

## The Motive of The Suicide: A Forensic Linguistic Study

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the message of a person who committed suicide in a letter that was found on 7th September 2021. To define the messages in the letter, this study observed the realization of the theme and rheme types and structure. So, there are three focuses of this study; (1) how is the realization of theme and rheme in the letter, (2) how is the structure of the theme and rheme in the letter, and (3) what are the messages the person who committed suicide wanted the readers to know. The analysis defined three findings. First, most of the themes are in the type of single-ideational which explains the confession of the writer because the theory of ideational theme explains it as a theme for a statement or declarative mode of clause. In this first finding, the writer was identified as well-committed in his action of doing suicide. Second, all the themes from each clause are linked in a Constant thematic pattern. This second finding explains the cohesion of the ideas of the writer in his writings. Third, the statement of the writer which was indicated by the single ideational theme and the message unity which was explained the by finding of the constant thematic progression pattern explained 4 messages (1) a giving responsibility of his children to his wife, (2) complains about his wife disrespect to him, (3) a farewell to his children, and (4) a confirmation of his authorship in the letter. The messages which are defined in the letter tell that the motive of the suicide is "a long-term marriage conflict".*

### KEYWORDS

*theme; rheme; forensic; motive; text*

### INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021, many people were shocked by the finding of the dead body of a soldier in Madura Strait, the small sea that separated Java and Madura Island. The soldier who was 53 years old was predicted to jump to the strait from the Suramadu Bridge. The findings of his motorbike, some pieces of stuff, and a letter in his small bag around the bridge revealed his action as a suicide. He was estimated jumped to the strait on Monday evening around 20.00 p.m., 6<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The letter which was found in his small bag around the bridge told some messages of sadness and complaints. However, in this moment many people thought it weird for a soldier in his 53 ages to commit suicide.

Some assumptions arose such as 'Did the man suicide or was killed by someone?' and also a question of 'how a soldier could commit suicide?' These assumptions were crowdedly in many people's minds to be revealed. In order to reveal this, an investigation by the approach of forensic linguistics to the letter can be done, sure by two guidances (1) suicidology and (2) linguistics theory to be applied to analyze the letter. The linguistics analysis investigates the truth of a criminal case which is linked by a related supported

discipline called as forensic linguistic approach.

Durkheim defined suicide as a homicide, he believed there are no people who will naturally think to do suicide without any reason. Durkheim, then made it clearer by explaining that suicide is a natural human action to escape from pain. Furthermore, he claimed that the environment and society where the people lived contributed a lot to the action of suicide, and this explanation defined suicide into two types, which are (1) Egoistic/ altruistic suicides and (2) anomic/ fatalistic suicides. The egoistic or altruistic suicides happen because of the imbalance (too little/ too much) of social interaction which is what Durkheim called ‘integration’ while the anomic or fatalistic suicides happen because of the extreme pressure of society rules or norms which is called ‘regulation’.

The explanation of integration and regulation in suicidology defined several areas as the factors of suicides such as (1) marriages; conflict, divorce, fertility, (2) social; bullying, pressuring norms, (3) economic; unemployment, poverty, lack of financial support, and (4) religiosity; misconception. Those factors then listed down the motives of the suicide such as (1) marriage conflict, (2) unemployment, (3) bullying, (4) misconception of the religion knowledge, etc. Those motives are automatically defined in the action of suicides (Kołodziej- Sarzyńska et al., 2019; Mueller et al., 2021).

The suicide motives must exist as they can be revealed in many ways and one of them is from a letter which probably had been written by the victim before he did suicide. Delivering ideas in his own style of language, a person who did suicide naturally structured his words, clauses, and sentences to support the deep message to be understood by whoever read it. This letter finally can explain some important things to be analyzed (Sawirman & Ridhwani, 2020; Triana et al., 2020). Revealing the message in the letter by analyzing the language can be done by applying the linguistic theory such as (1) analyzing the word form, semantic and sentence structure, then (2) speech act in the letter, etc. One linguistic point of view in overcoming messages is by defining its theme and rheme; the types and structure which is popularly known as a part of functional grammar or also called as Systemic Functional linguistics (SFL) (Abdulrahman Almurashi, 2016; Endarto, 2017; Schleppegrell, 2013).

