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Thematic Analysis of President Akufo-Addo's 2023 State of the Nation Address

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Abstract

This study examines the items given prominence in President Akufo-Addo's 2023 State of the Nation Address. As a qualitative research with textual analysis design, the study adopted the Theme-Rheme model of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics theory with which the clause is construed as a message. The findings of the study indicate that (1) topical, interpersonal, and textual Themes have their representation and distribution in the text. The most frequent ideational/topical Theme used in English is Participant followed by Circumstance. Process is the least thematised experiential. The textual Theme include mostly conjunctions, followed by conjunctive adjuncts. Interpersonal Theme includes mostly vocatives and few modal adjuncts and very few finite verbal operators. The elements of the topical Theme which present the core content of the message include; Participant such as Actor, Scope, Senser, and Identified – realized by pronouns and nominal group; Circumstantial of Temporal Location, Duration, Manner, Cause, Accompaniment, Role, Angle of Viewpoint. The study could be a significant contribution to scholarship in functional grammar, particularly in Theme-Rheme analysis of English use in ESL context. It demonstrates how a grammatical theory highlights foregrounding of experiences in a discourse and facilitating text composition and comprehension.

Keywords

theme, rheme, state of the nation address, systemic functional linguistics

Introduction

Language use involves conscious efforts to foreground and background ideas presented in texts. This resource of language employed to project (i.e. foreground) some elements to readers' or listeners' attention has been termed Theme by Prague school of linguists, and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 89) argue that the Theme serves as "the point of departure of the message" of a clause "to guide the addressee in developing an interpretation of the message; by making part of the message as prominent". This study examines the characteristics of the parts of the clause as a message promoted to this prominence in Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's 2023 State of the Nation Address.

With a State of the Nation Address (SONA), a political head figure, mandated by a constitutional provision, presents to the citizens the level of progress the country has reached, the progress it is making, and the policies for the near and distant future. Thematic analysis is key to the interpretation of the experiences (i.e. the happenings, actions, thoughts, ideas, and feelings) that provide orientation into the messages and how these experiences have been mapped together into a coherent message. Naturally, according to Halliday (2004), elements in thematic position attracts listeners' (or readers') attention than the elements in the remaining part of the clause termed Rheme, and the order of Theme and Rheme in the organization in the clause as a message is not arbitrary or value-free; the order can be manipulated to reflect a specific angle of presenting the message of the text. Therefore, doing Theme-Rheme analysis attempts to unlock the meaning-potential of the clause as a message and to uncover the socially-shared meanings, beliefs, and opinions, which may constitute ideological representations regarding how a phenomenon has been presented in a discourse, here 2023 SONA.

SONAs including those presented by Presidents of Ghana particularly in the Fourth Republic (i.e. January 1992 onwards) have received some amount of scholarly attention in recent times from diverse disciplinary persuasions including tourism (Adu-Ampong, 2017), media and communication (cf. Sikanku, 2022), health (cf. Quarshie et al, 2021), and linguistics (Logogye, 2021, Agbesi et al, 2023, Israel et al, 2023). These studies have examined SONAs other than the 2023 SONA and their objectives have focused on ideational and ideological contents only. Studies like Adjei et al's (2015) adopted Transitivity framework of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2004) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to examine President Atta Mills' use of processes and participants of those process in 2009 SONA. Sikanku's (2022) communication study of the 2019 SONA using textual analysis examines the major topical areas embedded in the speech and also to ascertain the recurring essential themes (i.e. topical issues) of the address. No study has so far employed Theme-Rheme framework of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics to study any SONA by a Ghanaian President in the Fourth Republic. This is the lacuna this present study has filled.

The current study is very critical to explaining the socially-shared meanings, beliefs, and opinions presented in 2023 SONA in the light of what the President consciously or unconsciously prioritises to give prominence in the present Ghana, especially, when Ghana's economy is characterized by serious challenges including environmental

degradation, astronomic public debt, fiscal deficit and the likes. Hence, the present thematic study of the 2023 SONA.

