

Thematic Structure and Thematic Progression in Background of the Study Section of Students' Skripsi

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Abstract

As students of university level, they need to accomplish the final project as a paper which becomes their scientific writing in the last semester. However, they sometimes ignore how important the coherence as well as cohesion in terms of writing are. Regarding the main obstacle faced by the students, the study is aimed to investigate theme-rheme structures or thematic structures proposed by Halliday (1985) as well as thematic progressions proposed by Paltridge (2000). The study is also conducted to explore English writing skill which functions to acquire some accurate information on the students' problems in writing English supported by Systemic Functional Grammar. The study reveals that there are at least four related problems found in the current study in terms of Theme structures and Thematic progression: the problem of selecting the textual theme, the problem of concordance between theme and rheme, the problem of incomplete rheme, and the problem of empty rheme. Hopefully, the current study would provide valuable contribution to the development of writing proficiency. This study is held not only to provide EFL learners the appropriate solutions toward problems in order to assist them enhance their writing performances, but also provide the strategies to achieve the coherence as well as cohesion in the text.

Keywords: Students' Skripsi, Theme and Rheme analysis, Thematic Structures and Progressions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Accomplishing a final project is very crucial for the last semester students who want to graduate from a university. Therefore, they need extra effort in writing skripsi as soon as possible. In addition, they have to pay attention toward the related mechanism in terms of fulfilling their papers in order to be approved by the supervisor. In other words, skripsi must be coherent as well as cohesive or they have appropriate theme-rheme. Sometimes the students ignore those prerequisites in line with writing the paper. Furthermore, they have lack of understanding in terms of composing coherent and also cohesive texts.

According to Thornburry (2005:7), "the text is product of speakers or writers in communicative process which involves language". Widdowson (2007:4) defined "a text as an actual use of language, as distinct from a sentence which is an abstract unit of linguistic analysis". Meanwhile, Anderson & Anderson (2003:1) defined "the text as the words that are put together to communicate a meaning". It is adopted from those definitions above, we may conclude that the text as an actual use of language in the form of spoken and written which carry specific purposes. Regarding the students'

purposes, the text is closely related to the background of the studies written by 3 students who are at the same year of their studies.

It is assumed that not all the texts can be classified into a good text. In creating good text there must be criteria which need to be considered by the writers themselves. This also happens when writing the paper which is rather complicated to be done by the students. The criteria include considering cohesion and coherence, and also using relevant theme and rheme in a sentence. According to Povolna (2009: 94), "both cohesion and coherence are important to know the quality of text, although they are not related to each other directly". This statement is supported by Widdowson (2007: 207) who declares that "one might derive a coherent discourse from a text with no cohesion in it at all. Equally, of course, textual cohesion provides no guarantee of discourse coherence". Meanwhile, Cozma et.al (2003) states that Theme as starting point and Theme as aboutness. Both approaches theorize that each sentence contains one element which is more important or central to the discourse and which is called Theme, and another element which develops the Theme, and which is called Rheme. It can be said that the first

position in the clause (theme) indicates the starting point of the message of the clause. But the rest of the clause (it is called as Rheme) is reserved for further information to be conveyed (Agustien, 2008).

In terms of theme-rheme analysis, thematic progression theory proposed by Dane (1974) and Paltridge (2000) are used in this study. Therefore, the analysis is focused on linear progression, progression with constant theme, and also progression with derived theme. Besides those terms, the study is also concerned with types of theme such as subject as theme, interpersonal element as theme, connective as theme, process as theme, and continuatives as theme. Therefore, the texts are analyzed by using the theme-rheme framework to examine the thematic structures (adopted from Halliday, 1985) as well as well thematic progression.

This study is aimed to find out the relation between theme and rheme in the text, including; (i) how are theme-rheme structures employed to improve the cohesion as well as coherence in the background of the studies? (ii) What types of themes are mostly used in the background of the studies?. It is also aimed to investigate the students' problems in writing the background of the study in a paper.

