THEMATIC PROGRESSION AS A MODEL USED TO KEEP COHESION IN WRITING AN EXPOSITION TEXT

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at modeling how thematic progression is used to keep cohesion of the text, especially the exposition text. This paper uses two expositions texts written by the students as the meadia to demonstrate the application of thematic progression in keeping cohesion of the texts. Then, the two texts that have been analyzed are presented to show how thematic progression can work to make the text cohesive. This paper concludes that the cohesion of the text can be improved by using thematic progression.

Key words:*writing, thematic progression, cohesion, theme, rheme*

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a process of arranging ideas that support a certain topic. This indicates that the most important thing to consider in writing is how to organize the ideas systematically. Those ideas are put in the form of clauses that contain both given information, the information which is relatively familiar and is generally put in the first part of the clause and is known as theme, and new information, as rheme. For these terms, Halliday (1985:38) says that theme is the starting point for the message that informs what the clause is going to be about. In addition, Martin et.al (1997:21-22) define theme as the point of departure of clause as message which possesses the initial position in the clause. The definition suggests that the first part of the clause has the most influential factor to the rest of the message in a clause. Putting the same word in different position of a clause influences the way the readers comprehend the message in the clause.

The other part of the clause is known as rheme. Eggins (1994:275) says that rheme is the part of the clause in which the theme is developed. Furthermore, Martin et al (1997:21-22) categorized rheme as the elements of clause that follows the theme where the presentation moves after the point of departure. Once the theme of a clause is identified, the rheme can be easily recognized. The rheme contains the information that controls the development of the theme.

However, it should be noted that theme cannot always be equated to the subject of a clause -- commonly categorized as nominal groups; nor the rheme must be equated to the predicate of the clause.

Theme	Rheme
The man	drives his car very carelessly
His car	the man drives very carelessly
Very carelessly	the man drives his car
How he drives his car	is very careless

The first clause shows the subject (nominal group) functions as a theme; however, the last three clauses suggest that theme can also be constructed by prepositional phrase, adverbial phrase, or a clause. The sentences also reveal that the rheme may be in various forms.

The process of determining the theme in each clause has to follow what Eggins (1994:303-305) calls as thematic progression, that is how the information in the clauses goes on; that is the progression from theme to rheme in a clause. The thematic progression gives significant contribution to keep cohesion of the text. Lack of cohesion is always a problem faced by the students, e.g. English Department students in UNP, when writing a text. The clauses in their text fail to show the movement from one ideas to the other ideas in a systematic way. As a result, their writing seems to be only a collection of the clauses without good organization.

Danes (1974) and Eggins (1994) divide thematic progression into three patterns: simple linear progression, constant continuous theme, and theme progression with derived themes.

1. Simple linear progression

This pattern is also called a zig-zag pattern (Eggins:1994), where the rheme of the first clause becomes the theme in the second clause; the rheme of the second clause becomes the theme of the third clause, and so forth. This pattern can be seen in the following figures.

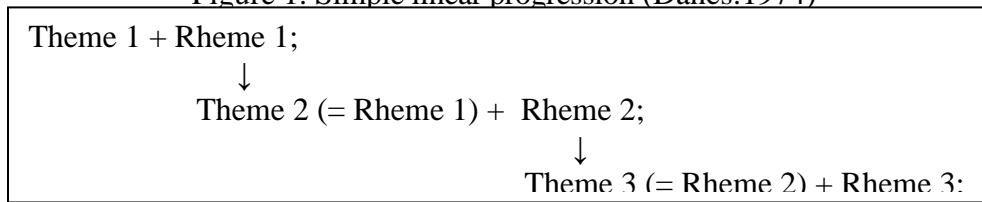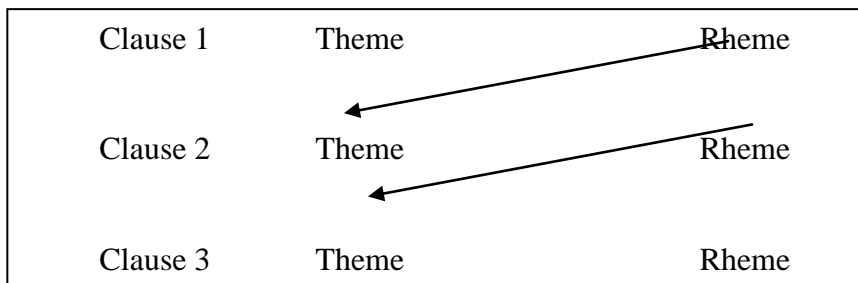Figure 1. Simple linear progression (Danes:1974)

