

THEME PATTERNS INTRODUCTION SECTIONS OF RESEARCH ARTICLES WRITTEN BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study analyzed theme patterns of 41 introduction sections of research articles written by undergraduate students of Indonesia, especially students of the English department in *Universitas Negeri Padang*. The sources of data are from e-journal archives of E-journal English Language and Literature (JELL) and Journal of English Language Teaching (JELT) of *Universitas Negeri Padang*. The data were analyzed by classifying the theme and rheme structure of clause sequences and then determining the patterns. This research is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach. The result of the findings shows that simple linear pattern (42,70%) found to be the most dominant pattern of the theme found in the data. In addition, new patterns (27,35%) are also frequently used in the data. These findings indicate that most students tend to write their ideas more cohesive than coherent as the lack of using an interpersonal theme and derived hyper-theme pattern found in the data.

Key words: Theme patterns, introduction section, research article.

A. INTRODUCTION

English undergraduate students of Indonesia are required to master four skills of English; listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Writing is the most fundamental expertise to acquire by them (Husin & Nurbayani, 2017). This expertise is acquired for them to write a final academic report. This requirement is one of the requirements to be a bachelor (Husin & Nurbayani, 2017).

English students; education, linguistics or literature students, are the students who write their paper or essay in English. They are obliged to write their papers in English. Hence, it is somehow challenging for them to fulfill the requirement. However, in reality, they face problems in writing this academic discourse, whereas the demands of writing tasks at the university level require more

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sophisticated levels in the argumentative and interpretive dimensions of language (Angel & Garcia, 2017).

The problems which commonly students find in writing essays or texts for academic purposes are possibly from the ineffective the learning process of English itself. The learning process could fail when students are lack of knowledge of academic genres' rhetorical features and limited writing experiences that involve argumentation and interpretation (Angel & Garcia, 2017). According to Crossley and McNamara (2014), the lack of writing experience that involves argumentation and interpretation function means a lack of cohesion and coherent elements which specifically important regards to the quality of the text.

Cohesion allows the reader to make connections between the ideas in the text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The tools for connecting the ideas are called cohesive ties. It is important to sign ideas by using this structure to help readers to read it incoherent way. Coherent element is also the strongest indicator of overall writing quality (Crossley & McNamara, 2014). It specifically involves the reader's mind and knowledge to understand the text. However, texts can be cohesive but not all of them are coherent. Therefore, it is important for having these two important elements of writing in unite for better quality.

These important elements, however, can be tested by using other approaches instead of using cohesive ties. There is a thematic approach called thematicity. There is a relation of thematicity with cohesion and coherence elements of writing. Thematicity is one of sub-field study in systemic functional grammar approach which focuses on theme and rheme structure functioned in a clauses or sentences. Initial parts of a sentence are easily to recognize as cohesive functions. According to that statement, theme is the one that can be found by seeing the first constituent of the sentences. Therefore, the themes of the sentences are the major indicators for evaluating the cohesion and coherence elements in clauses in any texts or discourses.

There are many studies about thematicity (Xu, 2000; Jalilifar, 2010; Refiei & Modirkhamene, 2012; Anani, 2013; Ebrahimi, 2016; Jalilifar & Montazeri, 2017; Nugraha, 2017; Adawiyah, 2017); however, there are only few studies exploring thematicity in the written language of academic writing or research articles; especially the introduction section of research articles. Introduction section is one of the important parts of any written discourses that can be analyzed in thematicity approach. An example, there are Jalilifar and Montazeri (2017) who have used thematicity to analyze the theme structure and patterns in introduction parts (foreword, introduction, and preface) of applied linguistics textbooks. They analyzed the written language of introduction sections in a different genre of text or discourse. Therefore, to add new research to enrich findings on thematicity in academic discourse, this study aimed to find theme patterns of introductions sections of research articles written by undergraduate students.

Theme pattern or progression was first conducted by Danes (1974) as an approach to suggest that the theme of a given clause will be the main link between the clause and the text (Fontaine, 2013: 166). Moreover, Eggins (2004) states that

‘theme shifting can be achieved either ‘accidentally’, with the new Theme coming from outside the text, or cohesively’ is called thematic progression.

