



## Theme–Rheme Structures in Indonesian and English Online News Reporting on Mining

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how Theme–Rheme structures shape discourse in Indonesian- and English-language online news reporting on mining. Based on 62 articles published between January and June 2025, the research applies Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to identify thematic patterns and integrates Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to interpret their ideological implications. Findings show that both Indonesian and English news are dominated by Actor → Action/Decision patterns, foregrounding government, parliament, religious organizations, and mining companies as central actors. Differences, however, are notable: Indonesian reporting emphasizes Time/Event → Action and Location → Event structures, situating mining debates within parliamentary timelines and regional contexts. English reporting features more Issue/Topic → Evaluation structures, reflecting evaluative and interpretive orientations, particularly in The Jakarta Post. By integrating SFL with CDA, it shows how clause-level features perform broader ideological work. Future research should expand to other policy domains, diachronic shifts, and multimodal contexts to deepen insights into thematic structuring in media discourse.

## INTRODUCTION

The controversies surrounding mining policy in Indonesia during the early months of 2025 have once again highlighted the complex entanglement of resource governance, public accountability, and media representation. The decision by the House of Representatives to deliberate amendments to the Mining Law, including highly debated provisions that opened possibilities for universities, cooperatives, and religious organizations to hold mining concessions, sparked intense public debate. Civil society organizations, academics, and environmental groups expressed concerns that such policies risk undermining the independence of educational institutions, aggravating environmental degradation, and redistributing mining wealth in ways that reinforce elite interests rather than public welfare. In this context, online news outlets became the primary channels through which competing perspectives, policy justifications, and critiques were circulated. The linguistic resources deployed in these reports do not simply convey neutral information; they shape how actors, events, and issues are foregrounded or backgrounded, thereby influencing how the public interprets mining discourse. Yet, despite the critical role of news discourse in shaping social perceptions of mining governance, there is still limited research examining how the micro-structures of language, specifically Theme–Rheme organization, operate across languages to construct meaning in contentious policy debates.

Theme–Rheme analysis, grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), provides a powerful lens to investigate how clauses are structured as messages. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) conceptualize the Theme as the point of departure of the message, while the Rheme provides the new information. By analyzing how information is organized at the clause level, scholars can uncover how writers guide readers' attention, attribute responsibility, or frame social issues. Within media discourse, such choices are far from random; they reflect institutional priorities, cultural values, and ideological positions (Fries, 2019). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which regards discourse as both socially conditioned and socially constitutive (Fairclough, 2015; van Dijk, 2020), complements SFL by enabling interpretations that move beyond textual description to the analysis of power, ideology, and social practice. Together, SFL and CDA provide both micro-linguistic precision and macro-social interpretation.

A growing body of literature has applied Theme–Rheme analysis to various genres of texts, including academic writing, political speeches, and media coverage. For example, Potter (2016) demonstrated how the manipulation of thematic structures in English and Arabic news reports highlighted ideological stances by foregrounding certain actors or events while suppressing others. More recent studies in the Indonesian context, such as Sinaga (2019), examined editorials in *The Jakarta Post* and found that topical themes dominated, revealing how textual cohesion was managed through thematic progression. Anjaniputra, Hapsari, and Anam (2022) carried out a contrastive analysis of abstracts written in Indonesian and English, showing that differences in thematic structures reflect cultural and rhetorical preferences, with English texts favoring explicit cohesion

markers while Indonesian abstracts relied more heavily on topical themes. Similarly, Hamid (2024) investigated Malaysian editorials and concluded that the distribution of marked and unmarked themes reflected ideological positioning and writer intent. These studies confirm the value of Theme–Rheme analysis for understanding how meaning is constructed, but they also reveal an important gap: few studies compare Indonesian and English media texts directly in the context of high-stakes public controversies such as mining.

The mining debate of 2025 provides an ideal case to examine this gap. On the one hand, Indonesian-language media primarily serve domestic readers – citizens, policymakers, and local stakeholders – whose interpretations directly influence political legitimacy. On the other hand, English-language media, including *The Jakarta Post*, Reuters, and Mining.com, target international audiences such as investors, NGOs, and foreign governments, framing Indonesian mining policy within a global discourse of sustainability, economics, and governance. Although both sets of media report on the same events, they do so for different audiences and with potentially different emphases. Comparing the Theme–Rheme structures in these two language contexts thus allows us to see how textual organization mediates between local and global frames of mining governance.

