

## THE ANALYSIS OF EFL STUDENTS' WRITING OF ARGUMENTATIVE TEXT USING SFL THEMATIC PROGRESSION THEORY

**Shofiah Nurjannah**

English Education Department, Islamic State University of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia  
*Shofiahnurjannah100@gmail.com*

**R. Nadia R.P Dalimunthe**

English Education Department, Islamic State University of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia  
*m.dalimunthe@uinsgd.ac.id*

**Nia Kurniawati**

English Education Department, Islamic State University of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia  
*Niakurniawati29\_ftk@uinsgd.ac.id*

### Abstract

This study aimed to investigate which thematic progression is mostly applied to students' argumentative text and how thematic progression contributes to students' argumentation development. A descriptive qualitative method was used as the method of this study. The data of the study were thirteen students' argumentative texts from second-semester students at the English Education Department. The steps in analyzing the data are: taking texts written by the students; reading the texts and separating clauses or sentences one by one in the text then determining the Theme and Rheme in each clause; underlining and coding identified Theme with T and identifying Rheme with R; making the graph and table between Theme and Rheme from every clause which aims to determine the Thematic Progression Pattern; making a description or explanation of what has been analyzed in the argumentative text. The result shows that Constant theme progression became the most applied pattern in students' argumentative text with a total number of occurrences of 17. Split rheme progression became the second one that applied to students' argumentative text with a total number of occurrences of 14. Simple linear progression became the third that applied to students' argumentative text with a total number of occurrences of 12. Meanwhile, in the contribution of thematic progression to argumentation development, the results show that students' writing prefers to use the Constant theme progression pattern in expressing their arguments, which means that the author of each text mostly used the same Theme that is taken from the previous sentence and repeated in next sentences.

Keywords: Argumentative text, Thematic progression

### INTRODUCTION

An argumentation text is a text where the author shows his perspective on something in writing to the reader (Özdemir, 2018). To write argumentative text, students' abilities can be measured by their mastery of its grammar, structure, and coherences of their writing. Assessing or measuring the coherence of their writing takes the right ideas or progress, which can use Thematic Progression. Thematic progression serves to identify coherences of sentences or themes-rhemes that are related from one sentence to another by using patterns available in thematic progression (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013).

Thematic progression serves to identify themes-rhemes that are related from one sentence to another by using patterns available in thematic progression (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Therefore, this research aims to analyze some texts made by students using patterns available in thematic progression, that are Simple Linear Progression, Constant Theme Progression, Split

Rheme Progression and Derived Hyper-Theme Progression (Paltridge, 2006 cited in Adawiyah, 2017). Thematic progression can be used to analyze the coherence of a sentence in a text. One of the texts that can be used for Thematic Progression analysis is argumentative text. An argumentation text is a text where the author shows his perspective on something in writing to the reader (Özdemir, 2018). Although it only shows the author's point of view, the argumentation text is one of the texts that is considered quite difficult to write (Crasnich & Lumbelli, 2005; Gárate & Melero, 2005 cited in Ananda, (2018). One of the difficulties encountered in writing an argumentation text is in organizing the argument to be an efficient argument (IELTS, 2017 cited in Ananda, (2018). As cited in Ananda (2018), Starkey (2004) explains that it is important in writing argumentative texts to pay attention to the proper arrangement of the writer's ideas in the text. Starkey (2004 cited in Ananda, 2018) also adding the right composition of text in writing can provide benefits and convenience for the reader. Therefore, this research also aims to analyze the accuracy of organizing writing by using patterns in thematic progressions, which are Simple Linear Progression, Constant Theme Progression, Split Rheme Progression and Derived Hyper-Theme Progression (Paltridge, 2006 cited in Adawiyah, 2017).

Systemic Functional Grammar or Linguistics, first introduced by Michael Halliday and Matthiessen (2004). Matthiessen (2009) said that systemic functional grammar is about taking a source perspective rather than a rule perspective, and aims to display the whole grammar system not just its parts. In other words, systemic functional grammar is related to language and process.

On the other hand, Systemic Functional Grammar also provides tools for analyzing the text's coherence. The development of the tool for analyzing text's coherence is usually called Thematic progression or Thematic development (Adawiyah, 2017). Thematic progression in Systemic Functional Grammar is commonly used as an instrument to analyze text written by someone (Yunita, 2018). There are several reasons why Thematic Progression is appropriate for analysis. First, Thematic Progression is used to arrange text in a coherent way (Butt, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2000 cited in Yunita, 2018). Second, this can also be used to represent the text development (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996 cited in Yunita, 2018).

There are several types of Thematic Progression. This research divides thematic progression based on type-based classifications on Danes (1974 cited in Adawiyah, 2017), that are Simple Linear Progression, Constant Theme Progression, Split Rheme Progression, and Derived Hyper-Theme Progression (Paltridge, 2006 cited in Adawiyah, 2017).