Theme-Rheme analysis has been carried out on discourses in a number of fields – political speeches, academic discourse, media discourse, and literary discourse. These studies have sought among other things to establish the experiential items thematized in determination of the speakers' focus, the types of Themes, and the kinds of linguistic properties that characterize the Themes. For example, Kuswoyo (2016) used Theme-Rheme framework to study political discourse and analyzed the Theme and thematic progression (TP) patterns employed in two selected press conference speeches of President Barack Obama. The findings show that Obama frequently uses participant Themes and few circumstantial Themes. Also, he uses only modal adjuncts interpersonal and structural conjunctions and continuatives as elements of textual Theme. The study reveals that thematic structure is used to develop a text to enhance communicative effectively. The combination of constant and linear TP pattern is used most in both press conferences. Theme and thematic progression patterns use to structure meaning in President Trump's 2008 victory speech were the research objectives of Liu and Zhang (218), whose analysis of the content and structure of Trump's victory speech shows that parallel and concentrated progression patterns are used by President Trump to emphasize some important information to his audience. President Trump also uses continuous and crossed progression patterns as helpful strategies for the development of the speech.

Studies involving the use of Theme-Rheme framework of Ghanaian discourse include Asante-Anyimadu's (2017) study of the congregation speeches of Vice-Chancellors of University of Education, Winneba. The study affirms that the topical Theme presents the core content of the Theme system that construes the clause as a bundle of message. Her findings indicate that the Participant of the process is the most frequent experiential element thematised, followed by circumstantial elements, and that Processes are minimally thematised in those congregational addresses.

Some linguistics studies have been undertaken on SONAs include Adjei et al (2015), Dadugblor (2016), Logogye (2021), Agbesi et al (2023), and Israel et al (2023). As mentioned in the earlier section of this paper, Adjei et al (2015) used Transitivity model of SFL to experiences communicated in President Mills' 2009 SONA. Their findings show that President Mills' speech is characterized by dominant material Processes with government functionaries and agents mentioned as the dominant Actors. This study belongs to the grammar, a sub-discipline of linguistics. From discourse analysis persuasion, Dadugblor (2016) did a synchronic study of the State of the Nation Addresses in Ghana and United States of America in which he, drawing on Andru's (2013) Rhetorical Discourse Analysis, investigated the expressive value of values of the inclusive and exclusive 'we' in the selected address. The finding of the study reveals that these speakers use the exclusive and inclusive 'we' contextually to associate with different audiences for purposes of political gain with both epidemic and deliberative stances. Pragmatically, Israel et al (2023) have examined communicative effectiveness in Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's 2022 SONA and have established that the address meets the Habermas' (1979) validity claims including: uttering something understandable, giving

the hearer something to understand, making himself understandable, and coming to understanding with another person.

Others have also examined SONA from non-linguistic perspective, including health and tourism. Quarshie et al (2021), for example, analysed the SONA's from 2007 to 2021 for evidence of mental health priorities in Ghana using summative qualitative content analysis. Their findings indicate that no mental health condition was highlighted in any of the SONAs and so, concluded that mental health priorities in terms of policy and management are superficial, inadequate comparative to those of physical health.

These inquiries have pointed to some relevance of studying the SONA from diverse perspectives; their meaning-potential is high and require vigorous and detailed analysis to unearth these linguistic delicacies embedded in them. The present study was intended to offer a good slice of this semantic values in the 2023 SONA by showing what elements are foregrounded into prominence to attract the attention of audiences.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the types of Theme employed by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo in his 2023 State of the Nation Address for the experiential functions these types of Theme manifest and their communicative implications in the selected speech. It was thus aimed specifically to: (1) investigate the types of Theme employed in the 2023 SONA, (2) examine the experiential elements thematized in the 2023 SONA, and (3) identify the lexico-grammatical resources that characterize the Themes in 2023 SONA. In line with the research objectives constituting the focus of this study, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. Which types of Theme are employed in the 2023 SONA?
2. What experiential elements are thematised in the 2023 SONA?
3. What lexico-grammatical resources characterize the Themes in 2023 SONA?

