

# Thematic Progression in Students' Descriptive Text

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## Abstract.

*A way for developing good writing skills is by using thematic progression. It can help students improve their writing abilities. Theme and rheme are used to analyze the thematic progression. This study aimed to find out the types of thematic progression of students' descriptive texts and the most dominant pattern of thematic progression in students' descriptive texts. The researcher used the descriptive qualitative method in the research design. There were 50 texts written by students at SMP Swasta Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar. The data was analyzed using (Eggins, 2005) theory as the theoretical framework that found three types of thematic progression. The findings revealed that the students' descriptive texts follow three thematic progression patterns: reiteration or constant pattern, zig-zag or linear pattern, and multiple patterns or split rheme pattern. The constant pattern was the most dominant used by students in 271 occurrences (91.80%), followed by zig-zag or linear pattern occurred 13 times (4.4%) and multiple patterns or split rheme pattern occurred 11 times (3.8%). The findings show students, in writing descriptive text, tend to use simple thematic progression due to their level of knowledge in grammar and thematic progression is relatively low.*

**Keywords:** *Thematic progression, narrative text, academic writing*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Descriptive text is the kinds of texts that learners would study in junior high school based on the Indonesian education curriculum. A descriptive text explains something in detail so that the reader may imagine the object being described. Descriptive text is one of the kinds of texts used to identify someone or something. The other definition is by (*English for Junior High School Students*, n.d.). The descriptive text describes the features of a particular thing, such as a human, an animal, or an object. According Depdikbud (2008), identification and description are the two generic structures of descriptive text. The identification introduces the topic of the description, while the description describes the subject's characteristics. Besides listening, speaking, and reading, students are expected to master writing as one of four skills in English. This is supported by (Harmer, 2004), who argues that writing is an important skill. (Amperawaty & Warsono, 2019) Writing entails thinking exploration, the creation of a written draft, revision, and finalization. By writing, people can share ideas, feeling, and thought as well as persuade other people. Writing is the process of creating a written product. It is the method of developing thoughts into written text that is coherent and cohesive. For most language learners studying English as a second or foreign language, writing an English text is a challenging task. (Bani Younes & Salamh Albalawi, 2015).

Writing a text is a type of discourse that requires good structure as well as continuity and coherence to be cohesive. (Halliday & Hasan, 1976) stated that a text or a paragraph that uses cohesion and coherence must be a strong text. This may suggest writing well, the researchers must use cohesion and coherence in their paragraphs or texts. According to them, cohesion is an internal property, while coherence refers to a paragraph's contextual properties. It is important to use a relation that includes elements both inside and outside the clause, which can help the text flow smoothly in writing text.

*Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci Filozofii Čká Fakulta OLOMOUC* (2009) stated, Cohesion and coherence are the relations used in the text. It can be said that cohesion and coherence are tools used in the writing of texts, and they serve as a link between sentences to make the text flow smoothly. Cohesion in writing can be highlighted as the key problem faced by students when learning to write English texts, as explained by (Devira, 2017). Cohesion and coherence are primarily needed for paragraph writing, this topic should be a major issue to be resolved.

According to (Eggin, 2005), the best way to create a text's message is by using thematic progression patterns. He also discusses different categories of thematic progression patterns, such as:

1. Theme Reiteration or Constant Pattern

A theme is picked and reiterated at the beginning of each clause in a theme reiteration or constant pattern. The pattern of this type can be seen as follows:

Clause 1            Theme    → Rheme

Clause 2            Theme    → Rheme

Clause 3            Theme    → Rheme

2. Zig-zag or Linear Pattern

The subject matter in the rheme of one clause is picked up in the theme of the next clause in a linear pattern. This pattern can be seen as follows.

Clause 1            Theme            Rheme

Clause 2            Theme            Rheme

Clause 3            Theme            Rheme

3. Split Rheme Pattern

A Rheme may contain a number of different pieces of information in Split Rheme Pattern, each of which can be used as the Theme in a number of subsequent clauses. This pattern can be seen as follows.

Clause 1            Theme            Rheme

Clause 2            Theme            Rheme

Clause 3            Theme            Rheme

The theme and rheme are the most important parts of the clause, students must be able to analyze them. So, understanding the thematic progression will help students to identify the whole clause (Bojonegoro et al., 2017). According to Halliday & Hasan, (2014) "The provided information serves as the "point of message departure," while the rest of the message in the clause where the theme is formed is named the rheme". According to (Maleki & Zangani, 2007), Students' writing cohesion can be supported by the use of theme and rheme in thematic progression patterns. Yang (2008) stated that thematic progression is very helpful in improving students' to organize text and it would help students improve their skills in writing. The theory of thematic progression focused on Theme and Rheme can be used to establish the flow of continuous knowledge to preserve the text's coherence and cohesion (Salzmann et al., 1999).

