

**AN ANALYSIS OF THEMATIC PROGRESSION IN THE BACKGROUND SECTION
OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' THESIS OF BENGKULU
UNIVERSITY IN PERIOD 2017**

Nanik Anjar Yani
Universitas Bengkulu
nanikanjaryani21@gmail.com

Bambang Suwarno
Universitas Bengkulu
wdsaraswati@gmail.com

Gita Mutiara Hati
Universitas Bengkulu
gitawitanto@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to find out the types and the dominant type of thematic progression in the background section of theses written by undergraduate students of the English Department of Bengkulu University (UNIB) in 2017. The design was descriptive quantitative. The sample consisted of 16 background sections of undergraduate theses, which were chosen randomly. The data were collected by the documentation instrument. The result showed that there were three types of thematic progression, namely, constant theme, linear theme, and split rheme. Furthermore, the linear theme was the dominant type. The order of frequency was as follows: linear theme (50.07%), constant theme (45.81%), and split rheme (4.10%). The conclusion was that all types of thematic progression were used and that the linear theme was the most common in the background section of the UNIB undergraduate theses.

Keywords: *Thematic progression, theme and rheme, undergraduate thesis*

INTRODUCTION

Writing background section in undergraduate thesis is part of Academic Writing. It means that the background should be formal and serious, since the people who read the academic writing are the lecturers, scholars, students, and researchers. They usually use many kinds of academic writing, namely journals, undergraduate theses, theses, and others as a reference for their writing task.

In one hand, the researcher also had learnt about Academic Writing, ELT Research Methodology, and Language Teaching Seminar. During learning those subjects, the researcher found many mistakes like the

relation between one sentence and another does not make sense, or there is a gap between the sentences, that done by the students in trying to write a background of the research. Furthermore, the researcher tried to look for the background section in some undergraduate theses in UNIB as a reference. Again, the researcher found that the meaning of each paragraph sometimes difficult to understand by the reader, since there is a gap between one sentence to another. It makes the reader difficult and confused in comprehending the information included in that writing. It implied, possibly, the matter is in part of the information flow of the sentences in the paragraph. The information flow of the sentences in the paragraph can be seen by the thematic progression of the sentence or clause.

Besides, Butt, et. al. (2001:135) stated that "to analyze and discuss textual meanings, we need a simple and distinct meta-language: we call the first element Theme and the rest of the clause Rheme". Moreover, theme and rheme is related one another. Theme and rheme can help the readers to understand the information in the clause. Theme of the clause comes first and rheme follows.

The flow of information in each clause from Theme to Rheme is crucial in achieving communicative effectiveness in a message. The exchange of information between successive Theme and Rheme pairings in a text is called Thematic Progression (Eggins, 1994). Thematic progression contributes to the cohesive development of a text, and then produces a coherent whole text (Butt, et. al.; 2001:134).

Additionally, according to Danes (1974) thematic progression refers to the way Themes interact with each other and with Rhemes in order to provide continuity in discourse and to organize the text. It means that the use of thematic progression can create the continuity of the information in the text. As a consequence, it also can create regular information in the text.

Paltridge (2006), stated that thematic progression refers to "the way in which the theme of a clause may pick up, or repeat, a meaning from a preceding theme or rheme". For instance, the theme of the first clause or sentence is repeated as a theme in the second clause or sentence. It is possible to create information flow in among the clause in the paragraph. It means the information flow in a text can be seen by the thematic progression that structured in a text.

METHOD

This research used descriptive design with quantitative approach. According to Creswell (1994), quantitative research is explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analyzed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics). The numerical data is described into paragraphs in order to make it clear.

Furthermore, the population of this research were 67 undergraduate theses in period 2017 of English Education Study Program. From that, the sample was taken randomly about 25% of the population, that is 16 background sections of undergraduate theses. It is based on the

statement by Gay dan Diehl (1992), they stated that "if the kind of research is descriptive, the minimal sample is 10 % of the population"

The data was collected by the following steps: (1) Borrowing the CD of undergraduate theses, (2) Choosing the documents randomly for borrowing half of the population, (3) Copying the data from the CD into the PC of the researcher, (4) Choosing 16 undergraduate theses randomly. Those were coded (e.g. 1, 2, 3, ets), and (5) Printing all of the subjects for easier analyzed.