2. Methodology

This study dealt with discourse analysis which was focused on using theme-rheme analysis to find out the students' problems in line with coherence and cohesion in a text. The source of data were taken from three students' background of the study sections in their papers. They contained three different topics, problems, and also mechanism of writing. The data were collected by selecting which papers needed to be analyzed. This study was concerned with analyzing sentence structure. Due to the students' problems in writing English text, two aspects of theme in the textual metafunction were examined; they were thematic structure and thematic progression.

There were three steps in analyzing the data. Firstly, the texts from the students were analyzed by using the Theme-Rheme Framework to examine the Thematic structures and the Thematic progressions. The procedure employed in textual analysis was identifying the number of clauses which were written by the students. There were three students' background of the

study sections which had different topics related to background of the studies on the students' papers.

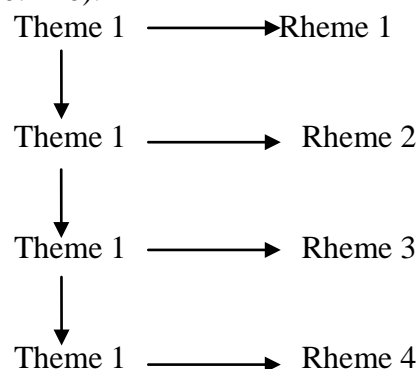
Secondly, the analysis of the thematic structures was adopted from Halliday (1985). There are three kinds of Themes: ideational, textual or interpersonal. The ideational Themes are further classified as unmarked and marked. Halliday (1985) mentioned that unmarked Themes are grammatical sentence subjects in declarative clauses, and can be realized as simple and complex nominal groups. Meanwhile the marked themes are also classified into three types: circumstantial adjunct, subordinating clause and attributive clause. Regarding the types of theme, the next stage was calculating and providing the percentages for each type.

Thirdly, the students' texts were analyzed based on the Paltridge's classification of thematic progression (2000). According to Paltridge (2000), thematic progression is the way in which the Theme of the clause may pick up or repeat a meaning from a preceding Theme or Rheme. The researcher preferred using Paltridge's theory to the others because it provided explicit design as well as pattern. In other words, thematic progression assists by providing cohesion and also coherence toward a text. Moreover, it guides the reader through the text logically and rationally in terms of writing English text. Based on Paltridge's theory, there are three kinds of Thematic development pattern: Theme reiteration/ constant Theme pattern, a zig-zag/ linear Theme pattern and a multiple Theme/ split Rheme pattern.

1. In a Theme reiteration or constant Theme pattern, a Theme is picked up and repeated at the beginning of each clause as illustrated in Figure 1.

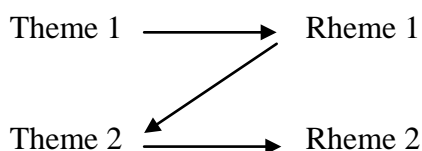
Figure 1

Thematic progression: Theme reiteration or constant Theme pattern (Martin & Rothery, 1986 as cited in Paltridge, 2000: 140).



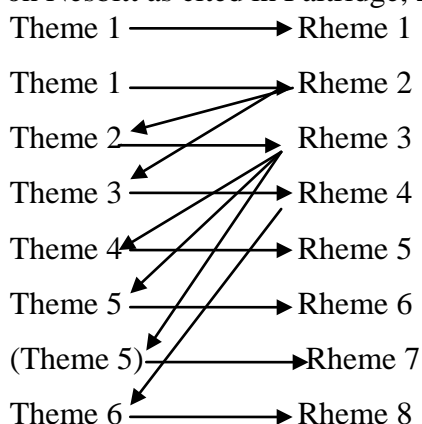
2. In a zig-zag or linear Theme pattern, the subject matter in the Rheme of the previous clause is taken up in the Theme of a following clause as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Thematic progression: A zig-zag or linear Theme pattern (Clegg & Wheeler, 1991: 83 as cited in Paltridge, 2000: 140)



3. In a multiple Theme or split Rheme progression, a Rheme may refer to a number of different pieces of information, each of which may be taken up as the Theme in a number of subsequent clauses as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Thematic progression: A multiple Theme/ split Rheme pattern (based on Nesbitt as cited in Paltridge, 2000).