Scholars have long argued that media discourse plays a constitutive role in shaping public perception of extractive industries (Gilberthorpe & Papyrakis, 2019). However, most studies have focused on content analysis or critical framing rather than linguistic micro-structures. While framing analyses often identify recurrent themes such as “economic growth versus environmental damage,” they rarely explain how these frames are realized syntactically and semantically at the clause level. Theme–Rheme analysis offers an underexplored but highly significant tool: it shows whether news prioritizes actors (e.g., “The government approved...”), issues (e.g., “Mining concessions remain controversial...”), temporal markers (e.g., “On February 18, parliament passed...”), or evaluative positions (e.g., “Critics argue that...”). These choices matter because they position readers differently: as observers of government action, as evaluators of issues, or as witnesses to events framed through time and place. Such positioning has social consequences, reinforcing trust, skepticism, or urgency in the discourse.

This study therefore proposes to conduct a comparative Theme–Rheme analysis of Indonesian and English online news articles reporting on mining discourse between January and March 2025, with additional context from June 2025 when the Raja Ampat nickel controversy reached international attention. The dataset comprises 62 articles: 39 in Bahasa Indonesia (from sources such as Tempo.co, Antara, CNBC Indonesia, Katadata, and Mongabay) and 23 in English (including *The Jakarta Post*, Reuters, Mining.com, and Tempo.co English). Each article will be segmented into clauses, with Themes and Rhemes identified following Halliday’s model. Clauses will then be coded into categories of thematic progression such as Actor → Action, Time/Event → Action, Issue/Topic → Evaluation, Location → Event, and Quotation → Source. The quantitative distribution of these patterns will be compared across the two

languages, followed by interpretive CDA to assess what the differences reveal about framing strategies, audience orientation, and ideological positioning.

The methodological choice to combine CDA with SFL responds to calls in recent literature for more integrative approaches that bridge micro-linguistic detail with macro-social analysis. As O'Halloran (2020) notes, CDA has sometimes been criticized for making broad ideological claims without sufficient attention to linguistic detail; conversely, SFL analyses can be overly descriptive if they are not situated within broader social contexts. By synthesizing the two, this study ensures that the analysis is both rigorous and socially meaningful. Furthermore, by focusing on online news, the study addresses the evolving media landscape in Indonesia, where digital outlets dominate public communication and English-language reporting serves as a window for global stakeholders (Lim, 2020).

The contribution of this study is thus threefold. First, it provides empirical data on how Theme–Rheme structures function in multilingual media coverage of a highly contentious policy domain. Second, it advances comparative discourse studies by situating Indonesian and English texts side by side, thereby illuminating how linguistic resources differ across languages in constructing similar social issues. Third, it enriches social sciences perspectives on media and resource governance by showing how micro-level syntactic organization contributes to macro-level framing and ideology. In doing so, the study not only fills a gap in linguistics but also speaks to broader debates in social sciences about media, power, and natural resource politics.

It can be concluded that the mining debate of 2025 provides a timely and socially consequential case through which to explore Theme–Rheme structures in online news. By comparing Indonesian and English coverage, this study highlights how clause-level organization of information reflects and reinforces broader discursive strategies. Through CDA grounded in SFL, it demonstrates that even seemingly technical linguistic features such as thematic structure are deeply implicated in how societies debate, legitimize, or contest extractive industries.

## **METHOD**

This study adopts a comparative critical discourse analysis design grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to investigate Theme–Rheme structures in Indonesian and English online news reporting on mining. By combining quantitative distributional analysis with qualitative interpretation, the method captures both the textual patterns of thematic organization and their social implications. This approach is well aligned with recent methodological trends in discourse studies that advocate integrative frameworks bridging linguistic detail with socio-political critique (O'Halloran, 2020; Martin & Zappavigna, 2019).

### **Data Sources and Sampling**

The dataset analyzed in this study comprises 62 online news articles covering the mining policy debate in Indonesia during the first quarter of 2025. These articles are divided into two major groups: 39 Indonesian-language reports and 23 English-language reports. Of these, 39 articles are in Bahasa Indonesia,

drawn from major national outlets such as Tempo.co, Antara, CNBC Indonesia, Katadata, and Mongabay. These outlets were chosen because of their prominence, diverse editorial orientations, and high readership. The 23 English-language articles come from The Jakarta Post, Tempo English, Reuters, and Mining.com, which target international audiences including investors, global NGOs, and foreign governments. The selection ensures that both local and global perspectives on the mining debate are represented. The distinction between the two groups is important because they target different audiences—domestic readers for the Indonesian-language news and international stakeholders for the English-language news—yet both report on overlapping issues related to mining discourse.