By focusing on the letter found in the small bag at the Suramadu bridge which was indicated to belong to the victim of the suicide, this study scientifically wanted to define the motives of the soldier to do suicide. This is a linguistic analysis by framing three questions (1) what are the messages found in the letter? (2) how do the messages lead the victim to do suicide? And finally (3) what is the motive of the suicide?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Theme and rheme realization in clauses and also in text for a broader scope is also defined as a system of information or ideas relationship. The theme is a point of departure which is also defined as given information while rheme is part of the theme is developed which is also defined as new information (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In this concept, theme is the first part of the clause which is believed as the important part a speaker wants to deliver while rheme is the information that conveys the information about the theme (Mahlberg, 2007). Look at the following examples:

- a. Monica reads the book in the library  
**Theme Rheme**
- b. In the library, Monica reads the book  
**Theme Rheme**
- c. The book is what Monica read in the library  
**Theme Rheme**
- d. Reading is what Monica do in the library  
**Theme Rheme**

Due to the previous explanation that there is a point of departure and given information, while rheme is the idea development of the theme, the four sentences above explained the realization of the theme and rheme in them. The four sentences semantically conveyed the same ideas of a person namely Monica who does reading in a room of library. However, the different points of departure in each sentence showed what the speaker wanted to highlight as his message. Sentence A is about a person who reads a book in a library, but Sentence B is about a place where someone namely Monica reads, however, Sentence C is about something that is read by Monica, and the last sentence d is about what Monica does in the library. The realization of theme and rhyme in a clause can create different messages even from the same idea because the different theme creates different points of departure and of course creates different main messages a speaker wants to convey (Moyano, 2016).

Similar to the theme and rheme realization of the four sentences above, there are three types of themes they are (1) ideational theme, (2) interpersonal theme, and (3) textual theme. The ideational theme is the syntactic function of a sentence such as the subject, predicate, and object. While the interpersonal theme is the mood and residue combination that initiated the sentence, the mood is the auxiliary, and residue is the verb. However, textual functions are parts connected to ideas in a text such as conjunction, connective, continuatives, and transitional signals and any parts function similarly to them. Look at the following examples:

- a. My brother and I play hide and seek in|the back yard  

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
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- b. Then, Lucy came and invited us to bike  

<b>▲ Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
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- c. Do you want to bike with me?, she asked  

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
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In the first sentence, the theme is ideational, while in the second sentence, the theme is a textual theme, and in the third sentence the theme is an interpersonal theme. Due to the number of themes in one sentence, the theme of the first sentence is a single theme (subject) but the theme of the second and third sentences is a multiple theme. Moreover, for sentence a which is the subject as the theme, it is defined as an unmarked theme, but when the adverb ‘at the back yard’ is placed as the point of departure then it is called a marked theme (Efransyah, 2019). Look at the analysis below:

- a. My brother and I play hide and seek at the back yard  

<b>Theme (Unmarked)</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
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- b. At the backyard, my brother and I play hide and seek  

<b>Theme (Marked)</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
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In a passage, the realization of theme and rheme can be structured into patterns. This comes from the ideas’ relationship from one sentence to another. The theme and rheme structure in a passage is also called thematic progression. Thematic progression is classified into four, they are (1) constant pattern, (2) linear pattern, (3) split pattern, and (4) derived pattern. Look at the following example:

- Monica plays a guitar in the classroom.  

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
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- She is very talented.  

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
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- She plays the guitar and sings at the same time.  

