

# The Analysis of Proceeding Papers' Coherence through Thematic Progression Manifestation

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## ABSTRAK

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**Abstract:** Twenty research papers published in international conference proceedings are analyzed in terms of its thematic progression manifestation to know the coherence built within the papers. The analysis obtained that among the three thematic progression manifest, zig-zag pattern is the most frequent pattern manifest by 388 patterns, followed by theme reiteration by 317 patterns and multiple rheme by only 8 patterns. This indicates that although the writers are lack of information regarding thematic progression, their unconscious manifestation of thematic progression allows the coherence built within the text, making the readers able to comprehend and understand the papers easily.

**Abstrak:** Sebanyak 20 artikel yang telah publikasi di prosiding konferensi internasional dianalisis berdasarkan manifestasi Pola Great Tema untuk mengetahui koherensi yang dikembangkan dalam artikel. Diketahui berdasarkan analisis tersebut, dari tiga Pola Gerak Tema yang dimanifestasi, pola *zig-zag* adalah yang banyak dengan 388 pola, diikuti dengan *theme reiteration* dengan 317 pola, dan pola *multiple-rheme* dengan 8 pola. Hasil ini mengindikasikan bahwa, walaupun penulis kurang mendapatkan informasi mengenai Pola Gerak Tema, namun mereka dapat menggunakan Pola Gerak Tema tersebut secara tidak sadar sehingga koherensi dalam artikel terbentuk, dan pembaca dapat mengerti isi artikel tersebut.

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Thematic progression has been an issue and studied frequently for decades by language experts. It has significant role to build coherence within discourse product thus allowing the audiences of the discourse to understand and comprehend easily what is presented by the discourse producer through the discourse. Introduced by Danes in 1974, Thematic Progression is defined as the thematic elements of theme and rheme which forms correlation with the proceeding clause or sentences' thematic elements (theme and rheme) causing the discourse to move forward. Meanwhile, theme is the highlight of the topic, while rheme is the comment of the theme (Hawes, 2015). There are three types of thematic progression patterns (Eggins, 2004); those are theme reiteration, zig-zag pattern and multiple-rheme pattern. Theme reiteration is a patterns applied in a sequence of sentences, where each sentence has the same theme element. Zig-zag pattern is a pattern in a sequence of sentence, where the rheme of a sentence is reintroduced in the proceeding sentence's theme. Meanwhile, multiple-rheme pattern is applied in a sequence of sentence of at least 3 sentences since the rheme of the first sentence contains multiple information pieces, which in turn is introduced in the next sentences' themes.

Many research projects have been done on thematic progression issue in discourse product, particularly in the written form. Previous research (Ping, 2007) distinguished between good essay and weak essay based on its thematic progression found that more varied thematic progression was manifested on the good essays rather than in weak essays. Thus it makes the good essays developed in more detailed and has clustered shape, while the weak essays had thin development and did not have clustered shape, instead it has outward-expanding. Another research project (Mellos, 2011) on the same issue also divided his data into two groups; high scoring papers and low scoring papers obtaining that the high scoring papers apply more varied thematic progression patterns making the elements within the papers correlated to each other. Meanwhile, the low scoring papers manifest theme reiteration constantly, leading to the text less developed and difficult to comprehend by the reader. Such result also obtained in the other research (Wang, 2007) that monotonous manifestation of theme reiteration leads to lack of development and making the text looks like a list due to the constantly repeated theme. Thus, these studies proved that the use of thematic progression does help the development of the text in order to be accepted by the readers. However, the constant use of certain pattern, particularly theme reiteration makes it less developed, rather than applying more various type of thematic progression which makes the text to be more developed and accepted by the readers.

Similar to (Ping, 2007) and (Mellos, 2011), (Rakhman, 2013) also categorized his data according to its scores. He categorized exposition text written by high school students into three categories: high score, middle score and low score, thus it obtained the differences of thematic progression manifestation in the three groups of paper. The result of the research found that group which applied thematic progression the most is the high-scored papers, followed by middle-scored papers, and low-scored papers. It revealed that the more thematic progression applied, the more papers will develop its coherence as the high-scored papers got the highest score in terms of their writing than the other two achiever groups. Furthermore, the researcher also claimed that the manifestation of thematic progression made their exposition text consistent with the argumentative language features. In addition to the previous studies that have been explained above, there are many more research projects conducted on thematic progression since it still becomes a popular research issue among the language experts. However, those previous studies primarily used exposition paper or essay to analyzed the pattern (Belmonte & McCabe, 1998; Cheng, 2002; Ma, 2001; Mellos, 2011; Ping, 2007; Rakhman, 2013; Rustipa, 2010; Wang, 2007; Zhang, 2004), leads to the present researchers' awareness that novel thematic progression research project is necessary to be performed on different data. Therefore, in the current study, we analyzed the manifestation of thematic progression on the international conference proceeding papers, as a novel object in research concerning thematic progression.