3. Findings and Discussions

This section focuses on discussing two main points, the first point deals with theme-rheme structure which contains textual theme including conjunctive adjunct, and continuatives, interpersonal theme, and also topical/

ideational theme including simple theme, and complex theme. The second one deals with thematic progression.

3.1 Theme and Rheme / Thematic Structure

Based on the data, the Theme can be further broken down into sub-components: Textual Theme, Interpersonal Theme and Topical/Ideational theme. Thus, This study was focused on the thematic structure to examine the problems resulting from the misappropriation of Theme and its effect on Thematic Progression in paragraph writing.

3.1.1 Textual Theme

Based on The analysis of thematic structure, a continuative adjunct and conjunctive adjunct were found based on data analysis.

3.1.1.2 Conjunctive Adjunct

Here is the classification of conjunctive relations that is based on Martin and Rose's classification (2003). They divided conjunctions into two categories for their roles: external and internal conjunctions. According to Martin & Rose (2003), external conjunctions are used to add activities, compare and contrast the events, ordering events in time, and also explain why and how events happen. Meanwhile, internal ones are used to add arguments, compare and contrast arguments or evidence, order the arguments in the text, and also draw conclusion. Table 1 is a list of the external conjunctions in terms of their roles of constructing logical relations found in the data.

Table 1

External conjunctions used in the students' texts of background of the studies

Logical Relations		Examples
Addition	Additive	And
	Alternative	Or
Comparison	Contrast	But
Time	Successive	after, after that

	Simultaneous	While, when, as
Consequence	Cause	So, because
	Means	Thus
	Purpose	In order to, so that
	Condition	If, then

In terms of the data calculation, the external conjunctions reach 92.7 % of all the conjunctions. They are classified into four logical relations: addition, comparison, time and consequence. The highest percentage belongs to logical relation addition which obtains 72.44 %, the second one belongs to logical relation consequence which reaches 14.17 %, meanwhile, the logical relation time reaches 9.44 % and consequence is the lowest one which obtains only 3.93 %. The students mostly used the logical relation addition on their own background of the study sections because the whole statements were indicated to add the other information. The use of ‘and’ was mostly written by the students. Meanwhile, few consequence conjunctions were used because the students did not state explicitly related to cause and effect statements and so on.

Table 2

Internal Conjunctions used in the students’ texts of background of the studies

Logical Relations		Examples
Addition	Additive	Moreover
	Side tracking	Traditionally
Comparison	Similarity	In fact, such as
	Contrast	Rather
Time	Successive	First, finally, the last, second

In line with the internal conjunctions, it approximately obtains 7.29 % of all conjunctions. They are also classified into three logical relations: addition, comparison, and time. Regarding the data calculation, the students mostly used the logical time relation (50%) followed by comparison (30%) and the last one belongs to addition (20%). In brief, the students did not use the logical relation of consequence in their sentences because they ignored the use of it to state the conclusion. As we know, concluding the arguments is very

necessary to be implemented in order to create a good review or evaluation toward the topic discussed.

3.1.1.2 Continuatives

According to Eggins (1994:281), “continuity adjuncts or continuatives are words which are used in spoken dialogue to indicate that the speaker’s contribution is somehow related to (continuous with) what previous speaker has said in an earlier turn”(I replace the previous one with Eggins’s statemenet). As mentioned before, logical relations are divided into three kinds: addition, comparison and time. In terms of addition, there is only sub-type of continuative: neutral. Meanwhile in terms of comparison, there are three sub-types: neutral, less than and more than. Finally, in terms of time, there are four sub-types: sooner, longer, persistent, and repetitive. Based on the data found in the study, the addition is only in line with ‘neutral’, and the comparison also uses the expectancy ‘less than’. At last, the logical relation time uses two expectancies such as longer and persistent. The summary of continuatives can be seen from table 3.