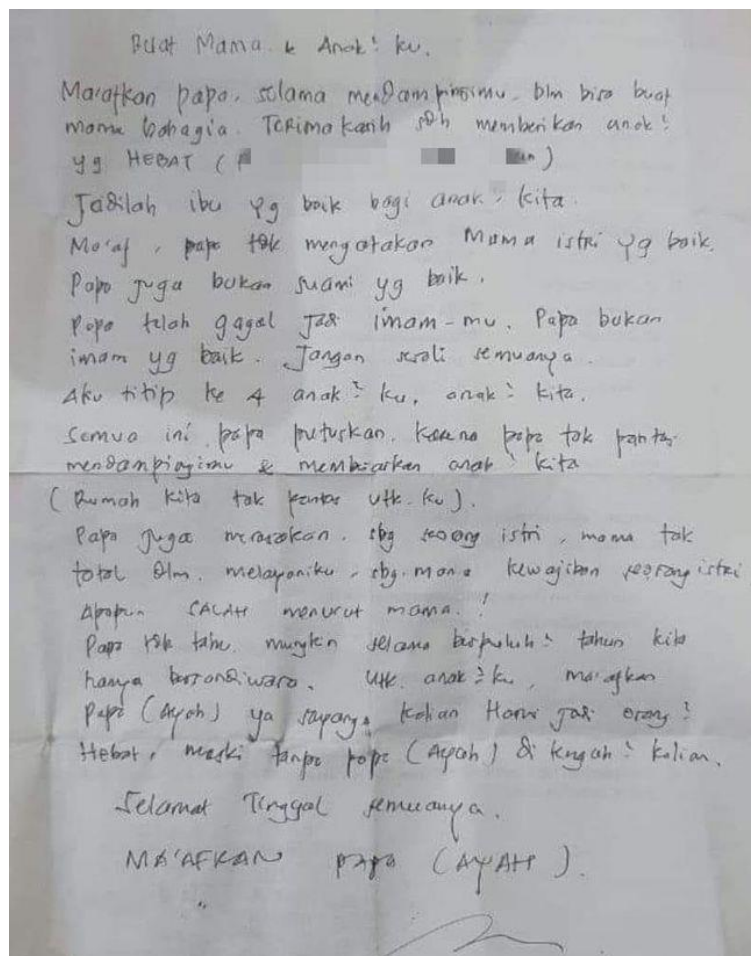
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
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Thus, the theme is the head of a message in a clause. According to its function in heading the message in the clause, the theme is identified by its position at the beginning of the clause. The complex information a language user intends to deliver is various which impacts the structure of the clause. This directly determines the position of the theme. However, the rheme is the rest of any ideas after the theme. The rheme completes the ideas of the theme and is identified by its position after the theme. The theme and the rheme are unity in clause or sentence cohesion. Again, the complex information a speaker or writer wants to deliver in his language directly determines the structure of the theme and the rheme. In conclusion to this part, in the perspective of functional grammar, the cohesion of a passage is identified by the structure of the theme and the rheme. The cohesion which is created by the structure of the theme and the rheme in a passage is built throughout the sentences. The relations which is structured from one clause to another in a passage are classified into four; (1) the constant pattern, (2) the linear pattern, (3) the split pattern, and (4) the derived pattern.

### RESEARCH METHODS

This is a case study of analyzing a victim of suicide's letter. The letter is analyzed by the approach of forensic linguistics which uses linguistic knowledge to reveal a mystery of a language form in a criminal case. In revealing the criminal mystery, the letter will be analyzed by the theory of textual function of systemic functional linguistics. The thematic progression is applied to know the messages left in the letter and answer the questions of the study. In conclusion, this study is a case study by the qualitative method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Mahsun terj., 2008; Soegiyono, 2011). The following is the letter:



**Figure 1.** The Suicade Letter

The letter consisted of 24 clauses as the following (source language):

