

# Thematic Progression Analysis in Students' Thesis Proposal of English Teacher Education Department

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**Abstract** - Thematic Progression is considered as appropriate way to generate how cohesive and coherence the writing is. The studies of thematic progression have illustrated its use as a tool to characterize EFL/ESL writing as successful or less successful in terms of coherence. The research is projected to contribute research on linguistic and discourse analysis especially on the thematic progression from first paragraph of background of study in thesis proposal. It is expected to be one of the guidance for both students and lecturers about thematic progression to make the writing coherent and cohesion. The research took place in the English Teacher Education Department at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya whose subjects are the eight semester students who had enrolled to thesis writing and passed the thesis proposal examination. The research analyzed 12 backgrounds of studies from all students who had passed their seminar proposal examination during the even semester in academic year 2016/2017. This research used the qualitative method to present the findings about the thematic progression in students' background of study along with the discussion of the word which contains thematic progression. Two types of patterns were examined: those which enhance the coherence and those which obscured coherence. The former included reiteration, zig-zag, and multiple patterns while the latter included brand new theme, empty use of *there*, and the use of dummy *it*. The finding of this research indicates that the most frequent type of thematic progression patterns which enhanced coherence is 33 reiteration patterns, followed by 23 zig-zag patterns and then zero of multiple patterns. Then, the most frequent of thematic progression which obscured coherence is six brand new themes, then followed by one of empty use of *there* and zero of the use of dummy *it*.

**Key Words:** *Thematic Progression, thematic progression analysis, students' thesis proposal.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In educational issues, learning foreign language takes one of the important things. English as the foreign languages has become one of the compulsory subjects for Indonesian students from the junior high school level to university level. Thus, Indonesian students are called English as second language (EFL/ESL) learners. ESL learners may face difficulty in writing the foreign language itself. Therefore, to solve the

difficulty the learners need to have conscious effort and much practice in organization, language use and writing techniques.

According to Thuy Le and Raksangob, the ESL/EFL learners particularly are those who studying English for academic purposes and have found that writing is full of difficulty among other skills; also improving this skill requires hard work, much time and efforts.

Reflecting the reason above, thematic progression (TP) consider as appropriate way to generate how cohesive and coherence the writing is. Studies have illustrated the usefulness of TP is that as a tool to characterize EFL/ESL writing as successful or less successful in terms of coherence.

Thematic Progression consists of Theme and Rheme. Halliday stated that Theme is the point of departure for the message which the element of the speaker selects for grounding. It means that a Theme is a starting point of a sentence that can be the main information of the sentence itself. It is noticed that as a message structure, a sentence is consisting of Theme and accompanied by a Rheme; which the structure is expressed as the Theme is put first. Herriman stated that the concept of Theme as point of departure of a single utterance (clause) to that explaining the inner connectivity of text, which is represented by thematic progression. It goes to show that thematic progression can make a significant contribution to the coherence and cohesion of the text.

This research is conducted at thesis proposal writing in Faculty of English Teacher Education Department UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Taking specifically thesis proposal as locus of this research was considered by two reasons. First, as the senior student of English Education Department UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya who will graduate from university-life have to fulfill some requirements; one of it is about writing a thesis. Before the students have to take thesis proposal writing course, they had to pass some writing courses; those are paragraph writing, essay writing, and argumentative writing. Thus, it is as a part of compulsory subject in English Teacher Education Department at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya. Therefore, it tends to an institution-directed course that obligates the students to learn how to write a good thesis proposal.

Second, based on preliminary research that done through interviewing some students who had enrolled to thesis proposal writing at English Teacher Education Department

UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya shows that among all chapters of thesis writing, background of study in chapter one has mostly occurred as the most difficult part among others. That problem is forms of their difficulties in defining the background of study. It is the statements to show the important phenomena and indicates that it is really crucial to be conducted. Additionally, they assumed that the content of background will be the summary of the other chapters; which is needed more energy to read any references dealing with those arguments. Furthermore, they feel worry about their statements; whether it is as good enough or not. Moreover, they are confused to connect between each paragraph to other paragraphs. Thus, they realize that the key success of thesis proposal is in the background. Therefore, they should write their background of study carefully. Indeed, it will be crucial to analyze students' thesis proposal in English Teacher Education Department of UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya.

