

EXPLORING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' THESIS ABSTRACTS: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THEMATIC PROGRESSION

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Abstract

The message of the text should convey readers' attention and understanding. Thematic progression can be one of the ways to bridge readers' attention and to provide the coherence between main aspects of the text. Then, coherence shows significant point in determining the text's message comprehend by the readers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the theme development that appears in bachelor's degree thesis abstracts. Three patterns of theme progression proposed by Eggins (2004) are used to assess the occurrence of theme progression. They are zigzag pattern, multiple theme pattern, and theme repetition. Qualitative discourse study which employed thematic development applied in this research. The data were obtained from abstracts written documentation of bachelor degree thesis students. There were 10 abstracts from students of a Private University in Cimahi. The most frequently used thematic progression pattern, in line with the study of the clauses' thematic progression. It can be seen that 82 times (79%) in the students' abstract are in form of theme reiteration. Then, in applying zig-zag pattern in Thematic Progression are 14 times (13%). The last, multiple-theme pattern appeared as the last choice of Thematic Progression pattern. It emerged in 8 times (8%) out of 104 clauses. To sum up, bachelor's degree students need to learn more how to combine the Thematic Progression in writing abstract. It is applied to make each sentence coherence and readable to be read. The results suggest that using topic progression analysis in academic writing classes to provide students control over text arrangement while composing abstracts or other research chapter sections.

Keywords: *Abstract, Thematic progression, Bachelor degree abstracts*

INTRODUCTION

Publishing an article or finishing the thesis is one of the requirements for completing research. It is actually not only for raising bachelor degree, but also for master and doctoral degree. In writing mini thesis or research, there are some parts that should be covered. As mentioned by Arsyad & Arono (2018 in Arono, 2019), one of the important parts in thesis is abstract. It is an essential point for readers of the article or thesis as the instrument to see the research quality of published research. It is also as the beginning part that is read by the reader to get the elicitation information after the

title, such as articles, thesis, and research reports. The abstract come after the title, and if the writer does not write it well and with interest, the reader cannot decide to read the rest of the piece (Belcher, 2009).

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) also adds that abstract can be defined as an accurate representation of the contents of a document (ANSI, 1979 in Lores, 2004). It seems that abstract is a concise summary of a report. Here, abstract is divided into two categories based on its functions. According to Ventola (1994a in Lores, 2004), these abstracts are instructive and suggestive. The purpose of an indicative abstract is to

aid readers in comprehending the overall structure and parameters of the research paper. It does not delve into the specifics of the step by step procedure involved, instead concentrating just on the topic and the paper's primary conclusions. On the other hand, an informative abstract serves as a summary of the entire work or as a research report in miniature. Students pursuing bachelor's degrees typically employ useful abstracts. Readers may notice the IMRD structure (Introduction-Method-Result-Discussion) in this kind of abstract.

In writing abstract, writer should be aware of all linguistics components and the whole sections of the abstract above. A crucial component of language is the theme and rheme. Martin (1992 in Emilia, 2014) mentions that the arrangement of material within individual clauses and the structuring of a longer text are related to the theme system. It can be stated that the arrangement of material within individual clauses and the structuring of a longer text are related to the theme system. Halliday et al. (2014 in Sari & Agustina, 2022) add that it is the element of clause structures which serves as the point of departure of the message (in the beginning or starting point), and rheme is as the rest or remainder of the clause.

In line with the important of theme system in writing abstract to see the meaning in a coherent whole or clause structure, it is stated as the main in developing a text. The information that is shared between a text's subsequent theme and rheme pairings is known as thematic development. Three thematic progression patterns exist. They are zigzag pattern, multiple-theme pattern, and theme repetition (Paltridge & Burton, 2000). Theme repetition serves as a pattern to indicate how the previous clause's content is comparable to that of the next sentence. Constant theme pattern is another name for this design. The zigzag pattern is used

when there is an element in the rheme of the previous phrase that becomes the topic of the clause that follows. The multiple-theme pattern comes last. It presents a new piece of information by utilizing the theme of one clause which are subsequently taken up and made in the phrase that follows.

As mentioned previously that the knowledge of thematic progression is very useful for language learners and to introduce different pieces of information. Emilia (2014) adds that the value of thematic system can help learners to organize ideas more effectively in writing and speaking. So, it can be said that thematic progression can be applied in educational setting. Regarding this, the researcher intends to apply thematic progression in analyzing abstract in bachelor degree thesis. It is conducted to analyze the development of bachelor degree abstract to be readable in term of cohesive and coherent to be read.

The focus of thematic progression has been conducted by some others previous research, especially in educational setting and research article. The first, there are some works which focus on thematic progression on students' work. They are analytic scoring criteria of argumentative essay using McCabe's model of thematic pattern (Soleymanzadeh & Gholami, 2014), analysis of Thematic Progression in students' argumentative essay using Eggin's model of Thematic Progression (Sari & Agustina, 2022), thematic progression in students' essays and two leading leading British newspapers (Hawes, 2015), theme analysis on the essays of English undergraduate students (Islam et al., 2022), Thematic progression in English Writing teaching for Chinese EFL students (Jing, 2015), and a research of investigating theme progression on students' exposition text (Bangga, 2021; Hariyadi et al., 2023).