Moreover, the data were analyzed by the following steps: (1) Coding the paragraph and the clauses, (2) Analyzing the type of thematic progression of each clause, (3) Classifying and calculating each type of thematic progression, and (4) Calculating the percentage of each type of thematic progression.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

1. Types of thematic progression used in the background section of English department undergraduate students' thesis in UNIB in period 2017

a. Linear theme

Linear theme is when the rheme of one clause is taken as a theme in the next clause. For example:

Excerpt 1

"(T₁) **Another example** is the term "*hypertension*". (T₂) **There** is also word formation process involved. (T₃) **The base word** is "*tense*" which means "*stressed tightly*". (T₄) **To form the new medical term, the word "tense"** is adding by affixes, they are *hyper-* as a prefix which means "over" or "excess" and *-ion* as a suffix which indicates an action or process. (T₅) **In short, the medical term "hypertension"** means abnormally high (over) blood pressure.'"

b. Constant theme

Constant theme refers to the pattern in which the theme of one clause is repeated as a theme in the next clause. For example:

Excerpt 2

"(T₁) **People and communication** are two words that cannot be separated. (T₂) **As long as human live, they** need to communicate to each others. (T₃) **They** communicate for different purpose. (T₄) **It can be said, people** communicate each other to fulfill their needs. (T₅) **To communicate, human beings** need "a tool" to deliver their ideas, it is known as language"

c. Split rheme

Split rheme is when the rheme may include some different informations which may be taken up as a theme in some subsequent clauses. For example:

Excerpt 3

“(T₁) Moreover, before conducting this research, there were some researches which are closely related to this research. (T₂) First, the research was conducted by Guna (2012) who investigated the correlation between Emotional Intelligence and Students' Achievement. (T₃) The subject of this research was 10th grade in SMA Negeri 3 Salatiga. (T₄) The result of the correlation test, it could be concluded that there was no correlation between EI and students' achievement. (T₅) Second, the research was conducted by Azimifar (2013) who investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement.”

B. Discussion

Based on the result, the use of three forms of theme was very useful in judging the type of thematic progression used. By using them, the pattern of the clauses can be seen through three sides whether it was connected by topical theme, textual theme, or interpersonal theme. It can make the analysis running easier especially in the clauses that contained all forms of theme. Mostly, the use of three forms of theme, or two forms of theme were conducted in *linear theme*. It caused the score of linear theme in highest place.

Furthermore, the researcher found some cases like that in the data. Fortunately, it was not too much but it was found in every background. Meanwhile, still, the frequent of linear theme was higher than others. Again, it was caused by the writer which more inclined to use linear type than the two other types. They had a tendency to use linear theme than constant theme due to the structure of the clause or sentence. If they used linear theme they can create information flow between the clauses by using textual theme or interpersonal without thinking to change the structure of the sentence, as if they use constant theme. Since in constant theme the theme/topical theme should be the beginning words of the clause. Likewise, it was more difficult to use split rheme in that case. Therefore, split rheme was only 4.10%. By using split rheme the writer should make the rheme of the clause contained some informations that would be elaborated in the next clauses. It happened in some paragraphs when the writer wanted to inform about the previous study of the research. Mostly, in that case, they used split rheme.

This example was taken from the research related to 'reading'. Therefore, it was explained about 'reading' like that and used constant theme. Because if the writer using linear theme, the sentence might be more difficult to construct. It was easier to construct if constant theme was used. In fact, although it was easier to construct, some of the writers of the research that has been analyzed by the researcher chose to use linear theme more. In result, constant theme was 45.81%. It was the second place after linear theme and before split rheme.

In addition, based on the paltridge (2006), Thematic Progression refers to the way in which the theme of a clause may pick up, or repeat, a meaning from a preceding theme or rheme. It happened in each background that have been analyzed by the researcher. The thematic progression between the clauses in the text was drawn by the pattern of

each type. All three types of thematic progression suggested by him were found in the background section of English Department Undergraduate Students' Thesis, but, still, the dominant one is Linear Theme. Further, Paltridge, in his book, did not mention about which one the superlative type between them. He just explained them and notified that they can create good thematic progression between the clauses. Moreover, the researcher found that Linear Theme was the dominant type used but it does not mean that it is the best type of thematic progression. Since all of them can create information flow in the writing, it does not matter which one of them that the writer want to use dominantly. In other word, the use of type of thematic progression in every kind of writing is the discretion of the writer.

Moreover, this study and the previous studies were constructed by the same topic, that was analysis of thematic progression. Eventhough, this result was different by three previous studies. The first was the research by Kurniawan (2015). He found that the Constant theme was dominantly used by the EFL students' in their thesis abstracts. He analyzed five thesis abstracts. He did not focus on the various forms of theme of the writing in analyzing the abstracts. He just focused on one type of theme, that was topical theme to make certain about thematic progression used. In contrast, the present research focused on three forms of theme, those are topical theme, textual theme, and interpersonal theme. Probably, it took a part in different result between this previous study and the present study. Additionally, the different sample of the research has a part to make the difference of the result between two same research topic. Kurniawan's research was in abstract which it consisted only one paragraph that told about all the big line of a research. It mostly gave an effect to use Constant theme more than others.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research, it can be concluded that all types of thematic progression suggested by Paltridge (2006) were found in the background section of English department undergraduate students' thesis of Bengkulu University in period 2017. The types were constant theme, linear theme, and split rheme. Moreover, they had different frequencies which were constant theme (45.81%), linear theme (50.07%), and split rheme (4.10%). As the data, linear theme was the dominantly type used. Mostly, linear theme was the dominant one caused by the textual theme and interpersonal theme found in the clause. It linked the information flow although the topical theme between two clauses were totally different.

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