The present study is significant in three main ways. First, it contributes to the understanding of the generic structure of the clause as a message. Theme plays an essential role in conceptualizing the clause as a message by structuring the flow of information in a discourse. The findings of this study will indicate how Theme, as a language system, helps in interpreting the message in 2023 SONA by mapping out the relevant information. Again, the study offers language users valuable insights which can inform the ordering of the contents of their speeches to focus attention on the prioritized issues. Finally, the findings of this study serve as a fertile ground for further research in SFL in general and Theme-Rheme analysis in particular.

Method

The present research is qualitative with a textual analysis design. Caulfield (2022) describes textual analysis broadly to include describing, interpreting and understanding texts. All forms of data can be extracted from a text from its literal, grammatical, pragmatic and discursal meaning to symbolism, assumptions, and values it reveals. Also, McKee (2003) explains textual analysis as a way for researchers to gather

information about how other human beings make sense of the world. In carrying out textual analysis, researchers gather information about texts, which are meaningful.

The data for this study is the 2023 State of the Nation Address delivered by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on 8th March 2023 in Parliament of Ghana. The text was accessed from the official websites of the Presidency of the Republic of Ghana, the Parliament of Ghana and the Ghana News Agency. The copies from the three sources were compared for the purpose of establishing that we have the authentic address.

The analytical framework used in the study is the Theme-Rheme model of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory. SFL views language "as a network of SYSTEMS, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning" (Halliday, 1994, p.15), and Theme-Rheme system is concerned with the creation of text through internal organisation of information in it, to make it interpretable to the audience. The clause is the unit of analysis. In English, Theme is realised by what is placed in initial position within the clause and this initial position gives the element a 'special status' of prominence within the clause. The remainder of the clause forms the Rheme. The structure of a Theme in SFL ends with the first experiential element – process, participant or circumstantial.

The text was first coded into clauses (six hundred and seventy-eight). Bound clauses were counted as separate analysable entry since they are ranked as constituents of the clause complex (i.e. sentence in traditional grammar). The clauses in the selected text were analysed using the Theme-Rheme framework which construes the clause as message in SFL theory by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). The Theme-Rheme system analyses each clause into two main parts – Theme and Rheme. The Theme is further analysed into their functional, structural and markedness types.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the findings in line with the three research questions underpinning the study, namely, (1) Which types of Theme are employed in the 2023 SONA? (2) What experiential elements are manifested by Theme in the 2023 SONA? (3) What lexico-grammatical resources characterize the Themes in 2023 SONA?

Types of Themes in 2023 SONA

The analysis of the Theme types has been done in terms of metafunctions (or simply functions), structure and markedness.

Functional Types of Theme

In terms of functions, 516 out of the total 678 clauses have topical Themes, while 162 which are non-finite bound clauses have no topical themes, majority of which have 'zero' or 'null' Theme; some clauses have interpersonal or textual Theme; and few have both interpersonal and textual Themes. The specific frequencies are tabulated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Frequency of use of functional Theme types

Theme type	Frequency of use	Percentage
Topical Themes	516	76.1
Interpersonal Themes	73	10.8
Textual Themes	198	29.4

From Table 1, five hundred and sixteen (516) topical Themes are used making the topical Theme the most frequently used followed by one hundred and ninety-eight (198) textual Themes, and then, seventy-three (73) interpersonal Themes. The results build on the findings of earlier researchers like Asante-Anyimadu (2017), Dahunsi and Babatunde (2017), Rahayu (2018) that the topical Theme is the most frequently used Theme in written texts. Such distribution is natural as central to text are the representations of experiences and the speaker's inner consciousness and these usually form the point of departure of the clauses. These ideational representations are then networked into a coherent discourse with the use of the textual connectives, which make the former and latter mandatory in text composition.

The frequency and percentage of use is clausal, i.e. the number of clauses in which the Theme types are used. Thus, 516 (76.1%) clauses in 2023 SONA use topical Themes. These include the free clauses and finite bound clauses. The remaining 162 (23.9%) clauses are non-finite, some of which do not have Theme structure. Examples are provided below.

Table 2. Analysis of non-finite clause

Mr Speaker, I am glad	to be here in this august House to perform, once again, one of the most pleasant duties on the calendar of the President of the Republic,
THEME	RHEME

Examples and the characteristics within the various types of the functional Themes are presented at the relevant sub-sections in the following presentation.