Articles were selected using purposive sampling, guided by two criteria: (1) explicit reference to mining, mineral resources, or the Mining Law debates, and (2) publication within the targeted time frame. Additional contextual articles from June 2025 addressing the Raja Ampat nickel controversy were included because of their relevance to international framing. The purposive approach follows previous CDA studies that prioritize discourse salience over corpus size (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

### **Data Collection**

The selected articles were archived in their entirety, including headlines, leads, and body paragraphs. Texts were cleaned to remove advertisements, hyperlinks, and irrelevant metadata. Each article was segmented into clauses, the basic unit of Theme–Rheme analysis in SFL. This clause-based segmentation is consistent with Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) definition of Theme as the point of departure in the clause, and Rheme as the remainder of the message. Clause segmentation was conducted manually to ensure accuracy, since automated tools often misidentify boundaries in Indonesian texts (Anjaniputra et al., 2022).

### **Analytical Framework**

The analysis proceeds in two stages. First, a thematic analysis of clauses is conducted according to SFL. Each clause is examined to identify its Theme (topical, interpersonal, or textual) and Rheme. Following Fries (2019) and Eggins (2004), Themes are then categorized into functional patterns such as:

Actor → Action/Decision (e.g., “The government approved the permit...”)

Time/Event → Action (e.g., “On February 18, parliament passed...”)

Issue/Topic → Evaluation (e.g., “The Mining Law revision sparked controversy...”)

Location → Event (e.g., “In Raja Ampat, nickel mining triggered conflict...”)

Quotation → Source (e.g., “‘This bill opens opportunities,’ said the minister...”)

This categorization scheme was adapted from earlier thematic progression studies (Potter, 2016; Hamid, 2024) but tailored to the mining news corpus. All coding was carried out using NVivo 14 software to facilitate systematic categorization and quantitative tabulation.

Second, the thematic patterns identified are interpreted through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Here, the analysis moves beyond description

to examine what these patterns reveal about media framing, ideology, and social positioning. For instance, frequent use of Actor → Action patterns with governmental actors as Themes may reflect an institutionalized focus on authority, while a higher proportion of Issue → Evaluation structures in English texts may indicate a discourse of critical appraisal aimed at global audiences. This CDA layer draws on Fairclough's (2015) three-dimensional model—text, discursive practice, and social practice—to situate Theme–Rheme structures within broader socio-political contexts.

### **Reliability and Validity**

To enhance analytical rigor, several strategies were implemented. First, inter-coder checking was performed on 20% of the corpus by two independent coders trained in SFL. Agreement reached 87%, which exceeds the acceptable threshold for discourse studies (McEnery & Hardie, 2019). Discrepancies were discussed until consensus was achieved. Second, triangulation was pursued by comparing the thematic patterns with framing analyses from secondary studies on mining news (Gilberthorpe & Papyrakis, 2019). This ensured that interpretations were not solely reliant on linguistic patterns but were grounded in broader discourse scholarship. Finally, transparency was maintained by preserving an annotated dataset that can be made available upon request, enabling replication.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All texts analyzed are publicly accessible online news articles. No personal or sensitive data are involved, so ethical risks are minimal. Nevertheless, the study acknowledges the intellectual property of the news organizations and cites them appropriately in excerpts.

### **Scope and Limitations**

The study focuses exclusively on news reports about mining, thus findings are context-bound and may not generalize to other policy debates. Moreover, while the dataset is relatively modest in size, it reflects depth rather than breadth, aligning with CDA's focus on discourse salience. Limitations also include potential subjectivity in clause segmentation and thematic coding, though mitigated through inter-coder reliability checks.

## **RESULT OF ANALYSIS**

### ***Overview of the Data***

The dataset analyzed in this study comprises 62 online news articles covering the mining policy debate in Indonesia during the first quarter of 2025, with some additional coverage extending into June 2025 on Raja Ampat issues. These articles are divided into two major groups: 39 Indonesian-language reports and 23 English-language reports. The distinction between the two groups is important because they target different audiences—domestic readers for the Indonesian-language news and international stakeholders for the English-language news—yet both report on overlapping issues related to mining discourse.

