THEME AND RHEME ANALYSIS IN THE STUDENTS' WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this study were to describe types of themes and thematic progression patterns found in students' descriptive texts. This study was conducted by using descriptive qualitative design. The data were collected by using documentation and interview technique. The data were in the form of clauses from students' descriptive texts at SMPN 1 Delitua. In this study, it was found that there were 267 clauses and 145 types of thematic progression patterns of 20 students' descriptive texts. The first finding of this study indicate that Unmarked Simple Theme (UST) held the highest frequency of occurrence at 78%, followed by Unmarked Multiple Theme (UMT) at 11.5%, Marked Multiple Theme (MMT) at 7.5%, and Marked Simple Theme at 3%. The second finding of this study indicate that Constant Theme Progression (CTP) held the highest frequency of occurrence at 62.08%, followed by Simple Linear Progression (SLP) at 28.27%, Split Rheme Progression (SRP) at 6.9%, and Derived Hyper-Theme Progression (DTHP) at 2.75%.

Keywords: Theme and Rheme, Thematic Progression, Descriptive Text

INTRODUCTION

Discourse is defined in numerous ways, but one way to think of it is as any piece of prolonged language, written or spoken, that has unity, meaning, and purpose. Saragih and Saragih (2021) defined discourse as a meaning that is realized in the text. In English Language Teaching, discourse analysis becomes fundamental tool to interpret the use of language in different contexts. The analysis can be based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). SFL,

well-known as Systemic Functional Grammar or System Grammar is a grammar developed by Halliday through the introduction of functional grammar based on the language model as sociosemiotics. Halliday (1994) mentioned that the structure begins with the one that gives the clause given information or called as Theme and afterward gives the clause new information that explain the whole clauses or called as Rheme. Theme is a part that stands as the core of the departure of a message, meanwhile, the rest of the message is called a Rheme. As a message structure, a clause indeed needs to be consist of a Theme accompanied by a Rheme; its structure is shown by the order of whatever is chosen as the Theme is put first while the Rheme as the explanatory goes next to it. These Theme-Rheme pairings are termed as Thematic Progression.

Moreover, in an informal interview with the English teacher of SMP Negeri 1 Delitua, it was discovered that when learning descriptive text, some students do not meet the expectation to catch social function, text structure, and linguistic features of descriptive text. Based on the problem above, it was interesting to analyze further the theme and rheme of students' writing, and its pattern development.

THEME AND RHEME

A clause is a unit of message. As a message a clause divide into two parts, namely the Theme and Rheme. Theme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) is given information that served as "the point of departure" of a message. While the rheme is the rest of the message in a clause that develops the topic. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) also categorized Theme based on its markedness, which is commonly referred as the Marked and Unmarked theme. When an element in the clause's theme position conflates with the grammatical subject, this theme is referred to be an unmarked theme.

My elder brother	went to Canada last month.
Unmarked Theme	**Rheme**

The element "My elder brother" fills the clause's theme place and conflates with the grammatical subject "he," which is the regular subject of a sentence; hence, it is classified as unmarked theme in the normal form of a sentence. However, in marked theme, an element other than the subject occupies the theme position, establishing a condition for marked theme to appear.

Table 1. Types of Theme based on Simplicity and Markedness

Markedness	Simplicity	
	Simple	**Multiple**
Unmarked	Unmarked Simple	Unmarked Multiple
Marked	Marked Simple	Marked Multiple

The first classification is Unmarked Simple Theme or UST. It is regular form of sentence which consists of only one Theme in it. For example, "Ben saw a lion yesterday". *"Ben"* conflates with grammatical subject "He" which means that the theme "Ben" is usual

form of sentence. It is classified as UST since it has only one Theme and it is a regular subject in a sentence.

The second classification is Marked Simple Theme or MST. It is irregular form of sentence which consists of one Theme which is not regular subject, it can be adverb of time, place, frequency and etc. For example, "Yesterday Ben saw a lion". *"Yesterday"* does not conflate with grammatical subject since it is adverb of time and it is not proper subject in a sentence. It is classified as MST since it has only one Theme and it is an irregular subject in a sentence.

The third classification is Unmarked Multiple Theme or UMT. It is regular form of sentence which consists of more than one Theme in it. For example, "and she left the room". *"and"* and *"she"* conflates with grammatical subject "she" which means that the theme "and she" is usual form of sentence. It is classified as UMT since it has more than one Theme, *and* as conjunction and *she* as the subject and *she* is a regular subject in a sentence.

The fourth classification is Marked Multiple Theme or MMT. It is irregular form of sentence which consists of more than one Theme which is not regular subject, it can be adverb of time, place, frequency and etc. For example, "So yesterday they left the room". *"So"* and *"yesterday"* does not conflate with grammatical subject since so is adverb of degree and yesterday is adverb of time and they are not proper subject in a sentence. It is classified as MMT since it has more than one Theme and it is an irregular subject in a sentence.

THE TYPES OF MULTIPLE THEME

According to Halliday (1994), themes are classified into three types: ideational (topical), interpersonal and textual. Any, all, or none of these categories may be present in a clause.