Topical Themes in 2023 SONA

Topical Themes basically show how language is used to reflect our outer experiences, and inner consciousness (thoughts and feelings). According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2014), topical Themes have experiential or transitivity content as Participants, Circumstantials or Processes. Participants are realised by nominal groups; Circumstantials are realised by adverbial groups and prepositional phrases; and Processes are realised by verbal groups. The distribution of the topical Themes is shown below.

Table 3. Distribution of topical Themes

Aspect of Transitivity	Frequency	Percentage	Exmples
Participant	418	81.0	<i>I, We, all households, our currency</i>
Circumstantial	91	17.6	<i>Even then, after the event, today</i>
Process	7	1.3	<i>Allow, let me, let us</i>
Total	516	100	

Clearly, from Table 3, the most frequently used thematised experiential element is the Participant representing approximately 81% of all topical Themes. The least ideational Theme is the Process representing some 1.3% of the number. The dominance of Participant in Theme position indicates that the President draws his audiences' attention more to WHO and WHAT are involved in the processes than the processes themselves or the circumstantials within which the processes occur. Examples of topical Themes from the present corpus are presented below.

Table 4. Analysis of topical Themes

Transitivity	THEME	RHEME
Participant	Many of the courts	have not been fit for purpose.
	Technical and vocational education	is being given the place of honour they deserve.
Circumstantials	Beyond the use of COVID funds,	there are legitimate questions being asked about how the country's debt situation got where it is.
	Last year,	I set up a five-member ad hoc Cabinet committee.
Process	Please allow	me // to acknowledge and appreciate the significance of the day.
	Mr Speaker, let me	state emphatically // that we have not been reckless in borrowing and in spending.

The participants *Many of the courts*, and *Technical and vocational education* are nominal groups (simplex and complex respectively) given focalization of attention in the clauses. Circumstantials *Beyond the use of COVID funds* and *Last year* are a prepositional phrase and an adverbial group respectively. They set the background providing the location in time for the processes in the Rhemes. The Processes *allow* and *let me* are thematised in imperative clauses to signal some 'rhetorical action' expected of the primary audience by the President.

The President's 2023 SONA as usual of such address is basically informative, i.e. the clauses convey information, in which more participants of the process and the backgrounds that influence the processes are projected to the attention of the audience.

Interpersonal Theme in 2023 SONA

The interpersonal Themes used in the 2023 SONA include vocatives, modal adjuncts and finite verbal operators. These realisations of interpersonal Theme are distributed below.

Table 5. Distribution of interpersonal Themes

Interpersonal Theme	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Vocatives	61	83.6	<i>Mr. Speaker, Fellow Ghanaians</i>
Modal/Comment Adjuncts	8	10.9	<i>please, mercifully, indeed</i>
Finite Verbal Operators	4	5.5	<i>are, shall, dare</i>
Total	73	100	

The most frequently used interpersonal Theme is vocatives. Vocatives are used sixty-one (61) times, sixty (60) of which are the nominal group “Mr Speaker” as in Example (1). The remainder is “Fellow Ghanaians” used only once as in (15). Next in frequency is the modal adjuncts. Eight (8), representing approximately 11%, modal adjuncts are used in all. The least frequently used interpersonal realization is the finite verbal operator, with frequency of four (4) representing 5.5%.

Vocatives

Two items form the vocatives in the text – “Mr Speaker” and “Fellow Ghanaians”. The former is how a male Speaker (the one who presides over proceedings in parliament) is conventionally addressed on the floor of the chamber of Parliament.

- (1). (a) Mr. Speaker, **it** is the 8th of March today,
 (b) Fellow Ghanaians, **let us** believe in ourselves, and in our capacity to overcome the problems that are before us.

These vocatives are used to enact “the participation of the addressee or addressees in the exchange” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 159). A vocative usually gives the identity a particular addressee and calls for their attention. President Akufo-Addo’s use of vocatives includes attention calling and negotiating interpersonal relationship with his audience. The predominant use of ‘Mr. Speaker’ as vocative resource marks the presentation as formal parliamentary discourse as all formal addresses in the chamber of parliament is referenced to or through the Speaker of Parliament.