Theme 1 + Rheme 1;
↓
Theme 2 (= Rheme 1) + Rheme 2;
↓
Theme 3 (= Rheme 2) + Rheme 3;

Figure 2. Zig-zag pattern (Eggins:1994)

Clause 1	Theme	Rheme
Clause 2	Theme	Rheme
Clause 3	Theme	Rheme

The figures clearly show that the rheme of one clause becomes the theme of the following clause. The following text is an example how this pattern works in a text. The underlined words are themes of the clauses.

Example 1

Communication is a process of transmitting a *message* (1). The message can be delivered through oral or *written expression* (2). Through writing, people can communicate without limitation of distance and time (3).

Th1 (Communication) + Rh1 (a message);
↓
Th2 (The message) + Rh2 (written expression);
↓
Th3 (Writing) + Rh3;
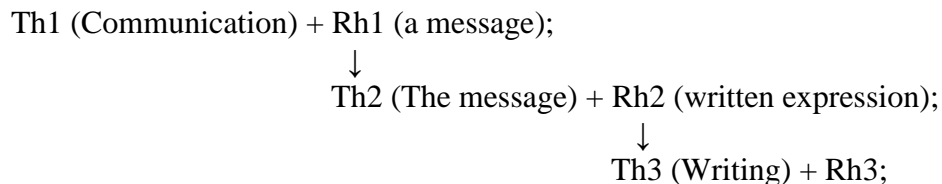
2. Constant continuous theme

The pattern of constant continuous theme shows up the theme of the first clause becomes the theme of the clauses that follow. This pattern can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 3. Constant continuous theme

Theme 1 + Rheme 1;
↓
Theme 2 (= Theme 1) + Rheme 2;
↓
Theme 3 (= Theme 1 = Theme 2) + Rheme 3;
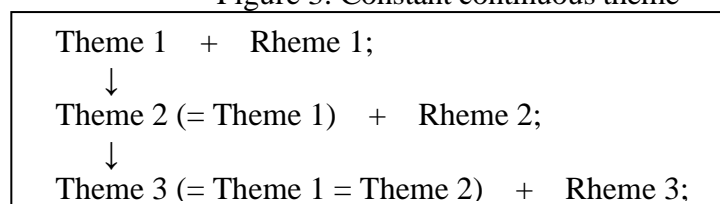
The figure shows the dependence of the theme in the following clauses to the theme in the first clause. The text below demonstrates the example of the use of constant continuous theme progression in a text. The underlined words are themes of the clauses.

Example 2

Oprah Winfrey was born in Mississippi on January 29, 1954 (1). When she was 19 years old (2), she became the first African-American news anchor on WTVF-TV in Nashville (3). She began *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, one of the most popular talk show in the United States (4). She got remarkable success in this program (5). She finally formed a company (6) and bought her own show (7).

Th1 (Oprah Winfrey) + Rh1;
  ↓
Th2 (She) (=Oprah Winfrey) + Rh2;
  ↓
Th3 (She) (=Oprah Winfrey) + Rh3; …

3. Theme progression with derived themes

This pattern highlights the one general theme from which other themes are derived. The following is the pattern of theme progression with derived themes.

Figure 4. Theme progression with derived themes

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Theme 1   +   Rheme 1;
      ↑
[Hypertheme] → Theme 2   +   Rheme 2;
      ↓
  Theme 3   +   Rheme 3; …
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The figure illustrates a superior theme (hypertheme); in other words, the themes in the following sentences are smaller parts of the hypertheme. The following text shows how this pattern works in a text. The underlined words are themes of the clauses.

