THEME-RHEME ORGANIZATION OF LEARNERS' TEXTS

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Abstract:

Writing seems to be the most difficult subject for many students. In order to be able to write effectively, the students should have sufficient knowledge of what to write and of how to organize the language. To produce good writing, it is necessary for the students to know how to organize Theme and Rheme in their writing. The interaction of Theme and Rheme governs how the information in a text develops. This research tries to investigate the texts written by the English learners. The purpose is to know which thematic development pattern mostly applied in their texts. The data of this research are 15 learners' texts. The steps in analyzing the data are first: taking texts written by the students, second: reading the texts, third: identifying the theme and rheme of every clause of the students' texts, fourth: describing the thematic development of the students' texts, fifth: drawing the thematic development of the students' texts. The results of the research show that 7 (47%) students mostly apply theme reiteration or constant theme pattern, 5 (33%) students mostly apply linear or zig-zag theme pattern, and 3 (20%) mostly apply split or multiple theme pattern. Constant theme pattern is mostly preferred by the students because this pattern is the easiest one. Multiple theme pattern is considered the most difficult for the students because they need to create new themes by taking up from the rhemes. Based on the findings, some suggestions can be put forward as follows: The students should be exposed with paragraphs having multiple theme pattern in order that they are familiar with these pattern. After the exposure, they should practice writing paragraphs with this pattern.

Key Words:

Theme, Rheme, Thematic-development pattern, Theme reiteration / constant theme pattern, Zig zag/ linear theme pattern, Multiple theme / split rheme pattern.

A. BACKGROUND

Many people have the mistaken idea that being able to write well is a talent that one either has or doesn't have. This idea is not necessarily true. We can learn to write effectively if we are willing to learn some strategies and practice them. Good

writing in English requires the ability to write good sentences and to organize them logically into paragraphs and essays.

Parts of communication skills according to Brown (2001) are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The skills can be categorized in two, receptive and productive. Listening and reading are considered as receptive skills, while speaking and writing are part of productive skills.

One of the principles for language teaching methodology, as stated in Nunan (2003) is focusing on the learners. It means that it is necessary to maximize the class time for the learners, rather than for the teacher, to do the work, e.g. to write.

Writing seems to be the most difficult subject for many students. It is a work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express the ideas and organizing them into sentences, into paragraphs that will be clear for the readers. In order to be able to write effectively, the students should have sufficient knowledge of what to write and of how to organize the language. Knowing what to write will enable the flow of ideas, whereas knowing how to organize will help them convey the ideas in a clear way to the readers.

To produce good writing, it is necessary for the students to know how to organize Theme and Rheme in their writing. Theme represents " This is what I am talking about", while Rheme is "This is what I am talking about it". The interaction of Theme and Rheme governs how the information in a text develops. Not (1996: 4) says that thematic development is necessary for the construction of an optimally coherent and grammatically cohesive structured text.

The investigation of thematic development patterns to scientific texts were carried out by Dubois (1987) and by Nwogu and Bloor (1991). Both studies were based on naturally occurring data and found the simple linier pattern and the constant pattern to be frequent. This research tries to investigate the paragraphs written by the

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English learners. The purpose is to know which thematic development pattern is mostly applied in their paragraphs.

Based on the background above, the problem of this research can be formulated as follows: "Which thematic development pattern is mostly employed in the learners' texts?" Texts here refer to the learners' paragraphs. Derived from this research question, in general the study investigates the kind of thematic development pattern employed in the paragraphs written by the English learners. Specifically, the study is aimed at analyzing: 1) the themes and rhemes of the students' writing, 2) the thematic development pattern they employ in developing their writing.

The current study is expected to give contributions in the development of linguistic studies. The study may provide English teachers with beneficial information about the thematic development patterns that underlie the English paragraphs written by the English learners. This information may be taken into consideration for developing English teaching materials to Indonesian learners studying English, especially for teaching paragraph-based writing.

B.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In every research, it is obligatory for the researcher to provide the theoretical framework on the basis of which the data under study can be analyzed in order to come up with the research findings pertinent to the research questions that have been formulated. Below is the theoretical framework employed in the study.

1. Paragraph

A paragraph is a group of sentences that works together to develop a main idea. A paragraph can be short or long. The number of sentences in a paragraph is unimportant; however, the paragraph should be long enough to develop the main idea clearly. A paragraph may stand by itself and may also be one part of a longer piece of writing such as an essay.

