



Analysis of Theme in Discussion Text Written by the Second Year Students of English Department of UNP

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Abstract

This research aims at finding out the type of theme dominantly used in the students' discussion texts written by the second-year students of English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang. This study used a descriptive research method. The population of this research was the second year students of the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang. They were selected because they had taken a course on essay writing. The sample was 30 students taken using cluster random sampling. The data were collected using a test that has been administered twice in order to get the more representative data. The results show that the dominant theme types used in the students' discussion text are simple unmarked theme (44.61 %), and multiple unmarked theme (42.35 %), and the types of theme least frequently used are simple marked theme (10.14 %), and multiple marked theme (2.90 %). The dominant used of unmarked theme is motivated by the students' desire to emphasize on the points of the arguments which are indicated by used of nominal groups.

Keywords:

Discussion Text, Theme and Rheme,

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the important subjects that should be mastered by students in every level of education, particularly by university students majoring in English. Through writing, students can express their ideas and background knowledge creatively which are required in written communication. It is one of the requirements to make them able to complete their study in their university. Also, it is not only needed in academic fields but also in any career field. Many companies require their prospective employees with good ability in written communication.

Nevertheless, writing is not an easy thing to do, because students should pay attentions to several elements in writing such as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and the coherence among sentences. According to Rijlaarsdam et al. (2004), writing is complex and effortful. It seems that writing is a difficult matter not only for students but also for teachers. However, many students consider writing as both difficult and boring activities. This is due to the fact that they must follow certain complex rules when they want to produce a good writing. In addition, they must also comply with the prevailing grammar and writing mechanisms, which should not bear problems when they communicate orally. The problem even becomes worse when they are asked to write a text in a foreign language. However, the exact problem is related to the unity or cohesiveness of the ideas in their writing, or how all of the ideas they write are related one another. A text is not merely a group of clauses, but those clauses have to be cohesive or united; in the sense that they have to support one major idea.

Writing is a process of arranging ideas that refer to a particular topic. This suggests that the most important thing in writing is systematically organizing ideas or thoughts. Halliday & Matthiessen (2014). These ideas can be categorized as given information (functionally called theme) and new information (functionally called rheme) In relation to theme and rheme terminology, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) state that theme is the core of a clause or the point of departure of the message, while rheme is the development of the theme or the other clause element in which the theme is developed.

The issue of theme and rheme has attracted several researchers to do research on theme and thematic progressions. Yang (2008) studied thematic progression in teaching explanation writing. Then, Rustipa (2010) studied theme and rheme organization in the texts written by EFL learners. In addition, Jing (2015) studied theme and thematic progression in English writing teaching. He found that thematic progression gives students more grammatical resources to improve the coherence of their writing, help them become aware of how information and ideas should flow in a text so that it could be easily understood by the reader. Furthermore, Rosa (2013) analyzed the thematic progression used by university students in writing an exposition text. He argued that thematic progression can be used as the model to evaluate the text cohesiveness of exposition text written by university students. Therefore, the finding of his research confirms that thematic progression can be used as the tool to improve the students' writing quality in exposition texts.

Moreover, Gunawan and Aziza (2017) investigated meaning-making in academic writing through the theme and thematic progression used in the undergraduate thesis. They found that that topical, interpersonal and, textual themes are used in the thesis following the conventional features of good academic writings. In addition, they also found that the undergraduate students' thesis use three types of thematic progression pattern, i.e theme reiteration pattern, zigzag pattern, and multiple theme pattern. Furthermore, Yunita (2017) analyzed the thematic progression in the vocational school students' recount text. She found that different themes work differently in building their recount texts: topical theme represents their

ability to deliver what the text is about, interpersonal theme helps them declare their personal comments, and textual theme shows their ability to develop the logical relationship between clauses and make their texts more cohesive and coherent.

The previous studies focused on several genres, such as exposition and recount texts. This means that there is a possibility to conduct studies on theme and rheme in another genre. In this study, the researcher chose a discussion text as the text type to be investigated. Discussion text is chosen because of some reasons. For example, discussion text investigates the issue which comes from two views or different outlook, there are positive and negative views. Therefore, writing discussion text will increase the students' critical thinking to think over. Furthermore, it also helps them to finish their study to make a thesis because the students will find the similarities and the differences about the previous related research with their own research. So, this research will analyse types of themes and patterns of thematic progression in the students' writing discussion text.

METHOD

This research used a descriptive method. According to Gay (1987) said that descriptive research determines and reports the way things are. Then, Kothari (2004) stated that the primary purpose of descriptive research was a description of the phenomenon or condition at present. It has been chosen as the research method because this research was intended to describe the phenomena of the use of theme and rheme in the discussion text written by second year students in the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang.

The data in this research was clauses. The source of data was to be discussion texts written by the second year students of the English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang in the 2019/2020 academic year. The sample of this research was collected by using cluster random sampling, and the technique that is used to select the sample was lottery technique.