Example 3

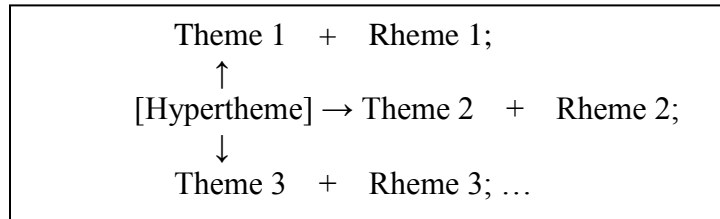Ecuador is situated on the equator in the northwest of South America (1). The economy is based on oil and agricultural products (2). More oil is produced in Ecuador than any other South American country except Venezuela (3). Bananas, coffee, and cocoa are grown there (4). The people are mostly of Indian origin (5). Several Indian languages are spoken there (6). The currency is called the Sucre (7).

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    Th1 (Ecuador) + Rh1;
      ↑
[Brief description of Ecuador] → Th2 (The economy) + Rh2;
      ↓
    Th3 (More oil)   +   Rh 3;
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The text in example 3 shows that the second theme (the economy), the third theme (More oil), the fourth theme (Bananas, coffee, and cocoa), the fifth theme (Several Indian languages), and the sixth theme (The currency) give some information concerning Ecuador. In this case, they serve as the sub-themes from the hypertheme (Brief description of Ecuador).
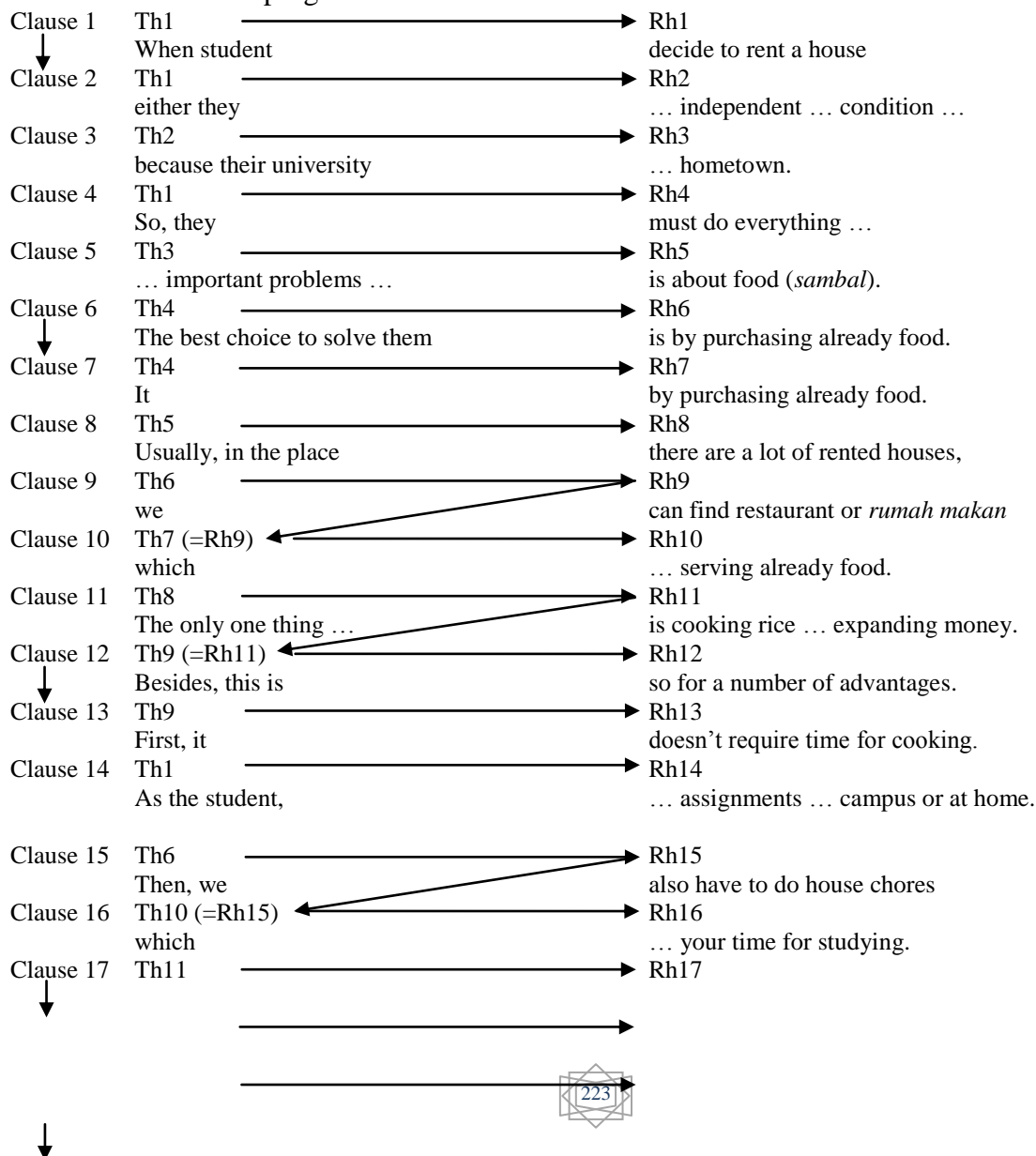
Each of types of thematic progression tends to agree with a particular type of texts (see Rosa 2008). For example, constant continuous themes tend to be used mostly in such texts as narratives, recounts, and reports; simple linear progression or cross-referential thematic progression (see Wang 2007) in expositions and discussions; and theme progression with derived theme in descriptives and reports. Furthermore, Rosa (2008) emphasizes that it is always possible to use all of types of thematic progression in a particular type of the text, but the text must have one dominant type of thematic progression.