Thematic progressions or patterns are divided into four types according to McCabe (1999): 1) simple linear progression, 2) constant continuous theme, 3) split theme, and 4) derived hyper-theme. The brief of theme patterns’ explanations are described below:

- 1) Simple linear progression can also be called zig-zag pattern which the rheme of the first clause turns out to be a theme in the second clause (Eggins, 2004). A paragraph which uses this progression is when the first rheme of first clause is taken up as the theme in the next clause.
- 2) The constant pattern is where the Theme of given information is derived from the Theme of a preceding clause (Fontaine, 2013:166). It is frequently used as focusing on a particular thing or concept (Bloor & Bloor, 2004:88).
- 3) Split rheme pattern occurs when the Rheme of a clause has two components, each of which is taken in turn as the Theme of later clause (Bloor & Bloor, 2004: 89).
- 4) Last, derived hyper-theme pattern focuses on one theme generally which is called hyper-theme (Refnaldi & Rosa, 2016: 127). Hyper-theme is used to show that it is a superior theme that takes other themes to be part of it particularly.

These theme patterns are the instruments of data analysis for researcher to find the result of this study.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used descriptive method with qualitative approach. Related to this research, the researcher described the findings of analysis in a form of explanation or descriptions. However, this research used a simple of calculation number for counting the findings to support answering the research questions. Furthermore, this research conducted in the scope of Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to discover thematicity through textual meta-function.

This research is a type of corpus library research as data were taken from field source which is on a website and the resources are in a written form. The research articles were chosen by applying quota sampling. The sampling applied to population of English study program undergraduate students’ journals, consist of English Language Teaching (K) and English Language and Literature (NK) study program’s e-journals, which were unpublished in 2018 and belonged to undergraduate students of English Department of State University of Padang in Indonesia. The unpublished journals are in volume number 7 (seven) with 4 (four) issues in each of English language teaching e-journals’ archives and English language and literature e-journal’s archives of *E-journal UNP* website.

There are 82 (eighty-two) e-journal’s from two e-journal archives that had been counted based on a relevant category—research-based type of journals written by undergraduate students. It was divided into 54 (fifty-four) English language and literature students’ research articles and 28 (twenty-eight) English language teaching students’ research articles. However, the samples were taken

approximately 50% from 82 (eighty-two) journals for efficiency and quantity advantage. Thus, there are 41 (fourty-one) research articles and discussed with divisions of 14 (fourteen) English language teaching research articles and 27 (twenty-one) English language and literature research articles. Therefore, the evidences were from these articles in order to reveal further results.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

The findings of the data as the results of the research are displayed in tables. These tables are displayed in the forms of frequency and percentage. The table below is about the finding of theme patterns, specifically the frequency and percentage of each pattern found from the data in two sources; E-journal of English Language and Literature (JELL) and Journal of English Language Teaching (JELT).

		Theme Patterns					
		Simple Linear	Constant Continuous	Split Rheme	Derived Hyper-theme	New Pattern	
JELL	F	685	370	60	29	418	
JELT		261	163	25	16	188	
Σ		946	533	85	45	606	2215
%		42,70%	24,06%	3,83%	2,03%	27,35%	99,97%

From the table above, there are several important facts found in the findings of theme patterns from both data; JELL and JELT. It shows that simple linear theme pattern (42,70%) is the most dominant use of theme types in the data. There are 946 clauses in the data that use simple linear pattern; respectively 685 patterns of clauses in the JELL data and 261 patterns of clauses in the JELT data. Next, this study found new pattern (27,35%) which is not included in four theme patterns proposed by McCabe (1999); however, the number of percentages is above constant continuous, split rheme and derived hyper-theme patterns. There are 606 new patterns found in both data; JELL and JELT.

Constant continuous theme pattern (24,06%) is the third row frequently used in both data of JELL and JELT. There are 370 patterns indicated as constant continuous theme pattern in the JELL data and 163 patterns in the JELT data. Meanwhile, the least frequently used in data are split rheme (3,83%) and derived hyper-theme (2,03%) patterns.

Based on the findings all above, there were given examples for each of the patterns. The first pattern is simple linear pattern. It is the most dominant use of pattern found in the data. Here is an example of a paragraph using simple linear theme pattern as explained below.