In this research, the researcher used a test as the research instrument collected the data. According to Gay and Airasian (2000, p.145) "instruments as a tool or something that was used collected the data. The students were given a direction about the test. Besides, The researcher explained about time and the topic that they have to write about. The researcher provided ten topics in form of discussion text. Then the students were required to choose three topics with which they are most familiar with and interested in. The three topics that have been chosen will be given to the students that belong to the class that has been chosen as the sample of the research. Then, the students will be asked to choose one of the topics and write a discussion text on it.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data Description and Analysis

The researcher describes and analyzes the data obtained from test of discussion text written by the second year students of English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang which is determining theme types from the data. There were three components of theme; a topical theme, a textual theme, and interpersonal theme. Each of them has several indicators to determine the types of themes based on the functions in the clauses or sentences. For topical theme, there are unmarked topical, marked topical, simple and multiple topical; Also, the sub-indicators for the topical theme; nominal, embedded clause, adverb, prepositional group or phrase, and process. Meanwhile, for the textual theme, there were continuative, conjunctive adjuncts, and structural themes. In addition, there were vocatives, finite, mood adjunct, and polarity as the sub-indicators for interpersonal themes. Below are the descriptions of theme types in students’ discussion text written by the second year students of English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang.

Extract 1

They can deserve valuable things

They can deserve valuable things

Topical	RHEME
Simple Unmarked Theme	

From the data above, it can be seen that the type of theme used in the clause “they can deserve valuable things” is a simple unmarked theme. The clause above only uses one theme, namely the topical theme. This is one of the characteristics of simple unmarked theme whose obligatory element is a topical theme. The word used as a topical theme in Extract 1 is "they". In general “they” is a pronoun; meanwhile, in functional grammar theory, it belongs to a nominal group serving as the subject or participant in a clause. The unmarked theme is determined based on the topical theme used in the clause. If the topical theme is composed of a nominal group, it can be categorized as an unmarked theme. However, if the topical theme is not the element of a nominal group (for example, circumstance, prepositional group or phrase, adverb, and process), it is categorized as a marked theme. Therefore, because the topical themes used in this clause is a nominal groups “they”, the theme is categorized as a simple unmarked theme.

Extract 2

Nowadays, technological advances are getting more sophisticated.

Nowadays, Technological advances are getting more sophisticated.

Topical	RHEME
Simple Marked Theme	

From the extract 2 above, it can be seen that the clause is categorized as marked theme because it is composed of a circumstance. The word used as a topical theme in the extract 6 is “nowadays”. It belongs to marked theme because it can be

1	Simple Unmarked Theme	554	44,61 %
2	Simple Marked Theme	126	10,14 %
3	Multiple Unmarked Theme	526	42,35 %
4	Multiple Marked Theme	36	2,90 %
Total		1242	100 %

From the table above, It is shown that simple unmarked theme is the type of theme most frequently used in students' discussion text with percentage (44,61%). The second one is multiple unmarked themes which is frequently used in students' discussion text with percentage (42,35%). The types of theme least frequently found are simple marked theme (10,14%) and multiple marked theme (2,90%).

The dominant used of unmarked theme is motivated by the students desire to emphasize on the points of the arguments which are indicated by the use of nominal groups. In other words, the theme of the arguments usually tells "who" or "what" is being argued, not "where", "when", "why" and "how" the points of the arguments are constructed.

Discussion

The findings of this research indicate that unmarked theme is used frequently in students' discussion text written by the second year students of English Department of UNP. In this research found that the dominant used of unmarked theme (61,83%). Moreover, the findings of this research is similar to the research done by The findings of this research supports the findings of the research conducted by Gunawan and Azizah (2017b) who also found that most of the students of the undergraduate students thesis dominantly is used unmarked theme with the frequency 56.20%. The high number of topical theme may indicate that writers effectively orient the reader to what their texts are about.

Furthermore, the findings are similar with the findings of the research conducted by Al Bakaa (2015). Both studies found that unmarked theme is the dominant type of theme used in the text. The similarity findings between this research and the research done by Al bakaa (2015) are caused the similarity of the text that is involved the arguments in a text. In addition, the similarity is caused by the same participant involved in the studies. Both take university student as the participant.

In addition, the dominant use of unmarked theme in the students' discussion text indicates that the students need to pay attention to construct grammatically correct clauses in their text. Then, the students pay less attention to how strong the arguments (pro and cons) in their text are. This is contrary with the findings of Rosa (2007b) arguing that the frequency of unmarked and marked theme depends on the type of arguments. The strong argument is a good way to see the cohesiveness of the discussion text. Marked themes are usually used to present cons arguments, while the unmarked themes are usually used to present pro arguments.

In conclusion, the different result between this research and the research done by Rosa (2007b) are caused the different participants involved in the research. In this research, the researcher uses the second year students of English department of Universitas Negeri Padang. Meanwhile Rosa (2007b) research took professional writers as the participant as they were the writer of editorial section in daily newspaper “Haluan”.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions above, related to the theme in the discussion text written by the second year of English Department Student of Universitas Negeri Padang, it can conclude that the dominant theme used is unmarked theme (simple and multiple unmarked). It indicated that students focus on how they generate the ideas in the discussion text. However, a marked theme is necessary in the clause to emphasize on the circumstance rather than to show the participant in the clause.

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