Modal Adjuncts

Also known as comment adjuncts, this sub-category the interpersonal Theme expresses the President’s judgment on or attitude to the content of the message of the clause. So, the President used modal adjuncts in the 2023 SONA to make:

- Admission, e.g. the use of ‘indeed’ as in

(2) Indeed, **there** were some who suggested that we cancel the national identification registration exercise, and even postpone the 2020 general elections.
- Entreaty, e.g. the use of ‘please’ as in

(3) Please **allow** me to acknowledge and appreciate the significance of the day, and heartily congratulate women all over the world, and especially women in Ghana,
- Evaluation, e.g. the use of ‘in our estimation’ as in

(4) In our estimation, **these initiatives** should increase the monthly revenues of ECG by some forty percent (40%) before the end of this year.
- Desirability, e.g. the use of ‘God willing’ as in

(5) And, God willing, I will continue on a path that brings the most benefit to the people of Ghana.

Finite Verbal Operator

These include primary and modal finite verbal operators by President Akufo-Addo to pose few rhetorical questions as in (6):

- (6) (a) Was that something to regret?
- (b) Shall we dare stop constructing roads?

These questions were employed to justify some actions by his government reported in the preceding clauses, including granting 50% tax relief to ‘frontline health workers’ for the period of COVID-19 in Ghana and borrowing heavily for road construction respectively. By these, subtly persuade the audience to disregard the accusation of excessive borrowing by the critics of his administration.

Textual Theme

The textual Themes in the 2023 SONA are in the following distribution shown in Table 4 below.

Table 6. Frequency distribution of textual Themes

Textual Theme	Freq.	Percentage	Examples
Continuatives	1	0.5	yes
Conjunctions	175	87.9	that, and, but, because, when, until,
Conjunctive Adjunct	23	11.6	for example, in addition, however, in the same way
Total	199	100	

The most frequently used textual Theme in the 2023 SONA is conjunctions (175) followed by conjunctive adjuncts (23) which occupy the same semantic space as the former. Continulative has the least frequency of only one (1). The conjunctions link paratactic clauses as in Example (7) and bind (hypotactic) a bound clause to a free one as in Example (8) below. The conjunctive adjuncts, however, establish inter-clausal relations; they relate message of one clause complex usually to that of preceding one as shown with the use of ‘firstly’ and ‘secondly’ in Example (9) or a paragraph to the preceding one as shown with the use of ‘In addition’ in Example (10).

- (7) Our currency has been buffeted, // our inflation rate has been very high, // and, for the first time in our lives, debt exchanges have become the language of everyday conversation.
- (8) We expect this trend of falling fuel prices to reflect soon in our daily lives, // since transport fares affect the price of everything.
- (9) These policies are aimed at achieving two results that are critical to the health of our economy. Firstly, they will help us preserve foreign exchange, especially the US dollar, and secondly, they will enable us to stabilise the price of oil products such as petrol and diesel on the domestic market.

- (10) Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasant duty on 17th October 2022, to commission a new, modern Court of Appeal complex in Kumasi, together with twenty (20) townhouses and a guesthouse to serve as permanent residences for Court of Appeal Judges based in Kumasi, who are mandated to handle appeals from the northern part of the country. The Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, who generously gave the land, was present at the ceremony. It is a truly magnificent site and I recommend it to Honourable Members who go to Kumasi to pay a visit and see it for themselves.

In addition, two hundred and ten (210) vehicles were, earlier in 2022, distributed to all judges in the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court and Lower Courts.

Structural Types of Theme

Theme, as identified in the reviewed literature, may be classified as a simple Theme or a multiple Theme in SFL based on the internal structure of the Theme. According to Halliday and Mathiessen (2014), a simple Theme consists of only a topical Theme and a multiple Theme has non-topical Theme(s) preceding the topical Theme. Even though the literature is somehow silent about it, in this study, we propose two terms to account for two thematic structures, which though Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) talk about, stop short of assigning them slots in the conceptual framework of thematic structure. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014, p. 127) describe some clause as “non-finite clauses hav[ing] neither [structural Theme nor topical Theme], in which case they consist of Rheme only” and another having only structural Theme. We shall analyse such clauses as having ‘zero’ or ‘null’ and ‘partial’ Themes respectively. In the 2023 SONA, there are both simple and multiple Themes as well as many ‘null’ Themes in the following distribution.