1. Topical Theme

Topical Theme is frequently, but not always, included in the first nominal group of a phrase. The term Topical Theme does not imply that this Theme always represents the topic of the discourse in the popular sense of the term 'topic'. Topical theme refers to the main topic, or what the sentence is about.

In Modern Japanese	the hiragana and katakana syllabaries each contain 46 basic characters.
Topical Theme	**Rheme**

2. Interpersonal Theme

Paltridge (2006) defines interpersonal Theme as the thing that comes before Rheme that indicates out the relationship between actors in the text, or the position or point of view that is taken in the clause. Interpersonal Theme covers one or more of the elements of (1) Finite, typically realized by an auxiliary verb, (2) a Wh-element, signaling that an "answer" is required

from the addressee, (3) Vocative, identifying the addressee in the exchange and (4) an Adjunct, typically coded by an adverb. Interpersonal Theme can express probability (e.g. maybe), usuality (e.g. sometimes) typicality (e.g. mostly), or obviousness (e.g. certainly). Finite indicates that a response is expected from the addressee. The Interpersonal Theme of Finite are underlined in the following clauses:

Should	you be doing that?
Interpersonal Theme	**Rheme**

Wh-elements include the question word such as where, why, which, when, what, whose, how. The wh-elements functioning as the Theme are underlined in the following clauses :

Why	can't you come over today?
Interpersonal Theme	**Rheme**

Vocative indicates (the names of) the people about whom information is asked. The vocatives functioning as the Theme are underlined in the following clauses :

Nawaki,	did you go to the ramen shop yesterday?
Interpersonal Theme	**Rheme**

Adjuncts are usually used as the theme. The theme is usually represented by an adverb that expresses the speaker's opinion, assessment, or attitude toward the message. The adjuncts functioning as the Theme are underlined in the following clauses :

Sadly,	it doesn't look like a cozy place to stay.
Interpersonal Theme	**Rheme**

3. Textual Theme

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), a Textual Theme is any combination of Continuatives (yes, well, no, oh, now, etc.), Conjunctions (and, because, who, whether, when, etc.), Conjunctive Adjuncts, and Conjunctive Adjuncts (for instance, in addition, likewise, etc.).

Continuatives indicate a relationship to previous discourse. The continuatives functioning as the Theme is underlined in the following clauses:

Well,	there was a little misunderstanding in this matter.
Textual Theme	**Rheme**

Conjunctions connect two clauses that are in a coordinating relationship or rely on one another. Conjunctions functioning as the Theme is underlined in the following clauses :

(I went there)	and	she returned home.
	Textual Theme	**Rheme**

Conjunctive adjuncts provide a cohesive link back to previous discourse. Conjunctive adjuncts functioning as the Theme is underlined in the following clauses:

<table>
<tr><td><u>As a matter of fact,</u></td><td>she is the doctor we're looking for.</td></tr>
<tr><td>**Textual Theme**</td><td>**Rheme**</td></tr>
</table>

THEMATIC PROGRESSION

Dane (1974) stated that the classification of Thematic Progression or Thematic Development is divided into four patterns, namely: Simple Linear Progression, Constant Theme Progression, Split Rheme Progression and Derived Hyper-Theme Progression.

a. Simple Linear Progression

A paragraph was identified using a Simple Linear Progression when the Rheme of previous clause is taken to be the next clause Theme.
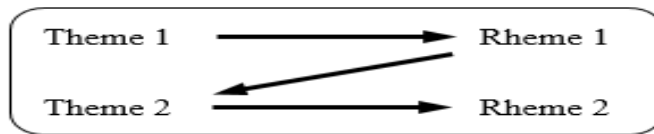

Figure 1. Simple Linear Progression Pattern

Theme	Rheme
My sister	loves to cook fried rice.
The fried rice	is very delicious.
Its delicacy	always welcomes us every morning.

It can be seen that in the first clause, *My sister* is the point of departure as defined by (Halliday, M.A.K. & C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, 2014) that "what the clause is about is on the starting point of a message.", while *loves to cook fried rice is the rheme.* The theme of the second clause is *"fried rice"* which is derived from the rheme of the first clause, and the theme of the third clause is *"delicious"* which is derived from the rheme of the second clause.

b. Constant / Reiteration Theme Progression

When a Theme is picked up and repeated at the beginning of each clause, a paragraph is recognized using Constant / Reiteration Theme Progression.
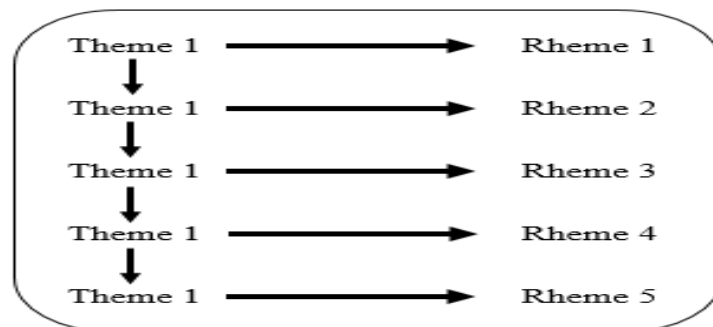