The presence of proceeding papers is to comply the purpose of research publication which is to distribute the acquired new or revised theories regarding issues studied. This is done so that the research conducted acquiring novel or updated theory can be acknowledged by the members of the issue discipline. Thus, the process of the research is not finished merely when it has been performed, but it must also be published so that the result obtained is known by the discipline community, as stated that the objective of research publication is to improve one's insight regarding a discipline in order to let them evaluate and understand the novel result found in the research (Morgan et al., 1999). However, despite the significant role of research publication to reach the research goal itself, publishing research papers in journal or proceedings is not easy. It is claimed that in Research Publication, particularly in the journal review process, the standard in selecting which article is worthy to be published is often relied only on the detailed comment given by the senior reviewers, which may in fact only based on their personal preference (Straub et al., 1994). Thus, such standard cannot be applied universally in the basis of publication review, causing a vague nature of the criteria of how to publish research article. In fact, the publisher indeed rarely gives detail on how the preferred nature of article should be composed in order to be accepted by them.

Considering the rationale above, we argued that the proceeding papers that have been published can be explored in terms of its essence through discourse analysis. Regarding the role of the papers as written discourse, articles were analyzed in terms of its role as a discourse, in which it communicates the researcher's insight obtained from the research, so that the readers of the article are able to conceive the arguments implied within the article. The role of the article as discourse can be investigated by analyzing the correlation of its structural elements, generally called as coherence, which can be investigated through the thematic progression manifested. When the coherence within the discourse, or in this context is the article built, it means that the information contained within the text is accepted by the readers. This research is considered worth executing since proceeding papers are considered to be an important source of scientific knowledge (Liséé et al., 2008). The journey of a research paper to be published in international conference might not be as complicated as international journal, since it took shorter for the paper to be published in a proceeding rather than in a journal where multiple review and deeper analysis are carried out. However, it should not restrain the conference paper writer to produce a good quality and comprehensible paper.

## METHOD

The current research was done qualitatively through discourse analysis. Extreme case sampling was chosen to collect the data, since this research chose the most cited published papers as listed in the *sinta* (Science and Technology Index) website of the university where this research was conducted. The other criteria included to choose the data are that the papers should be published in scopus-indexed international conference proceeding and written in English by the academics of the university where this research was done. Twenty papers were selected according to the criteria and then were analyzed using thematic progression rubrics designed by the researchers themselves. The rubrics have been validated obtaining inter-reliability index of 0.979, proving that it is reliable to be used as instrument.

The analysis was performed in all parts of the paper except the acknowledgement, references and appendix. It was done on sentence level unit and ignoring the grammatical error occurred on the papers as long as it did not affect the analysis. In addition to analyzing the papers, questionnaire was also distributed to the writers of the papers to know their awareness regarding thematic progression. Among the 20 proceeding papers involved in this research, there were only 6 writers involved, since some of them wrote multiple papers. From those 6 writers, only 4 agreed to be respondents to answer the questionnaire distributed by the researchers.

## RESULT

The result obtained from this research is in the form of analysis result and questionnaire result. In the process of analyzing the proceeding papers based on the thematic progression manifestation, the researchers obtained that the writers manifested zig-zag pattern the most frequently by 390 patterns, followed by theme reiteration by 318 patterns and multiple-rheme pattern by only 8 patterns. The number of patterns found for each type is presented in the following table 1.

**Table 1. Thematic Progression Patterns Found in Proceeding Papers**

Theme Reiteration	Thematic Progression		TOTAL
	Zig-zag Pattern	Multiple-Rheme Pattern	
318	390	8	716

Furthermore, the examples of each thematic progression pattern manifest by the writers are provided in the following tables along with the description.

**Table 2. Example of Theme Reiteration Manifestation on the Proceeding Paper**

Theme	Rheme
<i>Silica</i>	comes from a natural or synthetic material and usually is in the form of crystalline or amorphous solid [1,6,9].
<i>Silica</i>	is a metal oxide compound that is widely available in nature, but its existence is not in the free state.
<i>It</i>	is bounded to another compound physically and chemically.
<i>This material</i>	is used in many industries and medical field because of its unique nature and morphology such as the large surface area and pore volume, and the ability to absorb various substances like water, oil, and radioactive material.
In general, <i>Silica</i>	Has hydrophobic or hydrophilic properties based on its structure and morphology [10].