Therefore, this research purposes to analyze coherences and organization of an argumentative text written by EFL students. In particular, this research aims to analyze the Thematic Progression patterns of an argumentative text written by EFL student of English Education Department in UIN SGD Bandung.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is the qualitative method. As stated by Creswell (2012), qualitative research is a type of research exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon. A central phenomenon is a key concept, idea, or process that is examined in qualitative (Creswell, 2012). The researcher used the idea and process from Thematic Progression to analyze some argumentative texts written by students. The research is designed as a document analysis. According to Ary et al., (2010), document analysis design is a research design that is applied to a written or visual material that aims to specifically identify the materials. The analyzed materials can be in the form of textbooks, newspapers, web pages, speeches, advertisements, or other types of documents (Ary et al., 2010). The research conducted at one of University in Bandung, more precisely, the researcher conducted the research on second-semester students at the English Education Department. In

this research, the researcher analyzed 13 argumentative texts written by 13 groups of students in second-semester students of EED at this university. Each group consists of 3-4 students and they created an argumentative text, which means that it will produce 13 argumentative texts written by students.

This research has several stages in data collection techniques, that are: (a) Choosing a second-semester student majoring in English Education Department at this university who is currently attending a Paragraph Writing course, which is being a participant in this study. Where the results of their argumentative writing will be analyzed; (b) Collecting the data by asking the students to write an argumentative text based on the topic given by the lecturer of the course. In this research, the role of the researcher is to take the results of the students' writings, then analyze them according to the thematic progression pattern. The written test conducted by students was conducted once.

After collecting argumentative text written by students, the researcher divides each text into several clauses and identifies these clauses in terms of Theme-Rheme, as the basis of identifying the Thematic Progression Pattern. To analyze these texts, researchers divide them into several stages: (a) Separating clauses or sentences one by one in the text and then determining the Theme and Rheme in each clause. Danes (1974 cited in Adawiyah, 2017) mentioned that determining Theme-Rheme in each clause can also make it easier to determine which Thematic Progression Pattern is mostly applied; (b) Underlining and coding identified Theme with T and identified Rheme with R. (c) Making the graph and table between Theme and Rheme from every clause which aims to determine the Thematic Progression Pattern owned by the text as proposed by Danes (1974 cited in (Adawiyah, 2017); (d) Making a description or explanation of what has been analyzed in the argumentative text using the theory of Thematic Progression Pattern.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

After analyzing the thematic progression pattern that mostly applied in the writing of the second-semester students from English Education at UIN SGD Bandung, using the framework of thematic progression pattern proposed by Paltridge (2006 cited in Adawiyah, 2017), the researcher found 43 thematic progression patterns from the four thematic progression patterns proposed by Paltridge (2006) which were found in the students' argumentative texts.

**Table 1. Types of thematic progression**

Types of Thematic Progression	Texts													Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
Simple linear progression				2	1	1		3	2	1		1	1	12
Split rheme progression	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1		2	2			14
Constant theme progression	2	2	1	1	3	2			2	1		2	1	17
Derived-hyper theme progression														0
	Total													43

This shows that students still involve using thematic progression when they convey their arguments in their writing, even though the use of 43 thematic progressions is not balanced with the number of sentences in each text. In the students' writing argumentative texts, the researcher mostly found 3 types of thematic progression patterns from the 4 thematic progression patterns proposed by Paltridge (2006) that are Simple linear progression, Split

rheme progression, and Constant theme progression. First, the pattern of Constant theme progression found in students' argumentative texts is 17 times. Many students' argumentative texts use this pattern because their writings replicate a lot of the Theme in one sentence, and the Theme becomes the main point to be explained in the following sentences as a Theme. The second one found in students' argumentative texts is the Split rheme progression. 14 Split rheme progression is found in students' argumentative texts. The students' argumentative uses the Split rheme progression because their writing describes Rheme in one sentence, and it is explained again in the following sentences, as a Theme. The last pattern found in students' argumentative texts is the Simple linear progression of 12 times. Students' argumentative texts use Simple linear progression because Rheme in their writing becomes the main point or theme in the next sentence.

In brief, it could be stated that the student's argumentative text shows some commonality with other academic pieces regarding the use of thematic progression in which constant theme progression is dominant to produce a sense of cohesiveness in the text. This pattern provides a clear focus on the point of discussion. Also, through this analysis, it can be concluded that thematic progression patterns are one of the ways to analyze the text.

## CONCLUSION

From the types of thematic progressions above, the researcher found the application of each pattern in the student's argumentative text, namely: (1) Simple linear progression, by being Rheme in a certain sentence to become Theme in the next sentence, and so on; (2) Constant theme progression is the repetition and reapplying of the theme of the certain sentence to become the theme of the next sentence; (3) Derived-hyper theme progression is a theme in a first sentence is divided into several themes in subsequent sentences; (4) Split rheme progression, namely a rheme allows having several different examples of information, each of which may be taken to be the Theme in a number of subsequent.