## II. METHOD

This research is typically designed as qualitative descriptive study. A qualitative research leads the researchers to understand the phenomenon of the research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, etc. through descriptive approach in form of words. The approach of descriptive study research is trying to describe reality according to a systematic approach rigorously followed; it is based on theoretical considerations and is dependent on the objective of the study as well. Therefore type of qualitative descriptive study with descriptive approach is used in this research with aims to analyze the thematic progression used by the eight semester students of English Teacher Education Department at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya in writing a thesis proposal.

The data are collected through document study. Thus, some thesis proposals are chosen based on those who had followed proposal examination during the even semester of eighth semester students' academic year 2016/2017. So, there will be twelve students' background of studies in thesis proposal that will be analyzed by the researcher.

The data of this study is the data from the students' thesis proposal writing. So, the researcher gets the students' thesis proposal from the students directly. Then, after getting the file, the researcher would conduct analyzing them by breaking down through some sentences and then identifying the thematic progression occurred in the text.

In this study, data were collected by techniques of document study. The researcher asked the documents of students' background of study in thesis proposal of English Teacher Education Department. In short, the process of collecting data can be specified in the table 3.1 as follows:

Research Questions (RQ)	Source of Data	Data Collection	Research Instrument	Data Collection Technique
RQ	Students' thesis proposal	Document study	Researcher's Table of Classification	Identifying Thematic Progression Pattern

Table 1 Technique for collecting data based on Research Question

To answer the only one research question of how the thematic progression in students' thesis proposal which is needed to be written academically, the researcher did analysis through thematic progression pattern's theory which has been stated in the chapter two, review of related literature through some steps.

1. Collecting the background of study of thesis proposal from the students
2. Reading those texts
3. Placing the sentences into table format to make the process of the analysis easier and clearer
4. Determining the theme and the rheme
5. Classifying the thematic progression pattern
6. Calculating the occurrence of each type of thematic progression patterns found in the background of study in students' thesis proposal

The particular tool is needed to analyze the result of thematic progression occurred in students' background of study in thesis proposal writing. In doing the research, the researcher makes the table 3.2 as below:

Sentence		Thematic Progression Pattern											
(R)Rheme (T)Theme		Enhancing-Coherence						Obscure-Coherence					
		Reiteration		zag-Zig		Multiple		NewBrand Theme		useEmpty thereof		The if useDummy	
T	R	T	R	T	R	T	R	T	R	T	R		
		T1	R1	T1	R1	T1	R1	T1	R1	T1	R1	T1	R1
		T2	R2	T2	R2	T2	R2	X	X	X	X	X	X
		T3	R3	T3	R3	T3	R3	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 2 Instrument Tool

According to the table instrument above, the researcher does not focus on analyzing the types of themes of the sentence instead of there are three kinds of themes (textual, interpersonal and topical). Therefore, the researcher only focuses on the pattern of the thematic progressions which enhance the coherence and obscure the coherence of students' writing.

The documentation of analysis is used to answer research question. To answer RQ, the researcher used theory of Eggins and Danes which mention the types of thematic progression reveals in students' background of thesis proposal.

## III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings draw the categorization of thematic progression patterns made by the students. After analyzing the data, linked to the theories in related review literature, there are two kinds of thematic progression, they are enhance coherence which is caused by reiteration, zig-zag, and multiple pattern and obscure coherence which is caused by brand new theme, the empty use of "there", and the dummy use of "it".

## 1. Thematic Progression Pattern which Enhanced Coherence

This section of the thesis discusses the thematic progression patterns which facilitated coherence in the first paragraph of background of study of their thesis proposal. From the findings, there are three thematic progression patterns which help the cohesion. They are reiteration, zig-zag, and multiple patterns.

Types of thematic progression pattern presented the commonest type of thematic progression pattern used in the first paragraph of background of study in students' thesis proposal is the reiteration (33), then followed by zig-zag pattern (23), and the last is multiple progression pattern (0).

### a. Reiteration Progression Pattern

The highest thematic progressions pattern is reiteration. There are 33 reiteration patterns that reveal in students' work. One example of thematic progression pattern of reiteration category is below.