The distribution of the news articles collected and analyzed in this study is presented in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 displays Indonesian-language online news on mining, while Table 2 summarizes English-language online news on the same topic, both covering the period from January to June 2025.

**Table 1. Indonesian-Language Online News on Mining (Jan-Jun 2025)**

Media / Source	Number of Articles	Date Range	Main Topics
Tempo.co (ID)	14	20 Jan – 22 Mar 2025	Mining permits for universities, parliamentary controversies, nickel investigations, religious organizations.
Bisnis.com	1	24-Jan-25	January 2025 Coal Reference Price (HBA).
CNBC Indonesia	4	9-22 Jan 2025	Coal production, permits for organizations/universities, KPC issues.
ANTARA (central)	7	17 Feb – 20 Mar 2025	Parliamentary discussions on the Mining Law, permits for SMEs, provisions of the Mining Law, cancellation of university permits.
ANTARA (regional)	2	18 Feb – 24 Mar 2025	Megapolitan (permits for universities), Bengkulu (ban on coal trucks).
Mongabay Indonesia	6	28 Jan – 21 Mar 2025	Impacts of nickel mining in Kabaena, Gebe, and Bobo islands; coal in South Kalimantan; gold mining in Sangihe.
Katadata	1	23-Feb-25	Permits for local SMEs in mining areas.
ANTARA – Raja Ampat	4	8–12 Jun 2025	Raja Ampat nickel mining conflict, revocation of permits, investigations by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

**Table 2. English-Language Online News on Mining (Jan-Jun 2025)**

Media / Source	Number of Articles	Date Range	Main Topics
Tempo.co (EN)	5	18–19 Feb 2025	Ratification of the Mining Law, permits for SMEs/cooperatives, cancellation of university permits.
The Jakarta Post	14	16 Jan – 30 Jun 2025	Mining Law debate, royalty policies, Freeport operations, Raja Ampat mining controversy, environmental concerns.
ANTARA (EN)	1	18-Feb-25	PT Arsari Tambang's reforestation commitment.
Reuters	2	Jan–Mar 2025	Extension of mining permits, industry opposition to royalty increases.
Mining.com	1	23-Jan-25	2025 nickel mining quota approval.

Taken together, the two tables show that the dataset comprises a total of 62 articles, with 39 published in Bahasa Indonesia and 23 in English. This distribution provides a balanced foundation for comparative analysis, enabling

the study to examine how Theme–Rheme structures are employed across different linguistic and audience contexts in the reporting of mining issues.

### ***Theme–Rheme Patterns in Indonesian-Language News***

The analysis of 39 Indonesian-language news articles reveals five recurring patterns of Theme–Rheme structures. These patterns demonstrate how information is organized at the clause level and how specific textual choices shape readers’ focus and interpretation of mining discourse.

#### ***Pattern 1: Actor/Institution as Theme, Action/Decision as Rheme***

The most frequent pattern in the corpus places institutional actors – such as government bodies, parliament, or social organizations – at the beginning of the clause. This thematic choice emphasizes authority and responsibility, while the Rheme conveys new information about decisions, statements, or actions. For example:

1. *“Baleg DPR membuka peluang pemberian izin tambang kepada perguruan tinggi dan UKM”* (20 Jan 2025, ANTARA)  
‘The House of Representatives’ Legislative Body opened the possibility of granting mining permits to universities and SMEs
2. *“PBNU menyatakan siap mengelola tambang eks KPC”* (22 Jan 2025, CNBC Indonesia)  
Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU) declared its readiness to manage the former KPC mine.

Both highlight actors first, framing them as the driving force behind subsequent actions. This pattern, found in 35.9% of the articles, reflects the Indonesian journalistic tendency to foreground political or institutional authority.

#### ***Pattern 2: Time/Event as Theme, Actor + Action as Rheme***

A second pattern foregrounds time markers or specific events as Themes, followed by information about actors’ decisions or actions. Examples include

1. *“Pada 18 Februari 2025, DPR mengesahkan RUU Minerba menjadi undang-undang”* (18 Feb 2025, ANTARA Mataram)  
On 18 February 2025, the House of Representatives passed the Mining Bill into law.
2. *“Awal Maret, WALHI memperingatkan dampak izin tambang terhadap independensi kampus”* (6 Mar 2025, Tempo.co).  
In early March, WALHI warned about the impact of mining permits on the independence of universities

By starting with temporal cues, the articles situate events chronologically, guiding readers to interpret news developments as part of an unfolding sequence. This pattern accounted for 17.9% of the dataset, showing the importance of temporality in Indonesian news narratives.