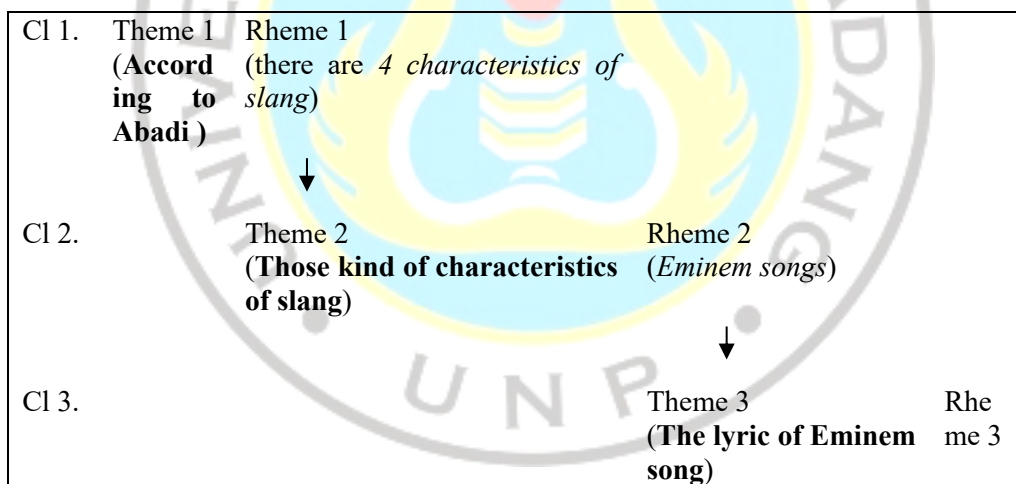
- (1) According to Abadi (2009, p.17), there are 4 characteristics of slang such as creativity, flippant, fresh, and onomatopoeic.
- (2) Those kind of characteristics of slang can be found in Eminem songs.
- (3) The lyric of Eminem song mostly used slang words.

(Datum JELL A8)

According to datum JELL A8, the underlined words are the theme of the sentence and the italic words are the rheme of the sentence. The pattern can be seen by seeing the connection between the rheme of the first clause to the theme of the second clause. It can be figured as like in the figure below.

From the figure above, it can be seen that the first rheme '4 characteristics of slang' is being mentioned again in the theme of second clause 'those kind of characteristics of slang', and also the second rheme 'Eminem songs' is being mentioned too in the theme of third clause 'the lyric of Eminem song mostly'. It shows that these sentences have become cohesive which the ideas are well-connected from first clause to third clause.

Second, there is constant continuous theme pattern. It is the second most



dominant use theme pattern found in the data. The examples are given below.

- (1) Some people think
- (2) They are better than others.
- (3) They say
- (4) They are the strongest
- (5) And they become the superior.
- (6) So that they have power to control the weak

(Datum B3)

According to datum JELL B3, there are 6 clauses that combined each other by using constant continuous theme pattern. Each of the themes which is underlined above are in similar given information. Thus, there is no new

information shows in the further clauses after first clause. The figure can be seen as follows:

Theme 1 (Some people + ↓	Rheme 1
Theme 2 (they) + ↓	Rheme 2
Theme 3 (They) + ↓	Rheme 3
Theme 4 (They) + ↓	Rheme 4
Theme 5 (And they) ↓	Rheme 5
Theme 6 (So that they)	Rheme 6

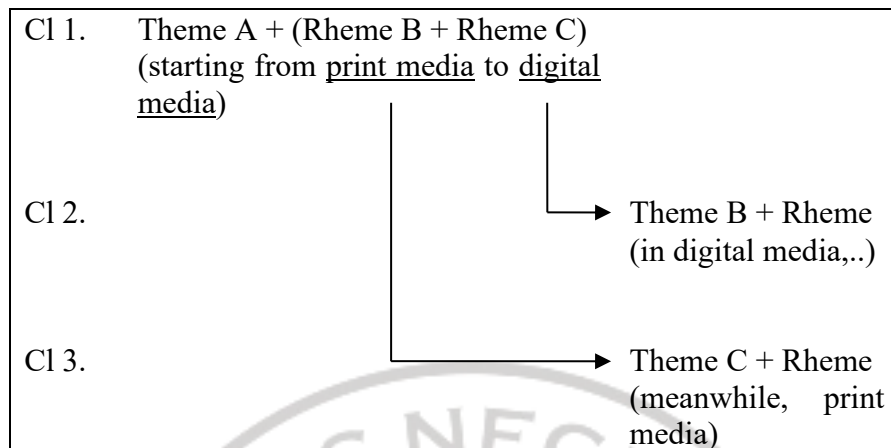
From the figure above, these 6 sentences are all explaining about ‘some people’ in constant way but using referent ‘they’ respectively. Therefore, it is the clear example of constant continuous theme pattern found in the data.

Third, there is split rheme theme pattern. It is one of the least dominant use of theme pattern found in the data. The example is explained below.

- (1) The news are delivered through many kinds of media, starting from print media to digital media.
- (2) In digital media, news is presented in websites, radio, and TV broadcasts.
- (3) While in printed media, news is presented in newspapers and magazines.