Table 3
Continuatives

Logical Relations	Expectancy	Examples
Addition	Neutral	Also
Comparison	Less than	Just
Time	Longer	Finally
	Persistent	Still

3.1.2 Interpersonal Theme

According to Paltridge (2006), interpersonal theme deals with an item that comes before the rheme which indicates the relation between participants in the

text, or the position or point of view that is being taken in the clause. Based on the data, an adjunct, and a finite are the subtypes found. There are no wh-elements and vocative subtypes. A set of lexical items such as mood adjunct ('I have asked/ I get the information'), comment adjuncts are not found in the students' texts, and finite are not used to indicate the writer's comment on the ideational content of the clause. Most of the students' statements tend not to explore their ideas using comment adjuncts and finite to indicate their arguments.

3.1.3 Topical (Ideational) Theme

Topical (ideational) Theme is the element which is closely related to a participant, a circumstance or the process of the clause. Halliday (1985) mentions that topical Themes are divided into two subtypes: simple and multiple theme. Simple themes always have a topical element while multiple Themes may have the interpersonal and textual Themes in addition to topical Theme. Regarding the data calculation on simple and also multiple themes, it shows that simple themes are higher percentage than multiple themes. Simple themes are 51.08%, while multiple themes are about 48.91%. In short, the students mostly tend to use simple themes when writing the background of the studies in terms of the paper because they intended to simplify the statements which were easily created by most of the students.

3.1.3.1 Simple Theme

Regarding the simple Theme, the topical Theme is classified into two subtypes: unmarked and marked Theme. Simple marked Theme means when a topical element is chosen for foregrounding, meanwhile simple unmarked Theme refers to that which is most usual (Arunsirot, 2013). Therefore, unmarked theme has the highest percentage (92%), while the marked theme was only 8% based on the result of data analysis.. In the current study, unmarked topical Themes are the subjects of the clause which are considered to be non-ellipsed topical Themes such as many students, and there and also relative nominal groups e.g. which, that, when. Moreover, there are two types of marked topical Theme: marked topical Themes as Theme Matter and marked topical Theme as transitivity role. In this study, the marked topical Theme as Theme matter is realized by 'as/in/based on + nominal group' e.g. in KTSP, the teacher is given a freedom to plan the teaching and

learning.... It is stated explicitly as an explicit announcement of the Theme which functions a purely textual role.

Table 4
Simple Themes

Textual Theme	Interpersonal Theme	Topical Theme		Rheme
		Marked Theme	Unmarked Theme	
			many students	still have difficulties to find the main ideas and supporting ideas in a text paragraph
			there	were about 10 million children having difficulties in learning reading
		In KTSP,		the teacher is given a freedom to plan the teaching learning which is suitable with the students

			and school conditions
	Based on the observation in pre-experimental ,		there were some facts indicated the problem through reading comprehension.
	At this time,		there are many teaching learning activities encountered in school learning that is still dominated by the teacher.

3.1.3.2 Complex Theme

Basically, the multiple theme deals with a clause structure which has more than one element of Theme (Arunsirot, 2013). There are three types of multiple theme found in this study: textual Theme and topical Theme, and interpersonal Theme, as in Table 5.

Table 5
Complex Theme

Theme	Rheme
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Textual Theme	Interpersonal Theme	Topical Theme		
		Marked Theme	Unmarked Theme	
If			people	want to learn English, they must learn dan mastery vocabulary.
After			they	finished translate the text, the other difficulty was came again they have to identify some informations
Likewise,			they	are unfamiliar with synonym in text.
The last,	I have asked	,	Some students	MA PUI Kephuh

and	I get		they	said that the
	inform			first difficulty
	ation			in reading is
	from			they couldn't
	them,			read the text
				fluently,
				means they
				low in
				mastering
				their
				pronunciation.