B. DISCUSSIONS

The two exposition texts to be analyzed were written by third year students of English Department of UNP. The thematic progression analysis shows how these texts can be improved in term of cohesion. The thematic progression of the texts is analyzed as follows.

Text 1 (Purchasing Already Food)

The thematic progression of the text is shown below.

Clause 1   Th1 ──────────────────▶ Rh1
           When student   decide to rent a house
Clause 2   Th1 ──────────────────▶ Rh2
           either they   … independent … condition …
Clause 3   Th2 ──────────────────▶ Rh3
           because their university   … hometown.
Clause 4   Th1 ──────────────────▶ Rh4
           So, they   must do everything …
Clause 5   Th3 ──────────────────▶ Rh5
           … important problems …   is about food (*sambal*).
Clause 6   Th4 ──────────────────▶ Rh6
           The best choice to solve them   is by purchasing already food.
Clause 7   Th4 ──────────────────▶ Rh7
           It   by purchasing already food.
Clause 8   Th5 ──────────────────▶ Rh8
           Usually, in the place   there are a lot of rented houses,
Clause 9   Th6 ──────────────────▶ Rh9
           we   can find restaurant or *rumah makan*
Clause 10 Th7 (=Rh9) ◀──────────▶ Rh10
           which   … serving already food.
Clause 11 Th8 ──────────────────▶ Rh11
           The only one thing …   is cooking rice … expanding money.
Clause 12 Th9 (=Rh11) ◀─────────▶ Rh12
           Besides, this is   so for a number of advantages.
Clause 13 Th9 ──────────────────▶ Rh13
           First, it   doesn't require time for cooking.
Clause 14 Th1 ──────────────────▶ Rh14
           As the student,   … assignments … campus or at home.

Clause 15 Th6 ──────────────────▶ Rh15
           Then, we   also have to do house chores
Clause 16 Th10 (=Rh15) ◀────────▶ Rh16
           which   … your time for studying.
Clause 17 Th11 ──────────────────▶ Rh17