#### ***Pattern 3: Issue/Object as Theme, Evaluation or Condition as Rheme***

The third pattern involves presenting an issue or object as the Theme, followed by evaluative or conditional information. For instance:

1. *“Izin tambang untuk perguruan tinggi menuai kritik dari kalangan akademisi”* (28 Jan 2025, Mongabay)  
Mining permits for universities drew criticism from academics
2. *“Revisi UU Minerba dinilai bisa membuat kampus disetir perusahaan tambang”* (22 Feb 2025, Tempo.co)

The revision of the Mining Law was considered likely to make universities driven by mining companies.

The first frames the issue of mining licenses itself as the focal point, while the Rheme supplies evaluative commentary. Similarly, the second highlights the law revision as a Theme, with the Rheme expressing a judgment. Occurring in 20.5% of the data, this pattern underscores how Indonesian media use thematic positioning to foreground controversial issues and invite evaluation.

***Pattern 4: Location as Theme, Event as Rheme***

Another notable pattern foregrounds geographical settings or locations as Themes, followed by descriptions of events taking place there. For example

1. *“Di Bengkulu, pemerintah kota melarang truk batubara melintas mulai 24 Maret”* (24 Mar 2025, ANTARA Bengkulu)

In Bengkulu, the city government banned coal trucks from passing starting 24 March

2. *“Di Pulau Kabaena, warga kehilangan lahan pangan akibat tambang nikel”* (12 Feb 2025, Mongabay).

On Kabaena Island, residents lost farmland due to nickel mining

Such constructions emphasize spatial specificity and localize national issues in concrete contexts. With 15.3% frequency, this pattern reflects how Indonesian news often embeds policy debates within regional or local realities.

***Pattern 5: Quotation/Opinion as Theme, Source as Rheme***

Finally, several articles begin with a quotation or opinion as Theme, followed by attribution of the source. Examples include

1. *“Pendanaan kampus dari tambang rawan konflik,” ujar Dekan Pertambangan ITB* (23 Jan 2025, Tempo.co),

Funding universities from mining is prone to conflict,” said the Dean of Mining at ITB

2. *“Izin tambang bisa menggerus independensi akademik,” kata dosen UGM* (21 Jan 2025, Tempo.co).

Mining permits could erode academic independence,” said a lecturer from UGM

This structure highlights the message itself before identifying the speaker, thereby foregrounding discursive content while maintaining journalistic attribution. Although less common—10.3% of the corpus—this pattern underscores the importance of legitimizing discourse through authoritative voices.

Based on the above analysis, Indonesian-language mining news is heavily actor-oriented, with more than one-third of the clauses foregrounding institutional actors as Themes. Issue-oriented and time-based Themes follow in importance, while location-based and quotation-based Themes play supporting roles. The predominance of actor-based Themes suggests that Indonesian news discourse frames mining debates largely through the actions of government institutions, parliament, and social organizations, while other thematic strategies provide temporal, evaluative, or local anchoring. This actor-centric emphasis aligns with broader tendencies in Indonesian journalism, where political elites and institutions often dominate public narratives.

### *Theme–Rheme Patterns in English-Language News*

The analysis of 23 English-language news articles shows that five dominant Theme–Rheme patterns are consistently employed. These structures reveal how international and English-language outlets frame the mining policy debate in Indonesia for global audiences. While the overall tendencies parallel those in Indonesian-language reporting, English texts show a higher reliance on evaluative and issue-centered themes, especially in opinion and editorial writing.

#### ***Pattern 1: Theme = Actor/Institution → Rheme = Action/Decision***

The most prevalent pattern in the English corpus begins with institutional actors – such as the House of Representatives, ministries, or mining companies – followed by descriptions of their actions or decisions. Examples include

1. “The House of Representatives ratified the Mining Bill in a plenary session” (18 Feb 2025, Tempo.co EN), and
2. “Indonesia’s government approved the 2025 nickel mining quota” (23 Jan 2025, Mining.com).