The previous studies mentioned above, they more focuses on thematic progression which emphasized on other parts of research article, such as thematic progression in line with grammatical cohesion in students' final project (Nicolas & Hartono, 2022), analyzing thematic structure using Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) taxonomy and Eggins's (2004) theory of thematic progression focuses on research articles in Scopus-Indexes International Journals (Susilowati, et al., 2022), the use of thematic progression in Introduction part of U-JET Journal using model by Eggins (2004) (Lestari et al., 2019), analyzing theme structure in an introduction section of articles published in Indonesian National Journals (Zein et al., 2023), and conducting thematic progression analysis in thesis abstracts seen from three disciplines, such as linguistics, literature, and language teaching (Arono, 2019). It still needs further research which concern on research article especially abstract, literature review, findings and discussion, and conclusion in which also as the main parts of research article. Regarding this gap, this research aims to analyze research abstract especially on bachelor degree thesis. The abstract is chosen because abstract although it is simplest but it contains all contents of the article or research.

The goal of this study is to examine the thematic progression seen in the abstract of a bachelor's degree thesis. Eggins (2004) proposed three patterns that are used in the thematic progression. They are zigzag, multiple theme patterns, and theme repetition. The research's findings and discussion are derived from an analysis and elaboration of those patterns.

METHOD

Research Method

Discourse studies were used in this qualitative study, which was conducted within the context of systemic functional

linguistics (SFL). The qualitative discourse study was used in this research to provide a description and analysis of a single entity (Schiffrin et al., 2001). It was allowed some steps, such as analysing, describing, categorizing, and the last is interpreting the data. On the point of that, in finding out how Thematic Progression used in abstract and their relationship with coherence, this research design is considered appropriate.

Research Participants

The data in this research involved 10 abstracts which consisted of 104 clauses. Those abstracts chosen randomly by purposive random sampling. The abstracts gathered from bachelor degree students of one of Private Universities in Cimahi. Those were written in English.

Research Instrument and Data Collecting Technique

In analyzing the data on the use of thematic progression, the framework of thematic progression was developed by Eggins (2004) was employed. A few steps were taken in the data analysis process. First is reading each abstract in advance. The second step is to categorize the clauses and put them in a data table. The third step involves recognizing and categorizing the clauses according to Eggins's (2004) theory's patterns and thematic progression. Lastly, tabulating the patterns of theme growth. The sixth step involves analyzing the data and drawing conclusions based on your own theory or earlier research, as well as a personal evaluation of the data analysis. The final section offers recommendations and a conclusion based on the interpretation of the data and study findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results show that the abstracts prepared by bachelor degree candidates follow Eggins' (2004) three types of

thematic progression. The zigzag, multiple theme, and theme repetition patterns are among them. The researcher's attention was not drawn to the specifics of a detailed analysis of the punctuation, grammatical, and vocabulary errors made by the students in this study.

Table 1. *Analysis of Thematic Progression*

Abstract	Theme reiteration	Zig-zag pattern	Multiple-theme pattern
1	2	3	2
2	10	3	1
3	13	0	0
4	11	0	0
5	7	1	1
6	5	3	2
7	10	2	0
8	7	1	1
9	9	1	0
10	8	0	1
Total	82	14	8

There were 104 clauses in all that were used as the data. Thematic reiteration occurred 82 times, or 79% of the total, in the bachelor's degree abstract were in forms of theme reiteration. In line with Yunita (2018), a high frequency of theme repetition in abstracts may be a sign of a student's ability to keep the focus of their study topic by restating the clause's thematic element in future clauses. Based on this research, the majority of students'

abstracts were deemed cohesive due to their singular focus. It can help readers navigate the text with clarity. On the other hand, readers may become disinterested in reading any writing product, abstract or essay, if the abstract primarily repeats the theme (Sari & Agustina, 2022). Repetition was demonstrated (Eggins, 2004). The following lists a few instances of theme repetition from the abstractions.

Table 2. *Analysis of Theme Reiteration*

Clause No.	Theme	Rheme
16	The stages of the ADDIE model	are Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation and Evaluation.
33	The method	used in this research was the research and development method.
47	The students	gave positive responses in understanding the material, students' feeling and students' enthusiasm.
74	The aims of this research	are investigating the implementation of using media in teaching vocabulary, finding out the students' responses, and knowing the difficulties of students using media.
89	The subjects of this research	were 33 eighth grade students at one of junior high school in Bandung.