	If you	… focusing on studying …
Clause 18	Th11	Rh18
	what you	are going to eat later.
Clause 19	Th6	Rh19
	We	can use the time for studying.
Clause 20	Th9 ⟶	Rh20
	Next, it	offers various menus.
Clause 21	Th9 ⟶	Rh21
	Its	guarantee
Clause 22	Th11 ⟶	Rh22
	you	will not feel bored,
Clause 23	Th11 ⟶	Rh23
	because you	can taste different menu.
Clause 24	Th11 ⟶	Rh24
	Compared if you	cook by yourself
Clause 25	Th11 ⟶	Rh25
	you	will eat same menu at last one day.
Clause 26	Th11 ⟶	Rh26
	Meanwhile, when you	buy it
Clause 27	Th11 ⟶	Rh27
	you	can arrange your daily menu
Clause 28	Th11 ⟶	Rh28
	whatever you	like to eat.
Clause 29	Th11 ⟶	Rh29
	You	… breakfast, lunch and dinner.
Clause 30	Th11 ⟶	Rh30
	While you	are deciding to buy cooked food,
Clause 31	Th11 ⟶	Rh31
	you	will get some eases and lightness.
Clause 32	Th12 (=Rh30) ⟶	Rh32
	Thus, why buy cooked food	is better than uncooked one.

This text contains 15 instances of constant continuous thematic progression (Cl1 = Cl2, Cl6 = Cl7, Cl12 = Cl13, Cl17 = Cl18, Cl20 = Cl21, Cl22 = Cl23, Cl23 = Cl24, Cl24 = Cl25, Cl25 = Cl26, Cl26 = Cl27, Cl27 = Cl28, Cl28 = Cl29, Cl29 = Cl30, Cl30 = Cl31, Cl31 = Cl32), 4 instances of cross-referential thematic progression (Th7 = Rh9, Th9 = Rh11, Th10 = Rh15, Th12 = Rh30), and no theme progression with derived themes. The data show that constant continuous thematic progression is the most frequent thematic progression used in the text. This text talks about the advantages of purchasing already food or served food. In this text, the writer tries to convince as well as to ask the readers who stay in the dormitory to prefer buying served food to cooking the food at dorms. This means that the text belongs to an exposition text that should have had cross-referential thematic progression as the dominant type. However, this text fails to show this thematic progression as the dominant one.

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that the information in this text is not well developed. For example, clause 1 provides new information "*rent a house*" in a rheme. But this information is not developed in the next clause because the theme in the next clause is the same information with the the theme in clause 1. Until the end of the text, there is no any single clause that develops the rheme in clause 1. Eventhough the information in a rheme must not always become the theme in clause 2, this information should become the theme in the other clauses to show that all of the information in the text is well developed. Therefore, it can be seen that a rheme always provides the information to be developed in the next clauses. This

information could be developed as a theme in clause 5, and the clause could become "*Besides, renting a house may cause some problems.*"

The problem elaborated above is caused by overusing constant continuous thematic progression. In this text, the theme "you" is used 13 times, and 11 of them are used in a row. This large number of using constant continuous theme obviously indicates that the text contains poor development of the information which is needed in persuading the readers. Besides, this also indicates that the writer does not consider the importance of information provided in the rheme. This text resembles a procedure text in which the writer talks about the ways the readers have to do to get the served food. The word "you" should be changed by the more varied themes by developing the information provided in the rheme of the previous clauses.

The next problem is found in clause 6 and 7. The two clauses have the same rheme "*by purchasing already food*" which is caused by the same theme used in those clauses Clause 6 uses the theme "*The best choice to solve them*" and clause 7 uses its pronoun "it" as a theme. The repetition of the same information in two or more rhemes causes the redundancy of the word, in other words, the information in the clause is not effective. To overcome this problem, clause 7 should be removed.

The use of new information in a theme position is also another problem found in this text. The presence of the phrase "*the best choice*" in a theme of clause 6 and "*the place*" in clause 8 is an example of how new information appears in the theme. This causes lack of cohesion of the text because some information in the text is not related with other information. As a matter of fact, to fill in the theme slot of those clauses, the writer can take one of the information in the rheme of the previous clauses. For example, in clause 6, the writer can take the information provided in the rheme of clause 5, so the clause becomes "*This problem can be solved by purchasing served food*". It can also be noted here that the choice of correct word is also a problem found in this text. the word "*already*" in clause 5, for example, should be replaced by the word"*served*".
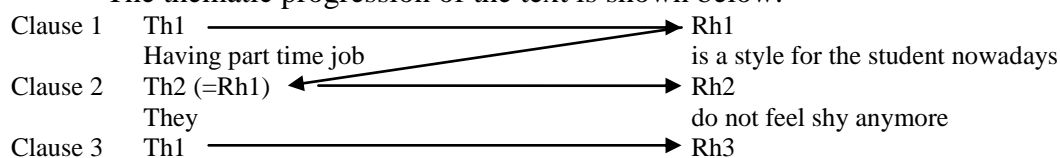
The lack of using connectors between the clauses is also a factor influencing the cohesion of the text. This makes the relationship between clauses is not clear. It must be understood that all of the clauses in the text should be a group of information which is related one another, not merely a group of independent information. For that reason, the use of correct connectors can make the relationship between the information of the clauses clear, and eventually produces a coherent text.