By foregrounding institutions, these clauses highlight actors as the primary sources of authority and change, with the Rheme providing details of the decision or outcome. This structure, accounting for 39.1% of the data, reflects the conventions of hard news reporting, where actors’ decisions drive the storyline.

#### ***Pattern 2: Theme = Time/Event → Rheme = Actor + Action***

A second pattern emphasizes temporal markers or events as Themes, situating the news within a timeline before introducing actors’ actions. The examples include:

1. “On February 18, the new Mining Law was passed by the Indonesian parliament” (18 Feb 2025, Tempo.co EN), and
2. “In early March, nickel miners demanded the government scrap the planned royalty hike” (17 Mar 2025, The Jakarta Post)

This pattern shows how time-based openings contextualize developments as part of ongoing political and industrial dynamics. This pattern, found in 17.4% of articles, demonstrates the importance of chronology in situating events for international readers unfamiliar with local timelines.

#### ***Pattern 3: Theme = Issue/Topic → Rheme = Evaluation/Condition***

Another significant pattern highlights issues or topics as Themes, followed by evaluations, interpretations, or conditions. For example,

1. “The Mining Law revision sparked controversy over granting concessions to universities” (21 Jan 2025, The Jakarta Post), and
2. “Mining concessions for religious groups raised questions about fairness and governance” (18 Feb 2025, The Jakarta Post).

This pattern reflects a discourse style where the issue is foregrounded, and the Rheme provides analytical or evaluative commentary. With 21.7% occurrence, it is the second most frequent pattern, strongly represented in The Jakarta Post editorials and opinion pieces.

#### ***Pattern 4: Theme = Location → Rheme = Event/Impact***

In several articles, geographical locations are placed in Theme position to situate events spatially. For instance,

1. “In Raja Ampat, nickel mining has triggered conflicts with tourism interests” (10 Jun 2025, The Jakarta Post), and

2. “At the Gresik smelter, Indonesia aims to increase gold output” (19 Mar 2025, The Jakarta Post).

These constructions localize global policy debates in concrete spaces, highlighting environmental and community-level consequences. This pattern, making up 13.0% of the corpus, underscores the role of spatial anchoring in connecting mining policy to lived realities.

***Pattern 5: Theme = Quotation → Rheme = Source***

Finally, English news also frequently employs quotations as Themes, with attribution to the source placed in the Rheme. Examples include

1. “‘This bill opens opportunities for SMEs,’ said Minister of Cooperatives” (18 Feb 2025, Tempo.co EN), and
2. “‘Nickel mining threatens endangered Papuan blue orchids,’ an activist warned” (30 Jun 2025, The Jakarta Post).

Such patterns prioritize the statement itself, lending salience to the voice of policymakers, activists, or industry representatives. Although less frequent (8.7% of the data), this strategy legitimizes coverage by anchoring it in authoritative or critical perspectives.

It is clearly observed that the English-language mining news employs a similar actor-oriented approach to Indonesian-language news, with actors and institutions placed prominently in Theme position. However, there is a notable difference: English texts devote a larger share to issue- or evaluation-based Themes, reflecting the prominence of editorial and analytical styles in outlets like The Jakarta Post. The prevalence of evaluative structures suggests that English-language reporting seeks not only to inform but also to interpret Indonesia’s mining policy for a global readership. Thus, while both corpora emphasize actor-driven developments, English-language news more frequently frames mining discourse through analytical, evaluative, and globally contextualized Themes.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study reveal both convergence and divergence in the Theme–Rheme patterns used in Indonesian and English online news reporting on mining. At the descriptive level, both corpora display a strong reliance on the Actor → Action/Decision pattern, which foregrounds institutional actors such as government ministries, parliament, religious organizations, and mining companies. However, while Indonesian-language articles often foreground actors to emphasize authority and legitimize actions, English-language reporting demonstrates a greater proportion of Issue/Topic → Evaluation structures, particularly in opinion and editorial writing. These differences are not merely stylistic but are integral to how mining discourse is shaped and how readers are invited to construct meaning.

### ***Actor-Centric News and the Construction of Authority***

The predominance of Actor → Action/Decision structures in both corpora – 35.9% in Indonesian and 39.1% in English – signals the central role of institutions in constructing mining discourse. This pattern reflects what van Dijk (2020) identifies as the discursive reproduction of elite power: by consistently positioning institutional actors in the Theme slot, news texts reinforce the perception that governments, parliaments, and corporations are the primary

agents driving the mining agenda. Readers are positioned to interpret mining as an arena of elite decision-making, where the most relevant information concerns the actions of authorities rather than the experiences of affected communities.