Paragraphs have a very specific organizational pattern. It means that all paragraphs are put together in a similar way. A paragraph has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence.

The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. It not only names the topic of the paragraph, but it also limits the topic to one or two areas that can be discussed completely in the space of a single paragraph. It also tells the audience about the purpose of the paragraph. That is, the topic sentence tells the audience what ideas to expect in the paragraph. A good topic sentence has two parts: the topic or theme and the controlling idea or rheme. The topic or theme is the subject of the paragraph. It is what we are writing about. The controlling idea or rheme limits the topic of our paragraph to the aspect of the topic that we want to explore in our paragraph.

Supporting sentences develop the topic sentence. That is, they explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistics, quotations, etc. (Oshima, et.al., 1999: 17). In terms of organization, there are two types of supporting sentences: major supporting sentences and minor supporting sentences. The major supporting sentences are the main details that tell us about the topic sentence. The minor supporting sentences tell us more about the major supporting sentences.

The concluding sentence of a paragraph signals the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important points to remember. A concluding sentence serves three purposes as follows: 1) it signals the end of the paragraph, 2) it summarizes the main points of the paragraph, 3) it gives the final comment on the topic and leaves the reader with the most important ideas to think about.

Good paragraphs and essays have some characteristics in common. They are coherence, cohesion, unity, completeness.

Halliday and Hasan (1976: 23) say that coherence refers to the way a group of clauses or sentences relate to the context. A text is cohered when one part of a text (a clause, a sentence or a turn at a talk) follows another part of a text (the next clause,

sentence or turn at a talk). The outcome of this is that each part of the text creates the context within which the next bit of the text is interpreted. Thus, there is relationship between what is said or written and what was said or written a moment ago.

Reid (2000: 116) says that coherence means "to stick together" An essay is coherent if a) the parts of the essay are unified, b) if the essay seems logical to the reader.

From the statements above, it is clear that in order to have coherence in writing, the sentences must hold together; that is, the movement from one sentence to the next (and in longer essays, from one paragraph to the next) must be logical and smooth. Each sentence should flow smoothly into the next one.

Boardman (2002: 36) explains: when a paragraph has cohesion, all the supporting sentences "stick together" in their support of the topic sentence. The methods of connecting sentences to each other are called cohesive devices.

Other characteristics of a paragraph are unity and completeness. A paragraph has a unity when all the supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence. And a paragraph is complete when it has all the supporting sentences it needs to fully explain the topic sentence and all the minor supporting sentences it needs to explain each major supporting sentence.

2. Theme and Rheme

Any clause, any text is the realization of meanings or semantics. Halliday (1994, 16) argues that there are different kinds of meanings constructed in language. Thus, any text is the realization of not just one meaning, but more than one kind of meaning. Eggins (1994, 82) says that any text is the realization of three kinds of meanings, i.e. ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings which are called metafunction.

Ideational meanings are realized by transitivity structures. Transitivity structures are the patterns of processes, participants, and circumstances carried by the content words. By interpersonal meanings, we communicate our

feeling/attitude/intention. In grammar, it is laid in subject and finite. By manipulating the subject and finite, we manipulate the mood, the interpersonal meaning, the intent. Finite carries a lot of burden of the mood of the clause. It carries (1) primary tense, (2) positive and negative form, (3) modality, (4) agreement. Thus, by mastering grammar, we will be able to convey our interpersonal meaning well. Textual meanings are realized by theme pattern in a text. Theme is point of departure (Martin et al., 1997: 21). The reiteration of theme choice expresses the textual meaning being made in the text.

Butt et al. (2001:114) states that theme is the starting point or signpost for a speaker, and rheme is a temporary destination. Usually the bit of the message that the writer or the speaker considers interesting or important comes in the rheme. While the first clause or clause complex in a text will probably contain new meanings, the thematic choices for the following clauses should not be unexpected. They should be connected with ideas that we have already met in the theme or rheme of a clause not too far before.

The theme of a clause can be realized as a nominal group, adverbial group or prepositional phrase, and nominalization. Butt et al. (2001) divide theme into:

(1) Topical (experiental) theme, i.e. the first element of the experiential meanings. It can be participant, process, or circumstance.