The cohesion of the text can also be influenced by the student's poor ability in using English grammar in their clauses. In this text, many clauses contain grammatical errors. This makes the readers unable to well understand the information that is delivered through this text. the use of incorrect verb tenses, incorrect word choice, and incorrect use of plural nouns are the factors that make this text difficult to understand.

By using a correct type of thematic progression, the cohesion of the text can be improved. The result of the correction of this text by using thematic progression can be seen in appendix 1. The appendix provides both the original text and the text that has been corrected.

Text 2 (The Advantages of Having a Part Time Job)

The thematic progression of the text is shown below.

Clause 1   Th1 ⟶ Rh1
           Having part time job   is a style for the student nowadays

Clause 2   Th2 (=Rh1) ⟵ Rh2
           They   do not feel shy anymore

Clause 3   Th1 ⟶ Rh3

		Part time job	is prestige for most of the student,
Clause 4	Th2	→ Rh4	
		because they	… parents proud of them
Clause 5	Th2	Rh5	
		In addition, the student …	will make their time functional,
Clause 6	Th3 (=Rh5)	Rh6	
		because their leisure time	is used own skill in the job field,
Clause 7	Th3	Rh7	
		so it	… experiences and knowledge
Clause 8	Th1	Rh8	
		Actually, part time job	provide many advantages …
Clause 9	Th2	Rh9	
		because they	… experience, money and responsible
Clause 10	Th4 (=Rh6)	Rh10	
		Firstly, in the job field,	they … valuable in their life.
Clause 11	Th5	Rh11	
		Not everything	can be measured by money
Clause 12	Th6 (=Rh7)	Rh12	
		Sometimes the experiences	are our best teacher
Clause 13	Th7	→ Rh13	
		Not everyone	… a job in the study time
Clause 14	Th4	→ Rh14	
		In addition, in the job field,	… socialize … characteristics,
Clause 15	Th2	Rh15	
		so they	… to face the people like that…
Clause 16	Th6	Rh16	
		Automatically it	… helpful in their social interaction
Clause 17	Th2	Rh17	
		For instance, they	… patient … arrogant bad tempered
Clause 18	Th2	Rh18	
		and of course they	can also solve their problems
Clause 19	Th2	Rh19	
		Secondly, they	can earn money by themselves
Clause 20	Th8 (=Rh19)	Rh20	
		Although the amount	is not too much,
Clause 21	Th2	Rh21	
		but they	think
Clause 22	Th8	Rh22	
		that it	… their own necessity, …
Clause 23	Th9	Rh23	
		Sometimes the college student	.. embarrassed … buy books
Clause 24	Th10	Rh24	
		because there	are many books that have to be bought
Clause 25	Th2	→ Rh25	
		and they	don`t want to loan to their parent
Clause 26	Th1	→ Rh26	
		and part time job	is really helpful to overcome it
Clause 27	Th11	→ Rh27	
		In other case	… teenager that need stylish
Clause 28	Th1	→ Rh28	
		and with their job of course,	they can buy clothes
Clause 29	Th2	→ Rh29	
		and they	didn't ask to they parent any more
Clause 30	Th2	→ Rh30	
		And also they	can deposit their money in the bank,
Clause 31	Th12	→ Rh31	

	so it	helps
Clause 32	Th2	Rh32
	if they	have urgent needs
Clause 33	Th1	Rh33
	Thirdly, by having part time job,	… responsible in their life
Clause 34	Th2	Rh34
	because they	are thought as a responsible people
Clause 35	Th2	Rh35
	If they	can`t be responsible,
Clause 36	Th2	Rh36
	they	will be discharged
Clause 37	Th2	Rh37
	and automatically, they	also be responsible in their job
Clause 38	Th2	Rh38
	They	… professional in work well