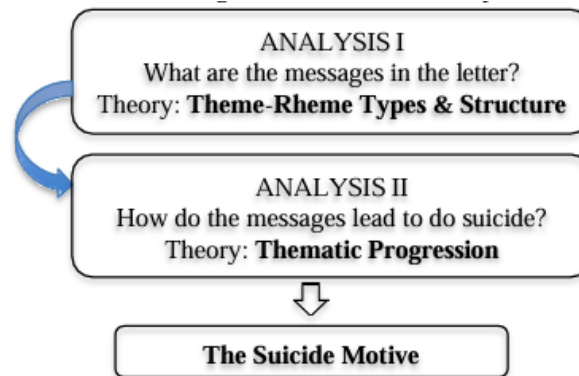
1. *Maafkan Papa,*
2. *Selama mendampingi, belum bisa buat mama Bahagia*
3. *Terima kasih sudah memberikan anak-anak yang hebat*
4. *Jadilah ibu yang baik bagi anak-anak kita*
5. *Maaf, papa tidak mengatakan mama istri yang baik*
6. *Papa juga bukan suami yang baik*
7. *Papa telah gagal jadi imammu*
8. *Papa bukan imam yang baik*
9. *Jangan sesali semuanya*
10. *Aku titip ke-4 anak-anakku, anak-anak kita*
11. *Semua ini Papa putuskan*
12. *Karena Papa tidak pantas mendampingi*
13. *Dan membesarkan anak-anak kita*
14. *Rumah kita tidak pantas untukku*
15. *Papa juga merasakan*
16. *Sebagai seorang istri mama tak total dalam melayani, sebagaimana kewajiban seorang istri*
17. *Apapun salah menurut mama*
18. *Papa tidak tahu*
19. *Mungkin selama berpuluh-puluh tahun, kita hanya bersandiwara*
20. *Untuk anak-anakku, maafkan papa (ayah) ya sayang*
21. *Kalian harus jadi orang-orang hebat*
22. *Meski tanpa papa ditengah-tengah kalian*
23. *Selamat tinggal semuanya*
24. *Maafkan papa (ayah)*

The following is the idiomatic translation of the letter into English:

1. I am sorry,
2. Along our marriage, I can't make you happy.
3. Thank you for giving me great children.
4. I hope you can be a good mother for our children.
5. Sorry, I can't say you are a good wife,
6. I am not a good husband too.
7. I have been failed to be your husband
8. I am not a good couple,
9. Don't regret anything.
10. I give you my four children, our children
11. All of these, I decided
12. Because I don't deserve to be by your side
13. And grows our children
14. I don't deserve our home
15. I also feel
16. As a wife, you didn't treat me well, your responsibility as a wife

17. Everything is wrong for you
18. I don't know
19. Maybe, after the years of our marriage, we just pretend,
20. For my children, please forgive me darling,
21. You have to be great people,
22. Even I don't with you Goodbye all
23. Forgive your Daddy.

Those clauses are analyzed by identifying their types of themes; ideational, interpersonal, and textual theme. The analysis then continues to define the pattern of the thematic progression. The analysis of the theme types will explain the messages that existed in the letter, and the analysis of the thematic progression will explain the relationship of one theme to the others and will expose the main theme/idea that the writer (victim of suicide) wanted to say. Finally, the messages and the ideas' relations that came from the analysis will define the motive of the writer commit to suicide. The following is the model of the analysis:



**Figure 2.** The Steps of the Analysis

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following explanations are organized by first exposing the findings and then continuing by discussing the relation to suicidality by Durkheim. The following findings are preceded by explaining the theme types and structure to define the messages delivered in the letter. From 24 clauses in the letter the following are themes types and structures which is found:

**Table 1.** The Distribution of Single and Multiple Themes

No	Types	Clauses of	Amount
1	Single Theme	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24	<b>14</b>
2	Multiple Theme	2, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 19, 20, 22	<b>10</b>