(2) Textual theme, i.e. the text-creating meanings and is any combination of continuatives (yes, no, well, oh, now), conjunctions (and, because, who) and conjunctive adjunct (for instance, in addition, likewise).

(3) Interpersonal theme, i.e. the first element of the clause which indicates an interaction between speakers. This may include the finite in interrogative clauses where it precedes the subject, vocatives (personal name used to address) and mood adjuncts (surprisingly, in my opinion, fortunately).

3. Thematic Development

Readers and addressers need to be assured that they are following the development of the text. Many texts are signposted by placing elements from the rheme of one clause into the theme of the following clause, or by repeating meanings from the theme of one clause in the theme of subsequent clauses. This kind of text development is called thematic progression or thematic development.

Thematic development refers to the way theme of a clause is developed. Theme of a clause may pick up or repeat a meaning from the preceding theme and rheme. According to Martin and Rother in Paltridge (2000: 140) as quoted by Mulatsih (2006), there are three kinds of thematic development patterns, i.e.

a. Theme reiteration / constant theme pattern.

This pattern shows that the first theme is picked up and repeated in the beginning of the next clause. The figure is as follows:

Theme 1   **Rheme 1**

Theme 2   **Rheme 2**

Theme 3   **Rheme 3**

**Theme 4**   **Rheme 4**

Theme 5   **Rheme 5**

b. A zig zag linear theme pattern

It is a pattern when the subject matter in the rheme of one clause is taken up as the theme of the following clause. The figure of this pattern is as follows:

Theme 1   Rheme 1

Theme 2   Rheme 2

Theme 3   Rheme 3

Theme 4   Rheme 4

Theme 5   Rheme 5
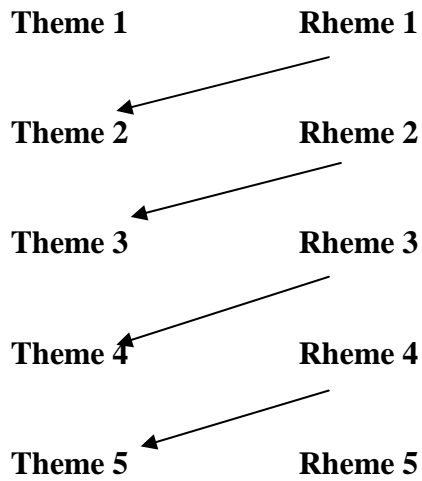
c. Multiple theme / split rheme pattern

In this pattern, a rheme may include a number of different pieces of information, each of which may be taken up as the theme in a number of subsequent clauses. The figure of this pattern is as follows:

Theme 1   Rheme 1

Theme 2   Rheme 2

Theme 3   Rheme 3

Theme 4   Rheme 4

Theme 5   Rheme 5
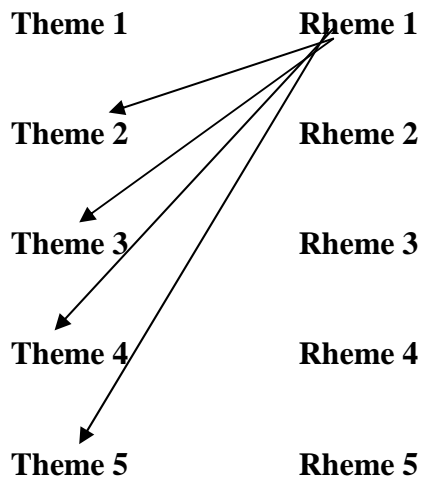
C. RESEARCH METHOD

1. The Nature of the Study

The study is descriptive and qualitative in nature. It described the observed phenomena in the form of words rather than numbers. The thematic development patterns underlying the learners' paragraphs will be identified and analyzed.

2. The Object of the Research

Students' writing is the object of the research. The students here refer to UNISBANK students, who took paragraph-based writing subject, in the academic year 2009 -2010.

3. Research Design

The first step taken in this study is taking paragraphs written by the students. The second step is reading the paragraphs. The third step is identifying the theme and rheme of every clause of the students' paragraphs. The fourth step is describing the thematic development of the students' paragraphs. And the fifth step is drawing the thematic development of the students' paragraphs.

4. Method of Data Collection

The data of the study are 15 paragraphs obtained from the writing tasks. The students are given tasks to write a paragraph of free topic. In collecting the data, the researchers ignore the students' score.