This text contains 11 instances of constant continuous thematic progression (Cl4 = Cl5, Cl6 = Cl7, Cl17 = Cl18, Cl18 = Cl19, Cl19 = Cl20, Cl29 = Cl30, Cl33 = Cl34, Cl34 = Cl35, Cl35 = Cl36, Cl36 = Cl37, Cl37 = Cl38), 5 instances of cross-referential thematic progression (Th2 = Rh1, Th3 = Rh5, Th4 = Rh6, Th6 = Rh7, Th8 = Rh19), and no theme progression with derived themes. The data show that constant continuous thematic progression is the dominant type of thematic progression used in writing the text. This text persuades the readers, especially university students, to get a part time job in their spare time. It, therefore, indicates that the text is an exposition text, and should have had cross-referential thematic progression as the dominant type. However, this text fails to show this thematic progression as the dominant one.

Based on data analysis, it can be concluded that this text contains the information which is not well developed. A few instances of cross-referential thematic progression used in the text is caused by a limited information used as a theme. From 38 clauses, there only 12 words or groups of words that act as themes. In fact, the variety of information used in the theme can be increased if the information provided in the rheme is effectively used and developed. This leads to poor quality of the arguments used in the text. Exposition text is a text whose quality depends on the quality and quantity of the arguments provided in the text. in other words, poor quality of the arguments causes poor quality of the text.

Another problem is caused the presence of empty rheme. The rheme is considered empty when it fails to present new information that functions as a source of information to be developed in the theme of the following clauses. Clause 20 "*Although the amount is not too much*", for example, contains an empty rheme because the rheme "*is not too much*" does not give any information because it cannot be measured. In order to avoid it, the rheme should be added by the information that can make the rheme effective. For example, the clause can be rewritten as "*Although the amount is not too much to fulfill their needs*". By adding the information in the rheme, the information in the rheme becomes useful, and then this information can be used as a theme in the following clauses.

The presence of new information in a theme position is also a problem in this text. The theme "*Not everything*" in clause 11 and the theme "*Not everyone*" in clause 13 are the examples of how the new information is used in the theme position because those words are not found in the previous clauses. Neither are they as themes nor as rhemes. This implies that the writer tends to write the information without good preparation because the writer does not care about the relationship of the theme with the information that has been provided in the previous clauses. The theme "*Not everyone*" should be replaced by "*only few students*", as in "*Only few students*

can get a chance to have a job in the study time" as the information about students has been provided in the previous clause.

The use of impersonal "*there*" in clause 24 impersonal "*it*" in clauses 7, 16, 22, and 31 do not refer to any words which they replace. The word "*there*" should replace the previous word containing the information about certain place, and the word "*it*" should replace the previous word containing the information about impersonal noun. This problem is often caused by the language interference of their native language to their English.

Similar with text 1, this text also contains many grammatical errors. The text with many grammatical errors makes the information unclear and difficult to be understood. The use of incorrect verb tenses and the use of incorrect word classes are instances of grammatical errors found in this text.

By using a correct type of thematic progression, the cohesion of the text can be improved. The result of the correction of this text by using thematic progression can be seen in appendix 2. The appendix provides both the original text and the text that has been corrected.

C. CONCLUSION

This paper highlights the application of the thematic progression in improving cohesion of the student's exposition texts. Cohesion is the main requirement to produce good exposition text. An exposition text agrees with a specific pattern of thematic progression as different text types employ different patterns of thematic progression. Through this paper, it can be concluded that the cohesion of an exposition text could be improved by analyzing the thematic progression of each clause in the text. This method can also be used as the good way to give feedback to the student's writing as it works not only in the level of clauses; but it also analyzes the student's writing in discourse level.

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