Table 7. Frequency distribution of Themes by structure

Theme type (Structure)	Frequency	Percentage
Simple Theme	271	40.0
Multiple Theme	237	34.9
‘Partial’ Theme	23	3.4
‘Null’ Theme	147	21.7
Total	678	100

Clearly from Table 7, simple Themes are more frequently than the multiple Themes even though the variance is not much. Examples of simple Theme and multiple Theme are provided in Example (11) and Example (12) respectively.

Table 8. Analysis of simple Themes

(11)	Our children’s schooling	has not been interrupted.
	We	have continued to provide Free SHS, Free TVET and pay teacher and nursing.
	Topical Theme	
	THEME	RHEME

Table 9. Analysis of multiple Themes

(12)	Mr. Speaker,	sixty-six (66) years since our independence,	Ghana has taken steady strides to becoming a more developed country.
	In addition, Mr. Speaker,	the seven hundred- and fifty-million-dollar (\$750 million) AFRExim Bank facility, which has been secured,	will make it possible for us to construct many other roads and interchanges.
Textual THEME	Interpersonal	Topical	RHEME

Types of Theme by Markedness

In the literature, markedness is concerned with the usuality of the element in the Theme position based on the Mood of the clause. There are two basic types of Theme in this regard – unmarked Theme and marked Theme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Table 6 below shows Theme markedness in the 2023 SONA and its frequency distribution.

Table 10. Frequency distribution of unmarked and marked Themes

Theme Type (Markedness)	Frequency	Percentage
Unmarked Theme	583	86.0
Marked Theme	95	14.0
Total	678	100

It is clear that the unmarked Theme is frequently used, representing 86% of the total clauses, in the 2023 SONA. However, ninety-five (95), representing 14%, marked Theme is a significant quantum to call for inquiry into the kinds of elements consciously or unconsciously promoted to the Theme position. All the marked elements are found in declarative clauses. Ninety-one (91) of these marked Themes are Circumstantials of the ideational metafunction. They predominantly express temporal (location and duration) as the point of departure of the clause as a message. The others are Participants other than the Subject of the Mood system promoted to the Theme position.

(13) Mr Speaker, when we make an assessment of what the state of our nation is, // it would necessarily have to include // what state it was in yesterday, // the state it is in today // and what state it would be in tomorrow, based on reasonable grounds of expectations.

From the foregone discussion, we gather from studying the following summary about the types of Theme in the 2023 SONA.

1. In English, majority of analysable clauses set off on experiential elements dominant of which are Participants in their typical initial position.
2. Textual Theme more frequently used than interpersonal Theme at least in corpus of the present study.

Experiential Elements Thematised

With regards to our second research objective, analysis focused on the constituents of the topical Theme in terms of Transitivity. Thus, the results are presented in line with the three experiential constituents: Participants, Circumstantials and Processes. By this, we are able to discuss the President's choices of Theme in respect of which aspects of the ideation are selected as points of orientation for the clauses. Here, we discuss the following in accordance with Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) description of the elements of the topical Theme.

The Participant Themes

Participant choices indicate who or what is given a role in a text. They reveal how people, objects, animals and abstract things are involved in the performance of certain roles in language. The participant roles thematised by the President Nana Akufo-Addo include:

- Actor as in

(14) *that **our country** has chosen to travel on the path of democracy*

- Senser as in

(15) *In the same way that **only a small percentage of our population** can recall life under colonial rule,*

- Identified as in

(16) *that **democracy** is not a static achievement*

The participants include both human and non-human entities. The thematised human participant types include the following:

- Pronoun participants such as *I, We, They*, in (...)

(17) (a) We will need even more of such bipartisan maturity

(b) I am certain // that this too shall pass.

(c) ... I hope // **they** get the public support that they need.

(d) I note, in particular, with satisfaction, // that **they** have developed a self-enrolment mobile application (My NHIS App)

- Named participants such as *The Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II* in (...) below

(18) (a) The **Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II**, who generously gave the land, was present at the ceremony.

