

THEMATIC PROGRESSION ON THE STUDENTS' WRITINGS

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Abstract:

In this thesis certain patterns related to the writing skill will be discussed in the surface and deep layer. Writing is mainly analyzed for certain types of essay, however it can be investigated introducing some notions to gain a wider comprehension.

Key words: theme, rheme, textual metafunction, thematic choices, multiple theme.

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Writing, like Speaking, is a productive language skill. The students cannot be good writers unless they practice writing and learn to organize expressions they choose to make their points precisely. They need to experiment with the language, playing with words and manipulating phrases and sentences. The more they play with language, the more they will be able to control it. So the teacher must let the students explore and experiment about the language; they would improve their writing by exploring and experimenting with language. They first way they put words together may not be right, but if they do exercises carefully and creatively they can be expected to become a good writer.

In writing, the students are required to produce language to express their ideas. To do this, they should have sufficient knowledge of what to write and organization of language. Knowing what to write will enable the flow of ideas, whereas knowing how to organize will help them convey the ideas in a clear way to the readers. To produce good writing, it is necessary for the students to know how to organize Theme and Rheme in their writing. The organization of Theme and Rheme is usually discussed in Systemic Functional Grammar. It is a multi-functional view of language in which each metafunction assigns a structure to the clause. Systemic Functional Grammar view language as a resource for making meaning. This grammar attempts to describe language in actual use and so focuses on text and their context. There are three types of meaning within grammatical structures in grammar as resource for making meaning, they are experiential/ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning. Textual meaning is relevance to the context: both the preceding (and following) text, and the context of situation. The textual function of the clause are that of constructing a message. It is constructed in English in term of Theme and Rheme. The system of Theme belongs to the textual metafunction of the language. It is concerned with the organization the larger text. Every clause is organized as a message related to an unfolding text.

The definition of Theme and Rheme as stated by Halliday (1994:37) is as follows: Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that

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with which the clause is concerned. The remainder of the message, the part in which Theme is developed is called Rheme. As a message structure, therefore, a clause consists of a Theme accompanied by a Rheme; and the structure is expressed by the order whatever is chosen as Theme is put first.

The Rheme is the most important element in the structure of the clause as a message because it represents information the speaker wants to convey to the hearer. It is the Rheme that fulfils the communicative purpose of the utterance. Gerot and Wignell (1994:103) mention that in English the Theme can be identified as that or those element (s) which come(s) first in the clause. This represents the point of departure of this message from the previous one. The rest of the clause is called Rheme. New information is typically contained in the Rheme.

Theme represents 'This is what I am talking about' and Rheme is 'This is what I am talking about it.' In terms of looking at a clause as a message, the Theme looks backwards, relating to current message to what has gone before. The interaction of Theme and Rheme governs how the information in a text develops. Paltridge (2000: 140) says that the notion of Theme and Rheme are also employed in the examination of thematic progression, or method of development of a text. 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. There are three kinds of thematic progression patterns, they are: reiteration or constant theme pattern, zig-zag/ linear theme pattern, and multiple theme/ split rheme pattern.

In writing, the students should pay attention not only to grammar, punctuation and capitalization, unity and coherence, but also to its thematic progression. It means how they develop old and new information in their writing. Based on the statements above the writer is interested in conducting this research with several considerations. First, the writer wants to know what are themes and rhemes in the students' writing, and second she is also eager to know what thematic progression pattern they employ in developing their writing. Butt *et.al.* (2000:114) say that if the Theme is the signpost for a speaker or writer's point of departure, then each Rheme is the temporary destination. Usually the bit of the message that the writer or speaker considers interesting or important comes in the Rheme. While the first clause or clause complex in a text will probably contain all new meanings, the thematic choices for the following clauses should not be unexpected. They should be connected with ideas that we have already met in the Theme or Rheme of a clause or not too far before. Because readers and addressees need to be reassured that they are following the development of the text, many texts are signposted by placing elements from the Rheme of one clause into the Theme of the text, or by repeating meanings from the Theme of one clause in the Theme of subsequent clauses. This kind of text development method is called thematic progression.

Thematic progression refers to the way in which the Theme of a clause may pick up or repeat, a meaning from a preceding Theme and Rheme. According to Martin and Rother in Paltridge (2000:140), there are three kinds of thematic development patterns, they are:

1. *Theme reiteration/ constant theme pattern*

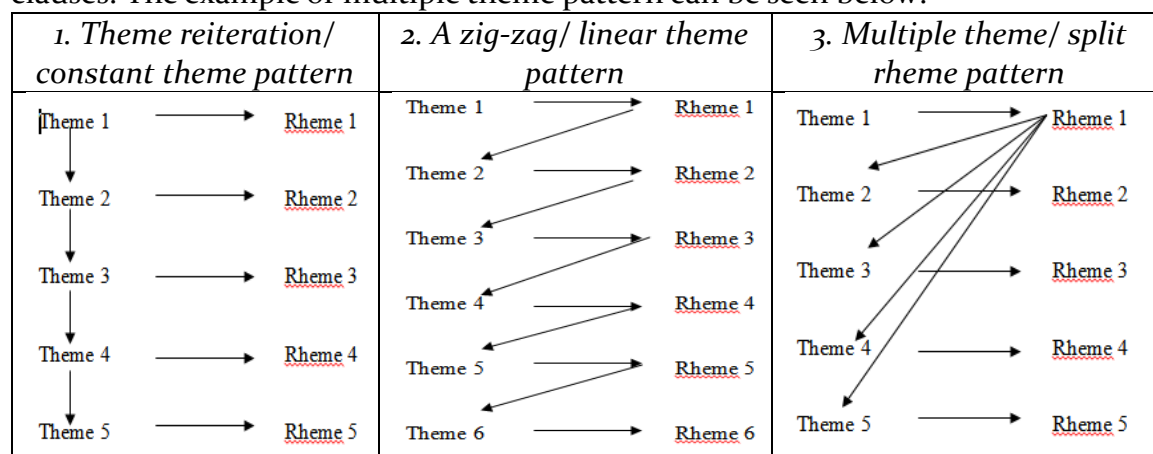
This pattern shows that the first theme is picked up and repeated in the beginning of the next clause. This is the example of this pattern:

2. *A zig-zag/ linear theme pattern*

It is a pattern when the subject matter in the Rheme of one clause is taken up in the theme of the following clause. The example of zig-zag pattern can be seen below:

3. Multiple theme/ split rheme pattern

In this pattern, a rheme may include a number of different pieces of information, each of which may be taken up as the theme in a number of subsequent clauses. The example of multiple theme pattern can be seen below:



Finding and Discussion

There are 50 students' writing used as the data of this research. The writing is in the form of paragraphs with different topics and different length, and they are developed using cause and effect strategy. The topics given in this study are: *Divorce, Teenage Marriage, Cheating, Watching Television, Rape and Murder*. In this article the writer presents the Theme and Rheme of 6 students' writings and also their thematic progressions based on Butt *et al.* analysis (2000:114). The errors concerning with grammar or spelling are ignored.

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