The table above presents one of the manifestations of theme reiteration in Article 12. The sequence consists of five sentences which have the same theme element of *silica*. As can be seen, the second sentence reintroduces the exact theme of the first sentence, which is then also continued by the third sentence using its pronoun of *it*. The last sentence still uses the same theme, but returns to its original of *silica*, with the addition of *in general*. These five sentences sequence applies the manifestation of theme reiteration as all the sentences' theme has the same theme.

**Table 3. Example of Zig-Zag Pattern Manifestation on the Proceeding Paper**

Theme	Rheme
The data	were collected using <i>Pattern Generalization Problem (PGP)</i> and interviews.
After students had already completed <i>PGP</i> ;	moreover, <i>they were interviewed</i> using students work-based to understand the conjecturing process.
These <i>interviews</i>	were video taped.

As the most pattern manifested on the whole articles, zig-zag pattern manifestation units were found a lot, one of them is presented in Table 1.3. The table details a sequence containing three sentences manifesting zig-zag pattern. The italic words indicates the thematic element which is correlated to each other. The manifestation of this pattern begins by the element of rheme of the first sentence which is mentioned in the next sentence's theme. Then, the rheme of the second sentence which is the development of its theme is mentioned as well in the theme of the third sentence's theme. In this case, the thematic progression pattern of zig-zag pattern occurs between rheme and theme of sentences in a sequence. In table 1.3 above, the rheme of the first sentence contains information about *Pattern Generalization Problems (PGP)* which is then reintroduced in the next sentences' theme as *PGP*. Then the rheme of the second sentence, which is the comment about the theme, contains *they were interviewed* which is reintroduced into the noun of *interviews*. Therefore, zig-zag pattern occurs in this sequence.

**Table 4. Example of Multiple-Rheme Pattern Manifestation on the Proceeding Paper**

Theme	Rheme
There	are <i>two types of instruments use</i> .
<i>The main instrument</i>	is the researchers themselves who act as planners, data collectors, data analysts, interpreters, and reporters of research results.
<i>The auxiliary instrument</i> used in this study	is a Pattern Generalization Problem (PGP) and interviews.

The last pattern is multiple-rheme pattern which is applied the least among the twenty proceeding papers. This pattern is manifested in only 8 units. One of them is presented in the table above. The manifestation of this pattern indicates by the rheme of the first sentence which has multiple information elements, which each of them is used as the theme of the next sentences. In table 1.4, the rheme of the first sentence contains *two types of instrument*, indicating that each of these two types will be introduced in the next two sentences. As presented the two of them are *the main instrument* as the second sentence's theme and *the auxiliary instrument* as the third sentence's theme.

Furthermore, based on the questionnaire distributed to the four respondents, it obtained that only two respondents knew about thematic progression, but only one who was able to define the term. Regarding the structure of the papers related to thematic progression, only one of the four respondents who mentioned clearly that relationship within papers' language is a significant factor in constructing good article. Language aspect is one of the aspects related to the writing aspect that has been mentioned frequently by the respondents as one of the recognized and prominent factor in writing research article well in terms of its structure, language as a translated text, publication worth and targeted readers. Furthermore, other than its writing aspects, there were also many other significant aspects claimed by the respondents, primarily in terms of the administrative and contents aspects, including novelty, originality, rationality, science development, explanation depth, and others.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis result (Table 1), zig-zag pattern is the most frequent pattern manifested by 390 patterns in the twenty research articles analyzed. As one of the most common patter manifested, this pattern is frequently found in scientific and other professional texts (Danes, 1974; Taboada, 2004). Supporting this theory, it was also claimed that argumentative paper, including research articles, frequently manifested zig-zag patterns because it tends to link various thematic patterns, thus able to develop the topic discussed in detailed (Belmonte & McCabe, 1998). In addition, a research article which can present the writers' argumentation comprehensively is recognized as a good research articles, thus enable the papers to be published (Fahy, 2008). Therefore, the present research successfully proved that it was reasonable for the proceeding papers analyzed to be successfully published in the international conference proceeding as they manifested zig-zag pattern frequently, enabling the writers' argumentation to be well-proposed within the papers.

The manifestation of zig-zag pattern allows the writers to maintain the information flow from one sentence to another sentence, thus enabling the readers to be able to follow the information presented. While the information within this sentences flows continuously, the papers' coherence is also developed, allowing the readers to understand and argue the argumentation delivered. When the readers understand the papers presented by the writers, the communicative purpose of this interaction is achieved. However, such system where zig-zag pattern assists the readers to follow the underlying information flow can also be found in other patterns analyzed, which are theme reiteration and multiple-rheme pattern since thematic progression is basically pattern which assists the discourse audiences to obtain the actualization of semantic links delivered through passage.