Some researchers focused on thematic progression, for example, their research concluded about students' recount texts and the coherence of students' writing recount texts. Gunawan & Aziza (2017) stated that focused on academic writing in a university. (Gumperz, 1982) were interested in the thematic structure of discourse and how it progressed. The observation used natural conversations of Indian and Pakistani citizens of the United Kingdom who are fluent in English and use it in their daily life. The researcher draws a conclusion based on previous studies that using thematic progression patterns to solve students' writing problems is a good choice. Meanwhile, (Yunita, 2018) focused on the Theme and Thematic development patterns of recount texts written by vocational students, as well as the patterns of dominance constructed by the students in their writing and the representation of Theme elements with students' writing abilities.

Meanwhile, Rakhman (2013) focused on students' exposition text in High School. His research aimed to see how students with various levels of writing ability achievement managed their writings into exposition texts and to see how closely their writings matched the argumentative language features defined in Systemic Functional Linguistics theory (SFL). Another study focused on the topic of Thematic Progression in Translation. Jalilifar (2009) looked at how themes developed and progressed in English academic texts and their Persian translations. He was interested in how translators deal with thematic progression as instruments when translating a text into another language. Sofyan (2017) defined the different types of thematic progression used on Indonesia Travel, the official website of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia. His article demonstrated how the progression of a theme or rheme in one clause is taken as the theme of the next clause.

This study helps students gain a thorough understanding of how to write descriptive text. Based on the explanation above, this study is to mention the most popular types that students' used in their texts by using theory from (Eggs, 2005). Furthermore, the teachers can use this research as a source for teaching materials, especially about thematic progression and this study can help other researchers for future research.

## II. METHODS

This study aimed to find out how students' descriptive texts progressed from one theme to the next in their writing. Qualitative research aims to collect, organize, and analyze data. The object of this study is students' from SMP Sultan Agung Pematangsiantar. There is fifty students' writing descriptive text that analyzed. Students will be given the task of writing a descriptive text. The students will be asked to write a descriptive text on a topic of their choice. The students did via WhatsApp. The researcher asks the students to take a piece of paper and asks the students to write a descriptive text with a free topic. The researcher will give 60 minutes to the students to write the descriptive text. The students also submit their writing descriptive text and collect their writing by WhatsApp. Then, the researcher underlines every sentence in students' paragraphs, especially in Thematic Progression. The last, the researcher analyzed thematic progression based on descriptive text written by students.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Three thematic progressions were found in students' descriptive texts after analyzing 50 students' descriptive texts. They are constant patterns, linear patterns, and split rheme patterns.. The following table shows the various forms of thematic progression:

**Table 1. Types of thematic progression in students' descriptive texts**

	Thematic Progression		
	Constant Pattern	Linear Pattern	Split Rheme Pattern
Number	271	13	11
Percentage	91.8%	4.4%	3.8%

The Constant Pattern is the most frequently used, as seen in the table above. It occurred 271 times or equals 91.8% of the total. A high number of students have the opportunity to retain the emphasis of the theme which will be continued and used at the beginning of the next clause. The second pattern is the Linear Pattern. It occurred 13 times or equals to 4.4% of the total. It means that the students were effective in the text's cohesion by adding new information and modifying a rheme to become the theme of the next clause. The last theme pattern is the Split Rheme Pattern. It occurred 11 times or equals to 3.8% of the total. It means that students express their focus at the rheme of one clause using this pattern, and then define it as themes in subsequent clauses.

Students use various forms of Thematic Progression patterns in writing descriptive text, as seen in the study of Thematic Progression above. It also demonstrates the structure of the sentence by sentence and word by word. It also discusses how the different forms of Thematic Progression patterns are used and how

their function in the descriptive text clause of students. The clause is made up of two parts: theme and rheme, which can be used to understand the various styles of Thematic Progression patterns that can be used to develop a sentence in a descriptive text written by students.

The researcher explains the Thematic Progression of 50 students' writing in the study by presenting students' descriptive text. The students will be asked to write a descriptive text on a topic of their choice Thematic Progression patterns, such as Constant Pattern, Linear Pattern, and Split Pattern, create sentences by transferring the theme or rheme of one clause to the next.

The Constant Pattern was discovered in clause themes as a result of the study. The Linear Pattern, on the other hand, develops a sentence in a paragraph by repeating the clause's rheme into the theme after it. The Linear Pattern is shown in the theme of the sentence clauses. The Split Rheme Pattern is shown in the related clauses' rheme in repeated themes. Both of these patterns serve as a method for organizing sentences and combining ideas into a cohesive text. Therefore, some clauses within the paragraph were not correlated to the ideas in previous sentences.

As Dewi et al (2019) illustrated that Constant Theme Progression is the most frequently used in their research. It happens 98% times or equals 90.7% of the total. The reason is students' focus on the theme that is continued and used at the start of the clause.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

According to the results of the research, there are three major forms of thematic progression: Constant pattern, Linear pattern, and Split Rheme pattern. By using the thematic progression pattern in the writing process, the text arrangement of the text can be improved by students and teachers to have better control over their writing. Students used thematic progression in the way they did for a variety of reasons, including a lack of understanding about how to do it, as well as a lack of interest in writing text. The students used thematic progression in the way they did because they got resources from text reading and an interpretation from an English teacher.

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