3.2 Thematic progression

In terms of thematic progression, Eggins (1994:303) states that “the thematic progression is the exchange of information between successive theme and rheme pairings in a text”. There are some main types of thematic progression, which relates to different text types. This study focuses on thematic progression proposed by Paltridge’s classification (2000).

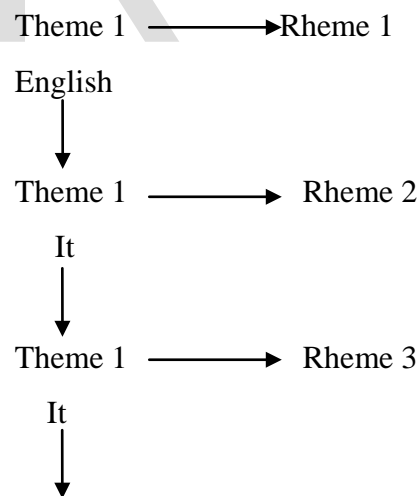
Related to the result of data analysis, three thematic progression patterns are found in the current study. They are a Theme reiteration, or constant Theme pattern, a zig-zag Theme pattern, and a multiple Theme or split Rheme. The highest percentage belongs to constant theme pattern (66.66%), the second one belongs to zig zag theme pattern (25%), meanwhile The multiple Theme or split Rheme is estimated about 8.33%. in addition, the result shows that there are several kinds of Thematic progression patterns used in the whole texts. Based on an analysis of the Thematic progression, most of the texts are stated by using a series of arguments which followed by the number of the rhemes in the form of clauses and then they also become

the theme in subsequent clauses by using logical time relations to indicate that these are additional steps.

This result also shows that constant theme pattern is significantly considered to be the main role as the basic pattern of themes in writing the background of the studies. However, the zig zag and also multiple theme patterns are considered to be medium and also low percentage in the data analysis. In terms of writing the background of the study, the whole patterns should be used and developed appropriately In order to make texts more understandable for their readers. Thus, it is needed to expand the rest types of Thematic progression patterns in providing arguments in greater depth to support the writers’ points of view in the body paragraph. Based on Danes (as cited in Nwogu & Blor, 1991), a Theme reiteration, or constant Theme pattern is the basic pattern of Themes in general. Thus, this pattern occurs more often than a zig-zag Theme pattern in the texts. Figure 4 is the examples of thematic progressions found in the data.

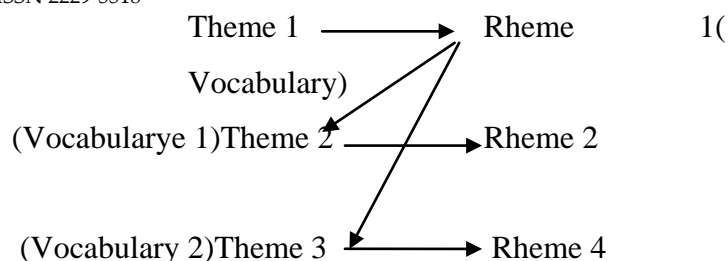
Figure 4: **Constant Theme Pattern**

The thematic progressions found in the data



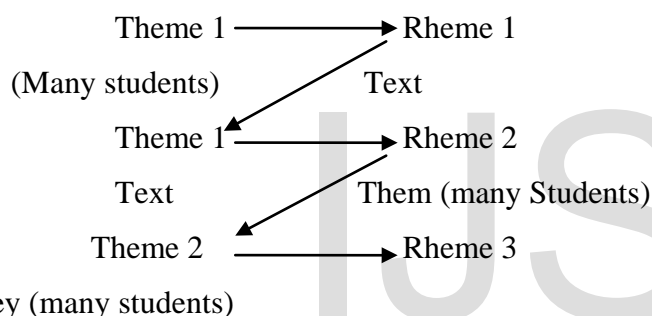
Here is the related example of constant theme pattern:
English (as a theme) is important in our lives. **It (theme)** has become an international language, which is used by the most communities in the world. **It (theme)** can support people in globalization era.