The fourteenth clause in the abstract displayed a zigzag pattern in the thematic progression. This pattern added

fresh information while maintaining the text's coherence. The introduction of new information is demonstrated by the way

the text's coherence is developed by changing a rheme to become the clause's next theme. Rheme in the preceding clause was developed and supported by this pattern, which led to theme in the following clause. The bachelor's degree abstract contained a few clauses that followed this pattern. It was evident from a few clauses that began as the rheme and developed into the theme for one or more

subsequent clauses. Certain abstracts employed the zigzag pattern through the use of relative pronouns and conjunctions like "but", "that", and "then". Students tended to dislike using conjunctions or relative pronouns in conjunction with clauses when producing abstracts with zigzag patterns. The graphic below shows several examples of zigzag patterns found in the abstract of bachelor's degrees.

Table 3. *Analysis of Zig-zag Pattern*

Clause No.	Theme	Rheme
6	The students and teacher they	have a good response, feel that teaching and learning with mind mapping technique is effective and make the students active.
25	It that the module	can be concluded developed by the researcher is very feasible to be used as a learning media.
71	Therefore, the use of scramble game in learning vocabulary because this media	can improve students' vocabulary mastery can make the learning process more fun and motivated to learn vocabulary.
82	Then, the students but they	responses that some students found it challenging the first time they listened unfamiliar with the vocabulary, were able to find out the meaning.

The multiple-theme pattern was the final thematic progression pattern. Only eight times, or 8% of all the themes progression patterns, does this pattern appear. It displayed the final position of the often used thematic progression in ten abstracts for bachelor's degrees. By using

this structure, students were able to articulate their attention at the rheme, or one clause, and then go on to characterize it as themes in the following clauses. The table below shows a few instances of a multiple-theme pattern found in the abstracts for bachelor's degrees.

Table 4. *Analysis of multiple-theme pattern*

Clause No.	Theme	Rheme
10	In mastering English, there	are four skills that should be learnt by students.
11	One of them	is writing.
12	Writing	is one of techniques for someone to share the ideas.
50	Students	need interesting methods to make it easier for them to write narrative texts.
51	One of them	can be used is the Chain Writing technique.
64	This research	used three kinds of instruments to collect the data.
65	There	are pretest and posttest, questionnaire, and interview.

The bachelor's degree abstractions exhibit a predominant thematic shift that aligns with topic reiteration (Nwogu & Bloor, 1991 in Yunita, 2018). It indicates that the English-language bachelor's degree candidates have included a description of themselves in their texts that follow a thematic development pattern. It also stated that authors appear to make their writings or abstracts comprehensible for readers.

Discussion

Based on the data obtained, it seems that the students in the study applied three types of Thematic Progression as proposed by Eggins (2004) - theme reiteration, zig-zag pattern, and multiple-theme pattern. These Thematic Progressions were effectively utilized in organizing the abstracts. The development and elaboration of the abstracts were well done with the incorporation of these three patterns. It is clear that these patterns were successfully employed to organize the abstracts and enhance their development by providing a structured approach to presenting information. With the incorporation of these patterns, the students were able to effectively elaborate on their content within the abstracts. This demonstrates a thoughtful approach to abstract construction and highlights the students' ability to apply theoretical concepts to practical writing tasks.

The analysis revealed a discrepancy in the application of theme reiteration, zig-zag pattern, and multiple-theme pattern within the abstracts of the bachelor degree theses, indicating a potential lack of organization in presenting ideas effectively. According to Ventola (1994a in Lores, 2004), an abstract is intended to provide a concise summary of a longer research report. Typically positioned at the beginning of a research study, its purpose is to give readers a quick understanding of the research content.

Ventola emphasizes that the abstract should incorporate various simple themes to effectively convey the research's essence. There are three further elaboration in line with analysis. They are discrepancy in theme reiteration, zig-zag pattern, and multiple-theme pattern, purpose of an abstract, and implications of the findings. The first based on the discrepancy, it suggests that the abstracts may not be structured logically or clearly. Theme reiteration implies that themes are repeated excessively, potentially confusing the reader. The zig-zag pattern indicates a lack of smooth transition between themes or ideas, making the abstract harder to follow. Multiple-theme pattern suggests that abstracts may introduce too many themes or concepts without clear organization, which can overwhelm or distract the reader. Second related with the purposes of abstract itself.

An abstract should serve as a succinct summary that condenses the main points and findings of the research. It should include various simple themes to give readers a quick overview of what the study is about without delving into extensive details (Ventola, 1994a in Lores, 2004). The last focuses on implications of the findings. The identification of these patterns in bachelor degree theses' abstracts suggests potential challenges in how students are organizing and presenting their research. This lack of organization could hinder the effectiveness of the abstract in communicating the research's significance and findings to readers.

This research is also suggested that more theme reiteration is necessary to establish connections among the clauses within the abstract, making it easier for readers to grasp the content. Despite the importance of using theme reiteration for clarity, it's important to balance this with engaging language to prevent abstracts from becoming monotonous to readers.

CONCLUSION

The use of thematic progression in bachelor degree abstracts is advised based on the aforementioned assertion and the findings. Students learn how to use a combination of thematic progression to compose or develop their abstracts. Additionally, incorporating these themes within the abstract could improve the essay's readability and cohesiveness. Subsequently, the abstract portion of the bachelor's thesis is the sole subject of this

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