(b) that my wife, the First Lady Rebecca Akufo-Addo, Vice President Mahamudu Bawumia, Spouse of Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Alice Adjua Yornas Bagbin, Chief Justice Kwasi Anin-Yeboah, and Justices of the Supreme Court, Chairperson Nana Otuo Siriboe II and Members of the Council of State, Chief of Staff of the Office of the President, Hon. Akosua Frema Osei Opare, and officials of the presidency, Chief of Defence Staff, Vice Admiral Seth Amoama, the Inspector General of Police, Dr. George Akuffo Dampare, and the various Service Chiefs, are all present.

- Institution participants as in the following examples

- (19) (a) However, because **Parliament** directly represents the citizens of our nation in this hallowed chamber
(b) **The WHO** has only recently expressed worry about a steady decline in measles vaccination coverage globally, because of the concentration on the fight against COVID-19.
(c) **The Ghana Health Service** has developed an elaborate programme

The pronoun participant Theme includes predominant focusing on either the speaker only 'I' eighty-two (82) times, or the speaker and others (mostly members of his government) 'We' one sixty (60) times, together constituting one hundred and forty-two (142) thematisation of the speaker with the Rheme or the following complementing clause stating their inner consciousness as in Examples (20) and outer experiences as in Examples (21) below

- (20) (a) I am grateful // that the people of Ghana rose to the occasion
(b) I am pleased // to state // that good progress is being made on the reform of the UN Security Council.
(c) I am proud of the amount of work that we have done, especially in the road sector.
- (21) Yes, I have been in a hurry to get things done, ... // We can be justifiably proud of the many things we have managed to do in the past six (6) years. // As I go around the country, // I hear the pleas for roads, schools, hospitals, // ...// I wish, as every other Ghanaian does, // that we would have built more drains // than we have. // And I wish // we had the resources to do more.

The thematisation of self indicates conscious effort of the President to focus the attention of his audience on his personal achievements as president and that of his government. This is so because the SONA is primarily used to account for one's stewardship highlighting the successes chalked in office. Through these themes we are also able to appreciate other participants who in the view of the President are worth being brought in the attention of the audience for the various roles they contribute to the experiential realization of the Ghanaian socio-economic and political life.

The non-human participant Themes include the following

- Concrete thing participants as in Example (22)

- (22) (a) **Our currency** has been buffeted,
(b) **Roads** constitute the largest number of questions asked in this House by Members of Parliament; // **a large amount of the monies we borrow** are for road construction.

- Nominalised participants as in Example (23)

- (23) (a) because **access to water** was a necessity
(b) and **access to electricity** was important

- Abstract entity or concept participants as in Example (24)
 - (24) similarly **the memory of dictatorship, one party rule and military rule** is receding into the dim past, // and **the struggles that have brought us so far** are disappearing into the recesses of history.
- 'It' Participants as in Example (25)
 - (25) (a) **It** stands as a reminder to all of us
 (b) Mr. Speaker, **it** is important // that we stress this point
- 'There' participants as in Example (26)
 - (26) Indeed, **there** were some who suggested that we cancel the national identification registration exercise

Demonstrative participants as in Example (27)

- (27) (a) and **that** means // it is International Women's Day, the day set aside globally to honour all women.
 (b) **This** is no mean achievement.

The Circumstantial Themes

The circumstantial Theme occupy significant role in terms of frequency of use and semantic roles. With frequency of 91(17.6%), the circumstantial topical Theme in 2023 SONA refers to semantic roles such as:

- Temporal location, which gives the of event in time as in
 - (28) (a) ... because after thirty years of democratic practice, we may be tempted to take it for
 (b) Thirty years ago, this House convened for the first time to mark the commencement of the Fourth Republic.
 (c) Even then, it is worth pointing out // that the school year has not fully returned to the predictable pre-covid calendar. // After the event, some might be tempted // to forget the volumes of sanitizer and other logistics it took to keep the schools open and safe,
 (d) For the first time in over forty (40) years, we have had a fiscal deficit below five percent (5%) of GDP for three years in a row. For the first time in over twenty (20) years, the balance of trade (that is the difference between our exports and imports) has been in surplus for three (3) consecutive years.
- Extent (Duration) as in
 - (29) (a) Within weeks, we were in the middle of a lockdown,
 (b) Over the next couple of years, my government will deepen even further our efforts to make tourism a strong primary source of growth for the economy.
 (c) "Mr. Speaker, in three years we have reduced inflation to its lowest level (7.8% in January 2020) since 1992.