(Datum JELL D3)

According to the example in datum JELL D3 above, it shows that the rheme of the first rheme of the first clause mentions ‘are delivered through many kinds of media, starting from print media to digital media’. It means that the preceding clauses will be referring to ‘print media’ and ‘digital media’. The details are figured in the figure as follows:



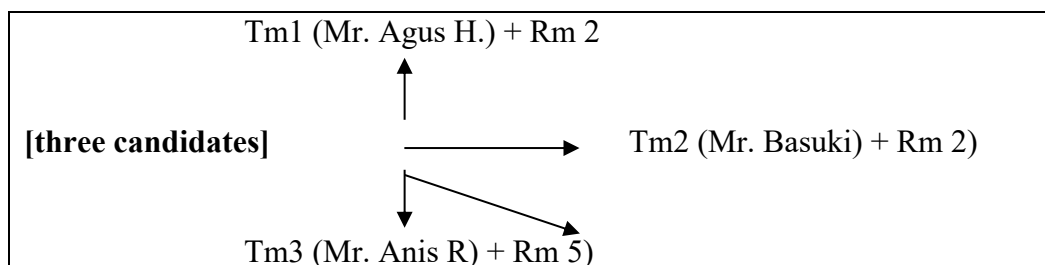
From the figure above, it shows that the rheme of the first clause which mentions ‘starting from print media to digital media’ in the first clause is to sign second and third clause as the new themes and to describe the two reasons respectively.

Last, there is derived hyper-theme. It is the second least dominant use of theme pattern found in the data. The example is explained below.

- (1) that three of candidates are famous person.
- (2) Mr. Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono is a son of ex-president of Indonesia,
- (3) Mr. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama is an ex-Jakarta’s governor,
- (4) Mr. Anis Rasyid Baswedan is an ex-Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, .

(Datum JELL A3)

According to the example in datum JELL A3 above, the examples above show that the phrase ‘the three candidates’ as the theme in the first clause is the superior theme. The other themes are being in a part of ‘the three candidates’ itself. The details are figured in the figure below:



From the figure above, it shows that the themes of clause number 2 till 4 which are; ‘Mr. Agus Harimurti’, ‘Mr. Basuki, and ‘Mr. Anis R, are part of the theme in the first clause ‘three candidates’. Although each of the themes numbers 2 to 4 does not mention any article it can be seen from the

explanation of the rhemes itself which are explaining the details information about ‘three candidates’.

2. Discussion

There are four theme patterns according to the theories of theme patterns conducted by McCabe (1999). There are simple linear, constant continuous, split rheme and derived hyper-theme patterns. However, not only these four patterns were found in the data, but also this study found a new theme pattern which is originally proposed by Eggins (1994).

The first theme pattern is simply linear. Based on the findings, the most dominant use of these patterns by the students is a simple linear theme pattern. It shows that the students had written their paragraphs in a simple linear pattern to sign the moving from the given idea to a new one. This kind of pattern indicates students to use it as the simplest way to convey their ideas in sentences. This simple pattern is usually shown by seeing their tendency to start their sentences by using unmarked topical theme types. These types consist of a nominal group and an embedded clause. These sub-indicators of unmarked topical themes are equal to the subject position in the grammatical structure. Moreover, in a simple linear pattern, the theme is the rheme of the previous sentence in the second sentence. Therefore, the ideas are chained to each other by focusing on the theme and rheme as well as how cohesive texts work. Also, Ebrahimi (2016) states that simple linear or *zig-zag* pattern are patterns which give an explanation to help the dynamic ideas. Thus, this pattern also could be an informative function of the text. As a result, this function is overtly beneficial to the readers or writers because they could follow and create the flow of ideas in this pattern.

Second, there is a constant continuous theme pattern. According to the findings of the occurrences of constant continuous theme patterns, there are 51 paragraphs used this pattern. Constant continuous can be replaced with a reiteration theme pattern. It is because the theme is more likely in repetition order in this pattern. The repetition order indicates static and sticks with only one main subject. This can be seen by the way how writers use a reference to link the main theme for each of the clauses. The use of pronouns can easily be recognized as the writer used this pattern.

Constant continuous theme pattern is also a kind of static text that suits more in descriptive or narrative texts. It means that one or more paragraphs only focus to explain or describe one idea. The way of describing this idea is usually by using references. It shows that the reader could understand the whole text by only recognized the theme at once and tried to link it until the last sentence of the paragraph. However, for academic discourses, it would be a lack of informative and elaborative functions in the text by using this pattern. It is because the contents of academic discourses are a combination of such linked ideas taken from various sources and then accumulated with the writer’s thoughts. Thus, it is impossible for the writer to just stick on one idea for each of the paragraphs without linked to another unless it would fewer argumentations.