As the contribution of thematic progression towards argumentation development, it can be summarized that students who convey their ideas or argument by writing argumentative text, tend to apply Constant Theme Progression to deliver their argument by repeating the same information, rather than Simple Linear Progression which made them offering new information in order to attain the cohesion in the text. In addition, the students also mostly tend to deliver their argument by applying Split Rheme Progression in order to develop their ideas on their academic essay in several ways. This indicates that some students have been able to plan various ways or methods of organizing their ideas and also students can already contribute to the use of Thematic Progression in conveying their arguments in the argumentative text.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It is used as a thanking expression from authors to official institutions or persons that act as a donor or contribute to the research. It is completed by a research letter of the contract. Example: this research is supported by the Ministry of Religious Affairs through a scheme of Research Excellence grant year 2017 number PUIK-2017-123.

## REFERENCES

- Almurashi, W. (2016). An Introduction to Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. *Journal for the Study of English Linguistics*, 4, 70. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jsel.v4i1.9423>
- Ananda, R. P., Arsyad, S., & Dharmayana, I. W. (2018). Argumentative Features of International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Essays: A Rhetorical Analysis On Successful Exam Essays. *International Journal of Language Education*, 2(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v2i1.4768>

- Andrews, R. (2009). *Argumentation in Higher Education: Improving Practice Through Theory and Research* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203872710>
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Razavieh, A., & Ary, D. (2010). *Introduction to research in education* (8th ed). Wadsworth.
- Bazerman, C. (2004). Intertextuality: How Texts Rely on Other Texts 1 (pp. 83– 96).
- Bloor, T., & Bloor, M. (2004). *The functional analysis of English: A Hallidayan approach* (2nd ed). Arnold ; Distributed in the USA by Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed). Pearson.
- Derewianka, B., & Jones, P. (2016). *Teaching Language in Context*. Oxford University Press.
- Ejiofor, E. (2019). Material Clauses in Koring Language. *Journal of Languages, Linguistics and Literary Studies (JOLLS)*, [Http://www.Jolls.Com.Ng](http://www.Jolls.Com.Ng) Vol. 8. March ISSN : 2636-7149-6300 (Online & Print). Retrieved from: <https://www.academia.edu/38486832/MaterialClausesinKoringLanguage>
- Elmusharaf, K. (2016). Qualitative sampling techniques. 24.
- Fauziyanti, K. I. (n.d English Language Teaching Department Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty Syekh Nurjati State Islamic Institute Cirebon 2016. 31.
- Gunawan, W., & Aziza, F. (2017). Theme and Thematic Progression of Undergraduate Thesis: Investigating Meaning Making in Academic Writing. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7, 175. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v7i2.8350>
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2013). *Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar*. Routledge.
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE. Jing, W. (2015). Theme and Thematic Progression in English Writing Teaching. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 11.
- Kifari, M. A. (2017). English Language Education Department Faculty of Teacher Training and Education University of Muhammadiyah Malang. 12.
- Mali, Y. C. G. (2014). Presented as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the Magister Humaniora (M.Hum) Degree in English Language Studies. 12, 207.
- Matthiessen, C., & A K Halliday, M. (2019). *Systemic Functional Grammar: A First Step Into The Theory*.
- Matthiessen, C., & Halliday, M. A. K. (2009). *Systemic Functional Grammar: A First Step into the Theory*. Bilingual edition, with introduction by Huang Guowen.
- Muthoharoh, S. (2014). A discourse analysis on thematic progression patterns found in "Opinion" articles in Jakarta Post newspaper [Undergraduate, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim]. <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/8373/>
- Olsen, A. W., VanDerHeide, J., Goff, B., & Dunn, M. B. (2018). Examining Intertextual Connections in Written Arguments: A Study of Student Writing as Social Participation and Response. *Written Communication*, 35(1), 58–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088317739557>
- Özdemir, S. (2018). The Effect of Argumentative Text Pattern Teaching on Success of Constituting Argumentative Text Elements. *World Journal of Education*, 8(5), 112. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v8n5p112>
- Paltridge, B. (2012). *Discourse Analysis*. (Second edition). Paltridge, B. (2015). *Discourse analysis* (pp. 134–139).
- Purba, D., Ginting, S., & Haswani, F. (2019). Thematic Progression in Recount Text Written by The Eight Grade Students. *GENRE Journal of Applied Linguistics of FBS Unimed*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.24114/genre.v7i4.12453>
- Rahmawati, R. V., & Kurniawan, E. (2017). Thematic Progression Analysis in Indonesian EFL Students, Thesis Abstracts. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 1(1), 81. <https://doi.org/10.25134/ieflj.v1i1.617>

- Rodway, Claire Louise. (2018). Reconceptualising feedback as interactional contingent scaffolding: Improving argumentation in second language undergraduate writing: A praxiology. <https://doi.org/10.25904/1912/3613>
- Yunita, S. (2018). Theme and Thematic Progression in Students' Recount Texts. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7(3), 524–530. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v7i3.9797>
- Zeegers, M., & Barron, D. (2015). Milestone 6. In *Milestone Moments in Getting your PhD in Qualitative Research*.