In Indonesian news, this actor-centric orientation resonates with broader patterns of political communication where authority is legitimated through formal institutions. For example, headlines such as “Baleg DPR membuka peluang pemberian izin tambang kepada perguruan tinggi dan UKM” (ANTARA, 20 Jan 2025) do not merely report on decisions; they affirm the authority of the legislative body as the legitimate decision-maker. This aligns with research by Taufiqurrahman (2021), who found that Indonesian media often structure their discourse to highlight state institutions as the central actors, thereby reinforcing hierarchical governance models.

In English-language coverage, actor-oriented structures also dominate, but with subtle differences. Sentences like “The House of Representatives ratified the Mining Bill in a plenary session” (Tempo.co EN, 18 Feb 2025) project authority but simultaneously serve a global readership by clarifying institutional actions within the framework of Indonesia’s policy-making system. Such constructions align with the “event-driven” nature of international hard news (Richardson, 2007), where the actions of institutions are highlighted to provide clarity and credibility.

#### *Temporal, Spatial, and Evaluative Anchors in Meaning-Making*

The second and third most frequent patterns, Time/Event → Action and Issue/Topic → Evaluation, contribute differently to meaning-making. Temporal Themes, occurring in 17.9% of Indonesian and 17.4% of English articles, establish chronology, anchoring readers’ understanding of mining debates as unfolding processes. By beginning with time markers—“Pada 18 Februari 2025, DPR mengesahkan RUU Minerba” (ANTARA, 18 Feb 2025) or “On February 18, the new Mining Law was passed” (Tempo.co EN, 18 Feb 2025)—the news situates decisions in a linear sequence. This temporal anchoring fosters what Fairclough (2015) describes as a “logic of inevitability,” where institutional actions appear as natural steps in a timeline rather than contested choices.

By contrast, Issue/Topic → Evaluation patterns, which appear more prominently in English news (21.7%) than in Indonesian (20.5%), foreground controversies, judgments, or social consequences. Examples such as “Mining concessions for religious groups raised questions about fairness and governance” (The Jakarta Post, 18 Feb 2025) illustrate how issue-led structures invite readers to engage in evaluative thinking. This supports van Leeuwen’s (2016) argument that discourse structures often encode social evaluations that shape ideological positions. In the Indonesian corpus, evaluative patterns exist but are less frequent and often couched in actor statements or NGO critiques, reflecting a more cautious use of explicit evaluation in mainstream reporting.

Spatial Themes (Location → Event) also contribute meaningfully by localizing mining discourse. Indonesian examples like “Di Pulau Kabaena, warga kehilangan lahan pangan akibat tambang nikel” (Mongabay, 12 Feb 2025) highlight the direct impact of mining on communities, while English equivalents such as “In Raja Ampat, nickel mining has triggered conflicts with tourism

interests” (The Jakarta Post, 10 Jun 2025) situate mining within global environmental debates. In both cases, spatial anchoring bridges macro-policy issues with lived realities, enabling readers to connect abstract decisions with concrete effects. As Machin and Mayr (2012) argue, spatialization in news discourse often serves ideological functions by making certain consequences visible while obscuring others.

### ***Quotations and the Politics of Legitimacy***

The use of Quotation → Source structures, though least frequent (10.3% in Indonesian and 8.7% in English), plays an important legitimizing role. Quotations foreground voices – government officials, academics, activists – that news organizations deem authoritative. For instance, “‘Pendanaan kampus dari tambang rawan konflik,’ ujar Dekan Pertambangan ITB” (Tempo.co, 23 Jan 2025) and “‘Nickel mining threatens endangered Papuan blue orchids,’ an activist warned” (The Jakarta Post, 30 Jun 2025) foreground statements before attribution. This structure amplifies voices while maintaining journalistic balance. As Cotter (2010) explains, quotation placement is a strategic tool that allows news discourse to construct credibility by attributing evaluation to sources rather than to the journalist’s own voice.

### ***Media Ideology and Audience Orientation***

The divergence between Indonesian and English reporting reflects differences in media ideology and audience orientation. Indonesian outlets, especially ANTARA and Tempo, often structure their news to foreground actors and events, thereby reinforcing institutional legitimacy and narrating mining debates as state-led processes. This supports Lim’s (2020) observation that Indonesian digital media remain deeply intertwined with state-centered political communication, even in the era of online journalism.