5. Method of Data Analysis

The data are analyzed using Butt et al. analysis (2000: 4), i.e. 1) Identifying the theme and rheme of every clause of the students' paragraphs , the errors concerning the grammar or spelling are ignored. 2) Describing the thematic development of each student's paragraph. 3) drawing the thematic development of each student's paragraph. 4) Drawing conclusions.

6. Unit of Analysis

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The unit of analysis of the study is every clause of the students' writing. So, each student's paragraph is segmented into clauses before being analyzed.

D. FINDINGS

The thematic development patterns underlying the learners' paragraphs cannot be identified directly. Only after the themes and rhemes of the learners' paragraphs have been identified can they be inferred.

There are 15 students' paragraphs used as the data of this research. The students wrote the paragraphs with various topics. In analyzing the data, the researchers ignore the students' score, the students' mistakes in grammar, vocabulary, punctuation.

After analyzing the themes and rhemes of the fifteen students' paragraphs, the thematic development patterns mostly used by the students are presented below.

Paragraph	Thematic development pattern mostly applied		
	Constant theme pattern	Linear theme pattern	Split theme pattern
1	V		
2		V	
3			V
4			V
5	V		
6		V	
7	V		
8		V	

9	V		
10		V	
11	V		
12	V		
13			V
14		V	
15	V		
	7	5	3

From the table above, it is clear that 7 (47%) students mostly apply constant theme pattern, 5 (33%) students mostly apply linear theme pattern, and 3 (20%) mostly apply split theme pattern.

Constant theme pattern is mostly preferred by the students because this pattern is the easiest one. The students do not need to find new theme. This pattern shows that the first theme is picked up and repeated in the beginning of the next clause. The analysis of paragraph 15 which mostly applies constant theme pattern is presented below.

The themes and rhemes of paragraph 15:

I have someone special in my life. She is my perfect person in the world. Why? Because she always become a light in myself. She always give me a spirit every time. She never tired. She want to be the best to her children. Her spirit is like a light in the dark, always shining and never dead. She is my mother. My mother like a hero. She have a great power to keep her children. She like a winner, she is strong and if Isee her like a wonder woman. But I   know she more than it. I love her. And

my love never finish. Mother is shining like a sun in the claudy. And for me my mother become my sun forever.

Theme	Rheme
1. I	have someone special in my life.
2. She	is my perfect person in the world. Why?
3. Because she	always become a light in myself.
4. She	always give me a spirit every time.
5. She	never tired.
6. She	want to be the best to her children.
7. Her spirit never dead.	is like a light in the dark, always shining and
8. She	is my mother.
9. My mother	like a hero.
10. She	have a great power to keep her children.
11. She	like a winner,
12. she	is strong
13. and if I	see her
14.(she)	like a wonder woman.
15. But I	know
16. she	more than it.
17. I	love her,
18. And my love	never finish.
19. Mother	is shining like a sun in the claudy.
20. for me my mother	become my sun forever.

In paragraph 15, the student employs two kinds of thematic progression patterns: Theme reiteration and ziig-zag patterns. Theme reiteration or constant theme is employed by repeating Theme 2 (she: my mother) in Theme 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16 *(she)*. He also repeats it in Theme 7 (her spirit), Theme 9 and 20 (*my*

mother), and Theme 19 (mother). Zig-zag pattern is employed by taking up Rheme 1 (*someone special in my life*) in Theme 2 (*she),* Rheme 10 (*her children*) in Theme 13, 15, 17 (*I*), Rheme in 17 (*love*) in Theme 18 (*my love)*

Zig-zag or linear pattern is mostly applied in paragraph 2, 6, 8, 10, 14. This pattern is considered more difficult than theme reiteration pattern because the subject matter in the rheme of one clause is taken up as the theme of the following clause. The following is the analysis of paragraph 2.

The themes and rhemes of paragraph 2:

Free sex can occur among teenagers. They do it because many reasons. In the village, they do it because of TV programs. Sinetron in TV often influence them. They imitate the artists' acts. Kissing each other is done in open area. In the city, free sex occur because of the environment or wrong friends. For example, friends with bad behavior persuade them to do bad things. These can be avoided by having strong religion. Having strong religion makes them afraid to do free sex.