Due to the types of single and multiple themes, the 24 clauses are distributed into (1) 14 clauses in the type of single theme and (2) 10 clauses in the type of multiple themes. Due to the explanations of textual function, the number of themes in one sentence is due to the complexity of ideas a speaker wants to deliver, due to this reference, it was defined that 14 of the clauses were implied a simple situation held by the victim of suicide, but there were also 10 clauses represented a complex situation to informed which is implied that the 14 simple situations expressed by the author is a kind of commitment and confession, it is not a normal condition. This analysis will be continued to the analysis of ideational, interpersonal, and textual types of themes as the following:

**Table 2.** The Distribution of Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual Theme

No	Types	Clauses of	Amount
1	Ideational Theme	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24	19
2	Interpersonal Theme	9	1
3	Textual Theme	12, 13, 19, 22	4

Regarding to the types of themes; ideational, interpersonal, and textual; the letter is dominated by ideational theme with 19 clauses or 79,1% from all, then there are 4 clauses or 16,6% of textual theme, and the last there are 1 or 4,1% of interpersonal theme. Due to the explanation of those three types of themes, ideational themes promoted the participants in the events which are identified by subject, predicate, object, and complement. While interpersonal theme indicated the ideas exchange and textual theme promoted ideas relations in text which identified by conjunctions, connectives, and conjunctives. Due to this explanation, the letter mainly explained the participants as the ideas such as I (author), Mama (wife), children, house, and our marriage. These participants mentioning were happened for 19 times or in 19 clauses which defined that the participants of the victim of suicide were the center of conflict. The distribution of the themes also defined the letter was written in clear mind by the very little exchanging idea (only in clause 9) which implied a self-conscious thinking in his suicide. There were also 4 clauses with textual theme which is very little to compare to the whole number of the clauses (24 clauses). However, this implied a direct thinking by not blaming anything in his life in his commitment to suicide.

Comparing the previous findings; the single and multiple themes, the distribution of ideational, interpersonal, and textual theme defined that most of single themes are in the types of ideational theme; promoting the participants in the victim's life, and even some of the multiple themes are in ideational theme. This indicated a very clear mind in explaining the reasons of his suicide. Due to this finding and comparing to the suicidology by Durkheim, it is strongly scientifically defined as a suicide.

Part I: clauses 1-8

Maafkan **Papa**  
**Theme Rheme**

Selama mendampingi, Papa belum bisa buat Mama.....  
**Theme Rheme**

Terima kasih sudah memberikan anak-anak yang hebat.  
**Theme Rheme**

Jadilah Ibu yang baik buat anak-anak kita.  
**Theme Rheme**

Maaf, Papa tidak bisa mengatakan Mama istri yang baik.  
**Theme Rheme**

Papa juga bukan suami yang baik.  
**Theme Rheme**

Papa telah gagal jadi imammu.  
**Theme Rheme**

Papa bukan imam yang baik.  
**Theme Rheme**



In part I of thematic progression, it is clearly defined that the clauses are in the pattern of constant progression as it is centered on the rheme of the first clause. The explanation above clearly defined that clauses 2-8 came from the rheme of first clause, those clauses stated and confirmed that the author of the letter is 'Papa' himself. In this part I, the author introduce himself as the author of the letter; those clauses are all about 'Papa'.

Part II: clauses 9-10

Jangan sesali semuanya  
**Theme**                      **Rheme**

Aku titip ke-4 anak-anakku, anak-anak kita  
**Theme**                      **Rheme**

These two sentences refer to the topic of the messages, these are delivering the ideas of the whole letter.