Third, there is a split rheme pattern. According to the findings of the occurrences of split rheme patterns, it is visible that most students are rarely to acknowledge this kind of pattern. This pattern is used to be the way how the rheme of the first clause is becoming the main theme for the preceding clauses.

Fourth, there is a derived hyper-theme. According to the findings of the occurrences of derived hyper-theme, it is also visible that most students do not try to write their ideas with this kind of pattern. To analyze the paragraph by using this pattern, the readers and writers must have good non-linguistic skills; background knowledge and a high sense of language. It is because the theme brought by the first clause is not that related well unless the readers could relate it by itself as they have acknowledged the idea before. The writers or readers should relate well for each theme in the clauses of a paragraph unless it would not be an effective way of transmitting the ideas.

Last, there is a new pattern found in both JELL and JELT data. The number of findings of the new pattern is positioned second from five theme patterns. There are found many clauses that have a new pattern that indicates many new ideas or new themes that caused a lack of cohesive function in the text. Most of the themes are signed by citing journal authors or theories experts. It is because the citations of journal authors bring new ideas to support the statement given in the writings. Not only is it signed by citing journals' authors, but also it is signed by other new ideas that did not link to the main discourse. Misunderstood ideas would affect writing quality. It shows that students' writing is not coherent well except it is supported by good background knowledge.

The findings of these four theme patterns are linked with related previous studies. One of them is similar to Ebrahimi (2016) found that a simple linear pattern is the most dominant use of these patterns by the students. He states that by using a simple linear theme pattern, it contributes to the cohesion of the text. The cohesion is by presenting the summary of the information presented in the rheme of one clause to the theme of the preceding clause that links ideas within clauses in the text and also by informing readers about where the information is starting from and where it is going.

Different from what Rahmawati and Kurniawan (2015) found in their research, the most dominant use of these patterns based on research articles' abstracts written by students is a constant continuous theme pattern. They stated that students were overuse this kind of pattern and had a lack of simple linear patterns which indicated as students' problems in writing a good abstract. They also stated that by applying the rule of 200 words maximal in abstracts, it was hard for them to hang on the ideas together using other than constant continuous linear and somehow it did not have any pattern at all. In line with this study, there were also found that not all of the paragraphs in both data of JELL and JELT had theme patterns. It shows that some of the students are also lack the understanding to create a link between one idea to another idea incoherent way.

D. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researcher found that most of students have similar ability to write their introduction sections by seeing their tendency to choose theme patterns. The tendency is; most of students prefer to use simple linear or constant continuous theme pattern because they prefer to start with nominal group or embedded clause as unmarked topical themes. The relation between each of the clauses on each of paragraphs is in zig-zag line.

This tendency shows also that undergraduate students of UNP (Universitas Negeri Padang) are overtly non-native English speakers. The sign of non-native English speakers write texts in English is by seeing the lack of using textual and interpersonal themes. It indicates that students are mostly not getting use to produce coherent texts. They tend to write their ideas in cohesive way, but not in coherent way. Moreover, the rarely use of split rheme and derived hyper-theme also indicates them to not usually write in elaborative way of writing. The elaborative sentences can be seen by looking at the number of themes in preceding clauses created only by one theme in the first clause or the rheme of the first clause. It is to show that an idea could relate to other information as well. Therefore, readers and writers would more enrich their reading and writing skills because the sentences are cohesive as well as coherent.

In other words, students could enhance their writing skill by acknowledging this thematic approach or thematicity in advance. Students could choose whether to use simple linear theme pattern, constant continuous theme pattern, split rheme pattern, or derived hyper-theme pattern in their writings. However, the consistency of using these four theme patterns in one text or discourse at once is the one that can be considered as writing in a good skill and a good quality. Therefore, it is recommended for students to get to know and learn thematicity, especially thematic patterns, because not only can they get skill for a good quality of writing but also advance skill for reading as well.

Considering the small number of research about thematicity, the findings obtained are not enough to allow for generalization of the results. Furthermore, keep in mind that analyzing thematicity is not to replace the cohesive understanding under feature of textual metafunction, but thematicity is still necessary to be in part of it. Further studies to conduct a research about thematicity should be in other genres or any discourses of texts to figure out cohesiveness. Interested researchers could extend the scope of this research by analyzing thematicity in other disciplines or other texts, such as hortatory texts, exposition texts, discussion of research articles and so on. Such researchers also could analyze introduction section in any kind of discourses also.

Moreover, the beneficial of this research is not only for students, but also for teacher in the future as thematicity could be one of alternative way to analyze cohesiveness and coherent element of the English texts based on its functions.

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