However, the positive or even the negative feedback surely can to be our evaluation towards our works result. Feedback according Vibha Chawla in his research is the most important component as it contributes significantly to behavior modification of the student teachers. While, according to Hattie that feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement. Feedback must be provided to motivate each other as advice and criticism. Feedback can come from many sources, in the learning process, especially in the class, got it from teacher and classmates (Peer-feedback). Thus, the effect of feedback can be very strong and can improve the teaching-learning process. Therefore, giving feedback is important for the student-teachers to be concerned.

Based on the example above indicates that by using reiteration or constant thematic progression makes the students as the writer wants to get their readers over and over with the same word or word. This condition is considered to be mostly preferred pattern used by the students because it is simple by repeating one theme in the previous sentence become the new theme in the upcoming sentence. Furthermore, to decrease the monotonous of the text, the students use the pronouns to indicate the same theme of the previous theme. However, using this type of thematic progression more may lead to the lack of deep explanation of the ideas introduced as the writer does not expand the information contained in the rheme. It is similar to Abed's statement that this pattern indicates to the technique of simple explanation and description in writing strategy. It goes to show that the way the students write their first paragraph of background of study in thesis proposal is very simple. They don't need to find new theme in the next sentence. Somehow, starting a sentence with the same theme in both the

initial and subsequent sentences is especially useful in helping students to communicate their ideas successfully. Therefore, this is one of the ways the students can do to make their writing coherent.

### b. Zig-zag Progression Pattern

The second highest thematic progression reveals in students' work is zig-zag thematic progression pattern. There are 23 zig-zag pattern that occurred in it. One example of thematic progression pattern of zig-zag category is below.

Basically, writing can be categorized into two main types in term of its style. Those are free writing and academic writing. The major difference between them is that academic writing has many of the things that personal writing has not. One of the important things in academic writing must be organized around a formal order or structure in which to present ideas. To ensure the ideas, the texts must additionally be supported by author citations in the literature.

As the example above is the example of academic text, McCabe has said that the zig-zag pattern is the basic thematic progression necessarily needed to make the text well-structured as it considered as the academic text. Thus, some students often use this pattern to their academic text in writing their background of study in thesis proposal. Somehow, this pattern is considered more difficult than reiteration pattern because it need to pick up the rheme of one sentence to be put as theme in the next sentence not directly use the same theme of the previous sentence.

### c. Multiple Progression Pattern

This pattern is used to distinguish between themes coming from different parts of the same rheme to reassure the reader that the topic is being further developed. Based on the Chart 4.2 indicates that there is no any multiple thematic progressions occur in student' text. Somehow, this pattern can be used in one paragraph as a variety of words referring to the same rheme. This pattern can solve the problem of unnecessary repetitions. Conversely, the fact shows that no single student even use this pattern to write their first paragraph of background of study of thesis proposal. Thus, this pattern is being suggested to be taught to the students in order that the students can make a variety in their writing pattern instead of reiteration and zig-zag pattern. Hence, through this pattern the students can help the way they write in coherent and cohesion.

## 2. Thematic Progression Pattern which Obscured Coherence

This part discusses the thematic progression pattern which obscured coherence from the first paragraph of background of study written by the students. They include brand new theme, empty use of "there", and use of dummy "it".

Based on the Chart 4-2, it is found that only some students who did obscuring the coherence of the text. It is only found that by branding new theme become the commonest types (6), then followed by the empty use of “*there*” (1), and the last is that there is no dummy use of “*it*” in students’ work. These examples below have been categorized as thematic progression which obscured coherence, while the explanation is explained in the research finding.

#### a. Brand new theme

According to Bloor & Bloor cited in Arunsitot’s journal that the problem of brand new theme occurs in the work of inexperienced writers who put new information in the theme position. Thus, the theme is introduced in the text causing a lack of organizational skill in the writing. In all the brand new themes found in students work are shown in the following tables, the italicized words represents the initial themes, and the bolded words represents new themes.

##### 1) *Speaking*, According to Yussou

**Haidara in his survey research that the EFL students in Indonesia**

Theme	Rheme
<i>Speaking</i>	needs these practical outputs which one of them is being able to communicate
<b>According to Yussou Haidara in his survey research that the EFL students in Indonesia</b>	were analyzed that there are not just about lack of vocabulary and grammar, but having lack of motivation and never develop their confidence

From example 1 (found in student’s F work), it is observed that *speaking* being an initial theme of example 1. However, brand new theme **according to Yussou Haidara in his survey research that the EFL students in Indonesia**, has been introduced in the following sentence which make a sudden break in the logical flow of information in the text.