- Accompaniment (Additive) as in Example (30)

(30) (a) Mr Speaker, apart from my own personal fond memories as a member of this House, Parliament stands as a symbol of our democracy and its values.

(b)... but instead of a meltdown, we have witnessed considerable cooperation and unity of purpose among all parties and factions.

- Role (Guise) as in Example (31)

(31) As President, I have championed the innovation of policies and the execution of projects that have helped improve the quality of life of the Ghanaian people.

- Angle (viewpoint) as in Example (32)

(32) In accordance with protocol and convention, it is good // to see // that my wife, the First Lady Rebecca Akufo-Addo, ... the various Service Chiefs, are all present

The selection of these circumstantial experiential elements as Themes promotes communication effects, including: enhancing, extending, elaborating and projecting of the message. Enhancing circumstantials expand the process + participant configuration carried in the Rheme through the specification of, for example, (1) temporal and spatial extent or location in terms of duration, frequency, time, distance and place of the unfolding of the process, (2) the manner of the unfolding of the process, (3) the cause of the unfolding of the process, or (4) the role of participants in the process.

Grammatical Resources Characterising the Experiential Themes

Grammatical Resources for Participant Theme

- Pronouns (I, we) as in Example (33)

(33) (a) I am pleased to announce that, on 1st March 2023, all ECG District Offices became cashless.

(b) Mr. Speaker, we are now at the most difficult stage of electricity provision around the country.

- Noun group simplex as in Example (34)

(34) (a) Our petrol stations have fuel,

(b) The WHO has only recently expressed worry about a steady decline in measles vaccination coverage globally, because of the concentration on the fight against COVID-19.

- Noun group complex as in Example (35)

(35) (a) Mr. Speaker, the impact of climate change and variability on global agricultural activities is a call to us, and, indeed, all countries, to adopt appropriate technologies and other innovative practices for sustainable agriculture and resilience against food insecurity.

(b) Our markets and shops are, by the Grace of God, well-stocked

Grammatical Resources for Circumstantial Themes

- Adverbial group as in Example (36)

(36) (a) Today, we live in a country in which we enjoy complete freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and political affiliation.

(b) Maybe, because of the severity of the present difficulties, or maybe because it suits their preconceived agenda, some people are unwilling to accept

- Prepositional phrase as in Example (37)

(37) (a) In accordance with our desire not to become part of this global trend, Government has taken steps to ensure that stocks of these vaccines are procured and supplied, as a matter of emergency

(b) In the year under review, electronic claims processing was about seventy percent (70%) of all claims submissions.

The Circumstantials, as evidence in our analysis, can be realized in the grammar of English in structures including prepositional phrase (both simplex and complex), and adverb group. These findings affirm an assertion made by Halliday and Mathiessen (2014) that prepositional phrase is the commonest realization of Circumstantials in English as most of the elements in the Circumstantial Theme are a prepositional phrase.

Conclusion

From the current study and through the above discussion, it has been shown that choice of Theme appears to be a key factor for the success or otherwise of clause and text as bundle of communication. In relation to the general question of the roles Theme performs in a text, Theme seems to organise the message, expresses an interpersonal message or viewpoint and organizes the internal cohesion of the discourse as a unit of communication of interrelated ideas forming one message with a specific focus. While the topical or ideational Theme sets the stage for the departure of the clause as a message, the textual controls the intra- and inter-clausal structures. The interpersonal Theme expresses interaction established between the President and his audience through the Speaker of Parliament.

Thematic analysis like this reveals a number of linguistic delicacies that project language complexities involved in discourse composition and comprehension. From the foregone analyses and discussions, it is revealed that most ideational Theme elements are Participants followed by Circumstance. Every circumstantial Theme is marked. Particularly in this study no Participant used is a marked Theme.

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