Theme	Rheme
1. Free sex	can occur among teenagers.
2. They	do it because many reasons.
3. In the village, they	do it because of TV programs.
4. Sinetron in TV	often influence them.
5. They	imitate the artists' acts.
6. Kissing each other	is done in open area.
7. In the city, free sex wrong friends.	occur because of the environment or
8. For example, friends with bad behavior	persuade them to do bad things.
9. These religion.	can be avoided by having strong

10. Having strong religion   makes them afraid to do free sex.

In paragraph 2, the student employs two kinds of thematic progression patterns: zig-zag and constant theme patterns. Zig-zag pattern is employed by taking up Rheme 1 (*teenagers*) in Theme 2 (*they),* Rheme 3 (*TV programs*) is taken as Theme 4 (*sinetron in TV*), Rheme 4 (*them*) is taken as Theme 5 (*they. * Rheme 5 *(artists' acts)* is taken as Theme 6 *(kissing each other),* Rheme 7 (*wrong friends*) is taken up as Theme 8 (*friends with bad behavior),* Rheme 8 (*bad things)* is taken as Theme 9 (*these),* Rheme 9 *(having strong religion)* also becomes Theme 10. Theme reiteration or constant theme is employed by repeating Theme 2 (*they: teenageers*) in Theme 3, by repeating Theme 1 (free sex) in Theme 7.

In multiple or split theme pattern, a rheme may include a number of different pieces of information, each of which may be taken up as the theme in a number of subsequent clauses. For the students, this pattern is the most difficult one. Split theme pattern is mostly applied in paragraph 3, 4, 13. The analysis of paragraph 13 is presented below.

The themes and rhemes of paragraph 2:

I often make three kinds of mistake when I speak English. These mistakes are also made by my friends, I think. The first is that forget to use tenses. I have a problem of verb endings. For example: I say "He go out of town" instead of "He goes out of town."The second is I translate directly from Indonesian language. I will say "I will buy a shirt nice" instead of "a nice shirt." The other is I speak like Indonesian or Javanese. I forget the idiomatic expression. I say "I want to go to back" instead of "I want to wash my hands. I want to practice harder to minimize the mistakes.

Theme	Rheme
1. I	often make three kinds of mistake
2. when I	speak English.
3. These mistakes	are also made by my friends,
4. I	think.
5. The first	is that forget to use tenses.
6. I	have a problem of verb endings.
7. For example: I	say "He go out of town" instead of "He goes out of town.
8. The second	is
9. I	translate directly from Indonesian language.
10. I	will say "I will buy a shirt nice" instead of "a nice shirt."
11. The other	is
12. I	speak like Indonesian or Javanese.
13. I	forget the idiomatic expression.
14. I	say "I want to go to back" instead of "I want to wash my hands."
15. I	want to practice harder to minimize the mistakes.

In paragraph 2, the student employs three kinds of thematic progression patterns: multiple or split theme pattern, zig-zag theme pattern, and constant theme pattern.

Multiple or split pattern is employed by taking up Rheme 1 (*three kinds of mistakes*) in Theme 5 (*the first),* Theme 8 (*the second*), Theme 11 (*the other).* Theme reiteration or constant theme is employed by repeating Theme 1 (*I*) in Theme 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15. Zig-zag pattern is employed when Rheme 1*(three kinds of mistakes)* is taken up as Theme 3 *(these mistakes)*

E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

1. Conclusion

Based on the analysis in chapter IV, some conclusions can be drawn as follows:

Seven (47%) students mostly apply theme reiteration or constant theme pattern, 5 (33%) students mostly apply linear or zig-zag theme pattern, and 3 (20%) mostly apply split or multiple theme pattern. Constant theme pattern is mostly preferred by the students because this pattern is the easiest one. The students do not need to find new theme. This pattern shows that the first theme is picked up and repeated in the beginning of the next clause. Multiple theme pattern is considered the most difficult for the students because they need to create new themes by taking up from the rhemes. In this pattern, a rheme may include a number of different pieces of information, each of which may be taken up as the theme in a number of subsequent clauses.

2. Suggestion

Based on the conclusion above, some suggestion can be put forward as follows:

The students should be exposed with paragraphs having multiple theme pattern in order that they are familiar with these pattern. After the exposure, they should practice writing paragraphs with this pattern.

The teacher should remind the students that a paragraph is started with a topic sentence having a topic and controlling ideas. The topic is the Theme while the controlling ideas are the Rheme. The controlling ideas in the Rheme should be taken up as the themes in the following clauses.

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