##### 2) *In teaching and learning process*, **many kinds of application. we**

Theme	Rheme
<i>In teaching learning process</i>	is not needed to feel so difficult if teaching the students
<b>Many kinds of application or media</b>	already created by the programmer to make the easy

	process when it applied something
<b>We</b>	can use easily if we want to study and applied about many things in the era of digital technology especially in teaching and learning process

From example 2 above (found in student’s G work), it is observed that *in teaching learning process* being an initial theme of the example 2. Somehow, two brand new themes **many kinds of application** and **we** which have been introduced in the two following sentences had made a jump break from the initial theme. Both of those words have no any relation to either the theme or the rheme of the initial sentence. Therefore, those two words (**many kinds of application** and **we**) have disrupted the coherence flow of the text.

#### b. Empty use of “*there*”

According to Oxford Learner’s Pocket Dictionary 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, the word “*there*” as the adverb has some meanings. It is used to show that something exist or happen, to indicate as a place or position, to indicate an existing or available, and to attract somebody’s attention. In addition according to Nada Salih Abdul Ridha the word “*there*” regarded as beginning of a sentence as an easy way to begin a paragraph. However, in this case the word “*there*” is not used as a way to begin a paragraph to show something exist or happened, but it is used in the second sentence of the paragraph that has no any relation to the preceding sentence in the first sentence of its paragraph. Therefore it can make a rupture of the flow information that happen in the text. The example below is found in student’s I work. The word *there* in the second sentence has made something exist but has no relation to the preceding sentence. Thus, it is better to make the second sentence in this text could be change to be a part of the first sentence as in “its skills are productive skills and receptive skills as target language”

Theme	Rheme
Learning language	is about how its skill can be applied in real life
There	are productive skills and receptive skills as target language

### c. The use of dummy “it”

According to Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary 4<sup>th</sup> Edition that the word “it” has some meanings. First, it can be a pronoun (used as subject or object of verb or after preposition). Second, it can be used to identify a person. Third, it is used when the subject or object comes at the end of a sentence. Fourth, it is used when you are talking about time, distance, or weather. Fifth, it can be used to emphasize any part of sentence. However, in this case the use of dummy *it* occurs when the pronoun of *it* takes place without clear reference. Therefore, the use of this word creates break in the texts that make obscuring coherence of the text. Based on the Chart 4-2 indicates that there is no any use of dummy *it* occur in student' text. The students do not even use one of this pattern to make their text obscured from the coherence.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions indicate the way the student write their first paragraph of background of study in thesis proposal is through thematic progression to enhance the coherence. The constant progression or reiteration pattern was the most prominent used by all the students to enhance the discourse coherence of the first paragraph of the background study in thesis proposal. The students used the same theme of the previous sentence to the theme of the following sentence. Although it can make the texts look monotonous, but it was easier for the students make their writing coherence to use the same theme without finding the new theme from the previous rheme. After that, the thematic progression which enhances the coherence in students' text is found that the zig-zag pattern come up as the second highest pattern occurred. By reiterating the rheme of the preceding sentence to the theme of the following sentence, the students try to make the text coherence. However, the other pattern which is multiple patterns was not used by the students.

There were in total 56 thematic progression patterns which enhance the coherence found in the students' text, and they were divided into three categories which are 33 reiteration pattern, 23 zigzag pattern, and 0 multiple pattern.

Further findings indicate that the most prominent patterns that obscured coherence of the students were the use of brand new theme. Then, it was followed by empty use of “there”. Another pattern, the use of dummy “it” was not occurred in the students' text. There were in total 7 thematic progression patterns which obscured coherence, and they were divided into three categories which are 6 obscured coherence thematic progression pattern categorized as brand new theme, 1 obscured coherence thematic progression pattern categorized as empty use of “there”, and no obscured coherence thematic progression pattern categorized as the dummy use of “it”.

Reflecting the findings above can be concluded that actually in the first paragraph of background of study, the students have been able to write coherently even though the way they write is trough reiteration and zig-zag pattern which sometimes make the flow of the writing look monotonous.

Therefore, multiple pattern is needed to be applied and taught to them in order to make their writing does not look not monotonous but it could be variety explaining the information in the text.

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