Figure 5: **Zig-Zag Theme Pattern**



Here is the related example of zig-zag theme pattern:
The writer concludes that **Vocabulary** is the component support to four of English skill as, listening, writing, reading and speaking. **vocabulary** is also very important to be learnt by them in learning English. But, learning **vocabulary** leads the students find some problem and difficulty.

Figure 6: Multiple Theme or Split Rheme



Here is the related example of multiple theme patterns:
Many students still have difficulties to find the main ideas and supporting ideas in a text paragraph. It seems to find the main point of the paragraph done by them. Likewise, they are unfamiliar with synonym in a text (split Theme).

3.2.1 The problems of the Theme

Halliday (1985) also stated that thematic structure plays an important role in organizing the message and enhances connectivity between ideas in the text. It is used as a means to analyze cohesion and coherence and to provide the related inputs on how the texts are constructed and to find out language weaknesses in the student's writing. In students' writing, lack of text coherence seems to be a major problem which leads to some problems toward the students' academic points. Some of students find failure to compose the flow of information from theme to rheme leading to difficulties for the readers to follow the context of ideas or arguments in the texts. According to

Bloor & Bloor (1995), there are three common problems resulting from the misuse of Theme and Rheme: the problem of the brand new Theme, the problem of the double Rheme, and the problem of the empty Rheme. In this points, the researcher provides some illustrations related to the problems as mentioned by Bloor and Bloor.

3.2.2 The Problems of Selecting the Textual Theme

In terms of connecting one clause to the other clause, the students sometimes have difficulties in employing the appropriate conjunctions in order to create coherent as well as cohesive text.

For example: then the writer asked them to translate the text using a dictionary. But it took long time. Second, the tenth grade have low motivation in reading. The conjunction 'but' is used to express contrast, however, the previous sentence does not indicate the contrastive actions. The suitable conjunction or textual theme should be however and nevertheless.

3.2.3 The Problem of concordance between Theme and Rheme

Regarding the students' sentences, there have been some appropriateness on using Theme and Rheme based on the concordance.

For instance: Second, the tenth grade **have** low motivation in reading. The theme 'the tenth grade' is not followed by rheme 'have' but it should be followed by rheme 'has'.

3.2.4 The problem of Incomplete Rheme

It is mentioned that some clauses have no predicates which lead to incoherence.

One of the examples: If they___ poor in their reading skill means they also fail in their study and ___ difficult in making progress. The underlines should be completed by appropriate predicates but the students

missed using them. Thus, they should be followed by are for those missing ones.

3.2.5 The Problem of Empty Rheme

According to Bloor & Bloor (1992), the empty Rheme refers to the clause which fails to present new information in the Rheme position.

One of the related examples: English teacher who could conduct the teaching reading well are needed. The clause seems to have empty rheme which can be overcome by adding new information in the rheme position in order to be a complete one. The clause can be added by 'English teacher who could conduct the teaching reading well are needed to prepare the appropriate strategies as well as classroom management in the classroom'.

4. Conclusions

In short, the study provides the number of solutions in line with the problems of writing proficiency especially for writing the background study which is the basic part needs to be elaborated as well as presented coherently and cohesively. It also contributes a series of findings which are relevant to the research question as well as the objective one in order to help the next researcher to conduct the same topic as the researcher conducted before. The findings reveal that in terms of theme and rheme structure, this deal with textual theme which provides the illustration: the external conjunctions reach 92.7%, while the internal ones only reach 7.29%. It is indicated that the texts are mostly dealt with presenting the activities rather than arguments. And regarding interpersonal theme, it is mentioned that mood adjuncts are dominant to be used in the texts. Meanwhile, in topical theme, the contribution of simple themes is the highest one with the percentage 51.08%, and the complex theme is only 48.91%. and in terms of thematic progression, it is mentioned that constant theme pattern obtains 66.66% which is indicated to be the highest one, zig-zag theme (25%), and multiple theme (8.33%). In addition, the result of the study reveals that the texts analyzed are aimed to find out what thematic structures and also progressions which are needed to be big concern or correction in line with this research.

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