Part III: clauses 11-19

Semua ini Papa putuskan  
**Theme**                      **Rheme**

Karena Papa tidak pantas mendampingi  
**Theme**                      **Rheme**

Dan membesarkan anak-anak kita  
**Theme**                      **Rheme**

Rumah kita tidak pantas untukku  
**Theme**                      **Rheme**

Papa juga merasakan  
**Theme Rheme**

Sebagai seorang istri Mama tidak .....  
**Theme**                      **Rheme**

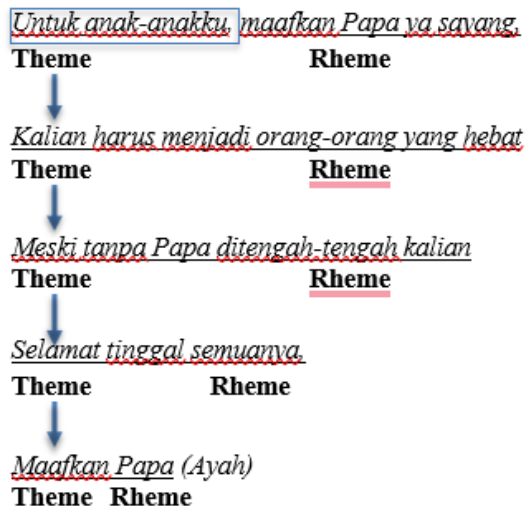
Apaun salah menurut mama  
**Theme**                      **Rheme**

Papa tidak tahu  
**Theme Rheme**

Mungkin selama berpuluh-puluh tahun kita hanya ....  
**Theme**                      **Rheme**

This part is headed by the phrase of *semua ini*, this phrase defines the reason the author commits to do suicide. Clauses 11-19 are progressed in mixed pattern, those are split-linear thematic progression. Unlike the previous parts (I & II), this part explains the deepest part of the heart of the author why he finally decided to suicide. An interesting idea to highlight is in clause 19 which indicates the long duration of the conflict in his life. Clause 19 defined the feeling of the author in the long term which indicated frustration and depression because of the pressure.

Part IV: clauses 20-24



The thematic progression in this part is in a constant pattern. The clause is initiated by the ideas of his children and ends by telling farewell to them as it is closed by asking for forgiveness from them. This part explained the interest of the author which lay in his children. In this part, the author didn't mention his wife and just remembered his children. Due to the explanation above, the whole ideas in the letter are organized into four parts, they are:

1. In clauses 1-8, the author defines the letter belonged to him. This part of the letter is initiated by saying 'sorry' due to his position as a husband. In this part, the author continued his ideas by 3 times blaming himself for not being a good husband for his wife. The ideas identification is recognized by the types of themes in the ideational theme which are most in single form.
2. In clause 9 a reminder to not regret everything, and in clause 10 giving responsibility of his children to his wife. In this part, the author reminded his wife to not regret all conflicts as the triggers for him to commit suicide. The author also gave his responsibility to his children and to his wife. Clause 9 is a multiple interpersonal theme, while clause 10 is a single ideational theme.
3. In clauses 11-19, the author complained and criticized his wife. This is the longest part of this letter which tells the reason why the author committed suicide. It is initiated by the clause of *semua ini Papa putuskan* that the phrase *semua ini* implied many conflicts he had with his wife. Moreover, in his part, there is a clause of *selama bertahun-tahun* which implied not only lots of conflicts but a long-term of conflict. This part of the letter defined the motive of the suicide as a feeling of frustration and depression due to the lots and long-term conflict the author had with his wife. The 9 clauses in this part are in single and multiple, either ideational or textual themes.

4. In clauses 20-24, the author expresses his love and farewell to his children. This part expresses the author's love for his children by asking for forgiveness and saying farewell. The Clauses of 20-24 are all about his love for his children. The themes in these clauses were ideational themes.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated a letter that was predicted to belong to the victim of a suicide. To find the answer, this study was guided by the suicidality of Durkheim who explained the definition, types, and characteristics of a suicide action. Suicidality is defined as a suicide triggered by an imbalance that exists in marriage, friendship, etc. However, too many norms and regulations in social life also can guide someone to do suicide. These explanations guided this study with three purposes, they are (1) identifying the messages in the letter, (2) defining how the messages lead the author to suicide, and (3) defining the motive of the suicide. The findings and discussion defined that the motive of the author to commit suicide is long-term frustration and depression due to his marriage conflict.

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