
Residue	Mood		Residue	

In speech function this clause is statement because the speech function used in the sentence was statement (declarative) and the speech role was giving information. The table 4 above showed how the student delivered the information by using complete elements in interpersonal metafunctions such as subject (we), finite (were), predicator (hit), complement (with a virus) and circumstance (a year ago). From the table 4 above, the researchers concluded that the student's writing to give information to the readers was suitable with the mood of the sentence, declarative.

Discussion

Referred to the findings of this study, thematic progression pattern (TPP) was beneficial in improving students' writing skills in terms of organization. The TPP activity lets students to apply their existing knowledge and experience identifying patterns in short texts before moving on to longer texts. Discussion of how information flows in a text to make it coherent can help students grasp how the meaning and purpose of a work were established when various pieces were successfully organized (Christie & Dreyfus, 2007).

Hence, the researchers also found that besides the use of TPP was important, the researchers also proposed that the teachers at school should be able to master and comprehend the use of genre-

based approach (GBA) in improving students' ability in writing. The GBA covered the cycle in teaching learning stages such as building knowledge of the field (BKOF), modelling and deconstructing of text (MOT), joint construction of the text (JCOT), independent construction of the text (ICOT) and linking related text (LRT).

All of the metafunction theories, thematic progression patterns, and grammatical and lexical cohesiveness in BKOF should be taught to students in order for them to understand the BKOF. Each thematic progression is also examined by the academics, who discuss themes and rheme. In MOT, teachers provide examples of paragraphs to show students how to construct a logical paragraph that contains a metafunction analysis. As a part of this portion, teachers work with their students to identify the three grammatical progression patterns and draw the patterns to highlight the paragraph's coherency, as well as the three thematic progression patterns.

Metafunction analysis or three theme progression patterns and cohesive devices are used to help JCOT students compose paragraphs in groups. An instructor helps their students write texts in context by giving them particular topics to write about and instructing them on how to structure their essays rationally. Next, students are encouraged to compose a paragraph on a topic of their choice, meaning that they are being actively pushed to develop their own writing abilities. For students who are having trouble writing a text, the teacher's job is to act as a facilitator. The students were then instructed to investigate or summarize what they had learned in the final step, LRT. This is the most difficult task since the pupils need to be encouraged. The use of GBA in helping students' ability in writing has been proven in the previous research conducted by Herman et. al. (2020). The figure 5 below showed how the activities of teacher and students in the classroom by implementing the GBA.
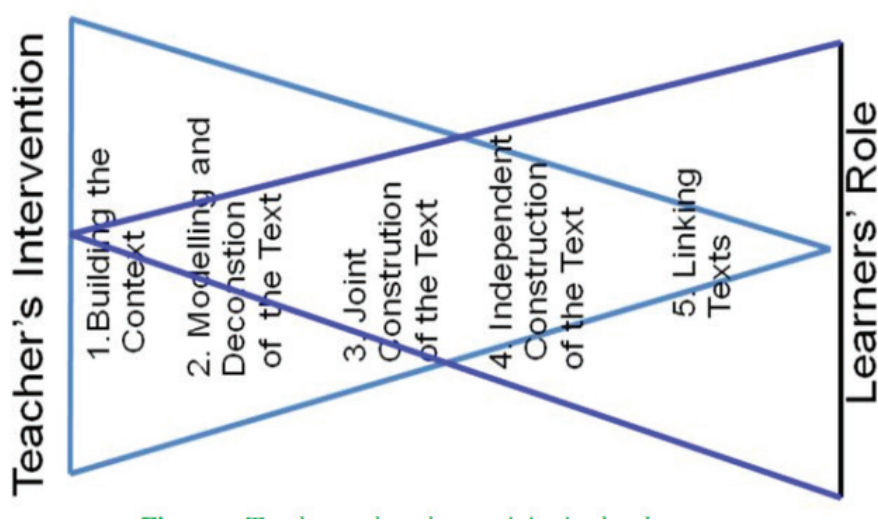

Figure 5. Teacher and Students activities in the classroom (Herman et. al., 2020)

Similar findings were reported in other studies that examined the usefulness of TPP as a measure of coherence in EFL/ESL writing (Bloor & Bloor 1992; Schleppegrell, 2009) in determining whether or not a piece of writing was effective or not. In contrast to native English speakers, who learned how to use TPP from their early years in school, EFL/ESL students have yet to learn what kinds of information to place in the Theme position and how to constantly pick up and repeat information already in the text so that the reader is always aware of the key concepts and how the key concepts are being repeated, according to Hawes and Thomas (2012)" (Hyland, 2004).

Conclusion

Referred to the data analysis, three main types of Thematic organizing patterns were used in the texts. In terms of frequency analysis, textual elements were used more frequently than interpersonal aspects. The high amount of textual Theme usage is not surprising given the vast quantity of continuatives, conjunctives, and relative components. This Theme may be seen more frequently than the interpersonal element since it not only works as a connector that relates the relationship of the clause within the text but also provides more clear instruction to the reader on how to acquire a coherent interpretation of the text.

The introduction of metafunction analysis within the purview of Systemic Functional Grammar by Halliday (2004) proven beneficial for EFL learners in writing class. English teachers can use metafunction analysis to improve learners' writing materials, such as ideational metafunction with its constituents (experiential and logical), interpersonal metafunction with mood (subject and finite) and residue (predicator, complement, circumstances), and textual metafunction with its constituents (theme, rheme, cohesion, and coherence).

This study's conclusion can be summarized as follows: (1) Students in grade nine at SMP Methodist Pematangsiantar, North Sumatera Province, who were taught using thematic progression pattern had superior writing skills than those who were taught using direct instruction; (2) teachers are encouraged to learn and comprehend the understanding of genre-based approach (GBA) because it has been proven effective teaching students' in improving their writing skills. Teachers' duties are crucial in keeping the writing process continuing. To summarize, learning to write cannot be accomplished in a single sitting. Thus, in order to successfully construct a relevant writing class, both teachers and students must continue active communication.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Authorship and Level of Contribution
Conceptualization, H., K. S., and R. P.; methodology, N. P., M. R., H., T. A.; validation, T. A., and S. M.; Formal analysis, H. and M. R.; investigation, N. P., R. P. and M. R..; resources, H.; data curation, K. S.; writing (original draft preparation), H.; writing (review and editing), K. S. and S. M.; visualization, T. A., and R. P.; supervision N. P. and H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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