Similar to zig-zag pattern, theme reiteration was also found to be manifested a lot which is by 314 patterns. Also known as constant theme pattern, theme reiteration aims to explain the rheme more than the theme. Research conducted previously resulted that numerous applications of pattern including theme reiteration leads to the text to be more coherent. The coherence in this pattern built when the theme of the first sentence is reused in the next sentence's theme, therefore the information will not stop in the first sentence, instead it continuous to the next sentence. However, when this system is manifested in long sequence and more frequently, it makes the text lack of development and looks monotonous. The monotonous occurred in theme reiteration manifestation is actually can be provided by not manifesting or repeating the exact and only theme. Writers should be able to modify the theme by adding other words or shortening the theme so that it still maintains the topic discussed but in different diction choice.

The papers analyzed in this research is proceeding papers whose genre has the tendency to manifest argumentation for the writers to take a position and prove it with evidence (Fahy, 2008). Therefore, more zig-zag patterns were found, while theme reiteration is usually more manifested in a static text such as descriptive and narrative text. Academic research articles are claimed to be boring and confusing when it does not deliver both argumentation and proof, it usually recognizes as poor discourse by the experienced journal reviewer and lead to the research articles are not being published (Fahy, 2008). However, as the proceeding

papers analyzed have been successfully published, it indicates that the research articles selected have successfully delivered the writers' argumentation along with their position and proof of the issues discussed.

While theme reiteration and zig-zag pattern are manifested immensely, multiple-rheme pattern is found only in 8 units from the whole 20 proceeding papers. In multiple-rheme pattern, both theme reiteration and zig-zag pattern are actually manifested as well (Eggins, 2004). However, not all manifestation of both patterns consecutively is considered as manifesting multiple-rheme pattern. It means that sequence which manifests multiple-rheme pattern will simultaneously apply both zig-zag pattern and theme reiteration, respectively. However, a sequence which manifests both zig-zag pattern and theme reiteration respectively will not always manifests multiple-rheme pattern simultaneously.

Multiple-rheme pattern makes readers to have an expectation of what topic will be discussed by the writers in the preceding sentences as multiple information pieces have been introduced in the first sentence (Mellos, 2011). This allows the readers' to comprehend and follow the information distribution within the sequences. In addition as the rheme of the first sentence has explained multiple theme to be used in the preceding sentences, the sequence will not lack of development since each of the theme is different but still correlated and developed more in the rheme of each sentence.

Regardless the numerous thematic progression found in the analysis including theme reiteration, zig-zag pattern and multiple-rheme pattern, based on the questionnaire distribution, it found that the writers were barely know thematic progression. This indicates that this system is hardly acknowledged by non-language scholars in spite of its significant presence in discourse. Whereas this term actually has Indonesian term as "*Pola Pengembangan Tema*" or "*Pola Gerak Tema*". Despite their lack of acknowledgement, their proceeding papers were successfully manifested the patterns numerously and published in the international conference proceeding. The possible reason might be due to other factors affecting the writers during the writing process, such as their awareness that their writing should be correlated and not stop abruptly so that the readers are able to follow the topic discussed. This indicates that correlation built by thematic progression manifested were developed unconsciously. This proves that human only aware the communication process they perform to each other by using language, but they do not aware of how the process do so (Krashen, 1982). Related to the current research result, it must be pointed out that the main focus of the proceeding papers' writer is to communicate the content of their paper to the readers because their goal is to let them recognized the message delivered.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to the result of the research, several conclusions can be drawn up concerning the manifestation of thematic progression manifestation. Regardless the writers' lack of insight on thematic progression, they successfully manifested numerous thematic progression unconsciously in their proceeding papers indicating that they aware to correlate the elements within the paper so that they can communicate with the readers regarding the issue discussed. Among the three thematic progression patterns analyzed, zig-zag pattern is the most frequent pattern manifested obtaining 390 patterns, followed by theme reiteration by 314 patterns and multiple-rheme pattern as the last one by only 8 patterns. The high manifestation of zig-zag pattern shows that the writers try to deliver their argumentation and take their position by providing evidence throughout the papers they wrote. Thus, in addition to help builds coherent text which is understandable and comprehensible for the readers, it signifies the research article as a proper academic text, thus qualified to be published.

Responding the conclusion drawn from the research, suggestion are provided as follows. The first suggestion is that due to the significant role of coherence within discourse, thematic progression needs to be taught clearly so that English academics can apply this system in their writing. Concerning the academics of non-English or language discipline, thematic progression can be taught through seminar or training of research papers writing by cooperating with the relevant expertise. In addition, since the present study has several limitations, future research is expected to be performed in more detailed, including involving the types of theme, more varied thematic progression patterns, more diverse subject and more varied data. Therefore it can contribute more to the research of thematic progression.

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