In contrast, English-language outlets, particularly The Jakarta Post, devote more attention to evaluative structures. By highlighting issues, controversies, and global environmental concerns, these outlets engage international readers who expect critical commentary on governance and sustainability. This aligns with Reese and Shoemaker’s (2016) model of media ideology, where journalistic routines and audience expectations shape how stories are framed. For global audiences, news is not only about reporting what happened but also about interpreting what it means in broader economic, political, and ecological contexts.

### ***Implications for Discourse Formation and Reader Cognition***

The patterns found demonstrate how Theme–Rheme organization contributes to discourse formation and meaning-making in readers’ minds. When actors are consistently placed in Theme position, readers are cognitively primed to associate mining with authority and elite decision-making. When issues or evaluations are foregrounded, readers are positioned to engage critically with policy controversies. Spatial and temporal Themes situate readers either in the flow of events or in specific locations, creating narratives that can appear either inevitable or locally urgent. Quotations, finally, legitimize positions by foregrounding voices deemed trustworthy.

In this sense, Theme–Rheme structures are not neutral but ideological. They contribute to what Wodak and Meyer (2016) describe as the discursive

construction of social reality. In Indonesian-language media, actor-oriented structures reinforce a discourse of authority and institutional legitimacy. In English-language media, issue-oriented and evaluative structures foster a discourse of critique and global accountability. Both orientations shape how readers—domestic or international—make sense of mining policy, with implications for public opinion, activism, and governance.

From all the discussion having been conducted, the Theme–Rheme patterns observed in Indonesian and English news reflect distinct discursive strategies rooted in media ideology and audience expectations. While both corpora foreground actors and decisions, Indonesian news emphasizes state legitimacy and chronology, whereas English news foregrounds issues and evaluations to invite critical engagement. These differences matter because they shape not only how mining discourse is reported but also how it is understood and acted upon by different readerships. The study thus confirms that thematic structures are key sites of ideological work, where linguistic choices translate into cognitive and social effects.

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

This study has examined how Theme–Rheme structures operate in Indonesian- and English-language online news reporting on mining, based on 62 articles published between January and June 2025. The analysis revealed that both corpora rely heavily on the Actor → Action/Decision pattern, which foregrounds institutional actors such as parliament, government ministries, religious organizations, and mining companies. This dominant structure reflects journalistic conventions that center elite decision-makers and frame mining as an arena of institutional authority.

At the same time, the comparison highlighted key differences. Indonesian news tended to emphasize chronology and locality, through Time/Event → Action and Location → Event patterns. These thematic choices situate mining debates within parliamentary processes and regional contexts, presenting them as part of an unfolding sequence of state actions. In contrast, English-language news relied more heavily on Issue/Topic → Evaluation structures, foregrounding controversies, governance issues, and environmental concerns. This evaluative style aligns with the expectations of international readers who demand interpretation and accountability alongside factual reporting.

The implications of these findings are significant. First, they confirm that Theme–Rheme structures function ideologically, shaping discourse by guiding readers' focus and framing how events should be understood. Indonesian reporting reinforces state-centered legitimacy, while English reporting situates Indonesia's mining policies within global debates on equity and sustainability. Second, these results suggest that news texts do not simply describe reality but actively participate in its construction by privileging certain actors, issues, and perspectives.

For social sciences, the study demonstrates the value of integrating Systemic Functional Linguistics with Critical Discourse Analysis. Clause-level patterns reveal how micro-linguistic features connect to macro-level ideological work.

Understanding these connections is essential in contexts such as mining, where resource governance, environmental impact, and public accountability remain contested.

Several avenues for future inquiry remain open. Expanding the dataset to other policy domains—such as energy transition, deforestation, or infrastructure—would test whether the observed patterns are unique to mining or generalizable across issues. A longitudinal approach could trace whether thematic structures shift in response to political changes or public pressure. Cross-media comparisons, including television, online video, and social media, would reveal how Theme–Rheme operates in multimodal environments.

Additionally, empirical studies of reader reception could measure how different thematic structures influence trust, perception of authority, and engagement with policy debates. Comparative studies across Southeast Asia could also examine whether the actor-oriented bias of Indonesian news is mirrored in neighboring countries with similar political and media environments.

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