Figure 2. Constant / Reiteration Theme Progression

Theme	Rheme
Anthony Ginting	is undoubtedly one of the best badminton players in Indonesia
He	was the champion of China Open 2018

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He	defeated Kento Momota in two straight games at that time
He	likes to use unique trick shot against his enemy
He	recently won the bronze medal of Badminton in Tokyo Olympic Games 2020

The same element *"Anthony Ginting"* as the point of departure for all clauses, and the rheme for each clause gives further information and explanation regarding the theme. The use of the personal pronoun *"he"* does not indicate a change in the theme. It is employed in order to avoid repetition. This pattern is simple to understand, however the repetition of the same theme may turn the text monotonous.

c. Split Rheme Progression

A paragraph is recognized using Split Rheme Progression when a Rheme may include several different pieces of information, each of which may be taken up as the Theme in several subsequent clauses as illustrated below.
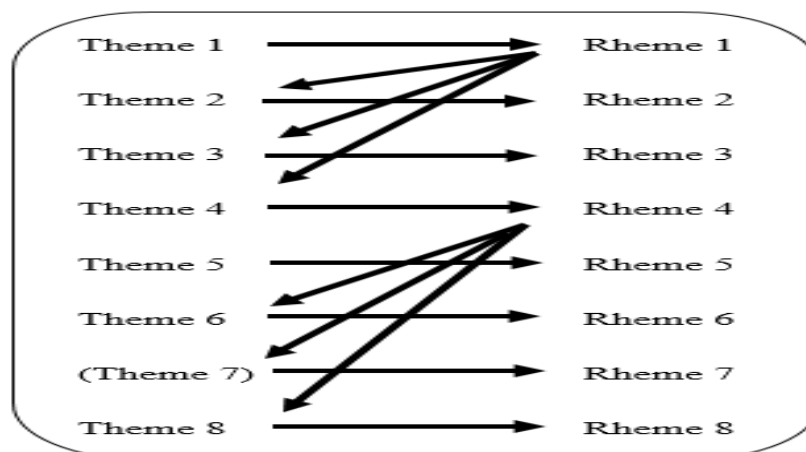

Figure 2 Split Rheme Progression Pattern

Theme	Rheme
Verbs	come in three tenses: past, present, and future.
The past tense	is used to describe things that have already happened (e.g., earlier in the afternoon, yesterday, last month, five years ago)
The present tense	is used to describe things that are happening right now, or things that are continuous.
The future tense	describes things that have yet to happen (e.g., tomorrow, later, next month, next year, two years from now).

The above example shows that the rheme has been divided into three parts: *the past tense, the present tense,* and *the future tense.* Each of these elements is the theme of the following clauses. In this case, the theme of the second clause is the *past tense*, the theme of the third clause is the *present tense*, and the theme of the fourth clause is the *future tense*. This pattern increases information flow because fresh information in the first sentence's rheme

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becomes given information in the next sentence's theme. As a result, the following theme is given information, as shown diagrammatically in Figure 3 above.

d. Derived Hyper-Theme Progression

When specific themes from subsequent clauses are derived from a Hyper-theme or the same overriding theme, a paragraph is identified using Derived Hyper-Theme Progression.
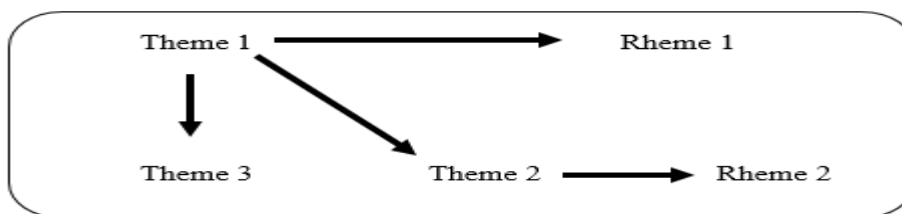

Figure 3 Derived Hyper-Theme Progression Pattern

Theme	Rheme
Many figures	were involved in proclaiming the independence of Indonesia.
Ir. Soekarno	acts as the reader of the text of the proclamation.
Drs. Mohammad Hatta	proposed the signing of the text of the proclamation by all figures of the proclamation
Ahmad Subardjo	was the one who picked up Soekarno and Hatta at Rengasdengklok.
Fatmawati	sewed the Indonesian Red-White Heritage flag.
Soekarni	proposed that the signing of the text of the proclamation should only be signed by Soekarno and Hatta, as representatives of the Indonesian nation.
Sayuti Melik	typed the text of the proclamation.
Latif Hendraningrat	raised the Red-White Heritage flag during the proclamation of Indonesia's independence ceremony.
Admiral Maeda	allowed the proclamation figures to use his house as a place to formulate the text of the proclamation.

METHODOLOGY

This research belonged to descriptive qualitative research design since it described the phenomena in the students' descriptive writing namely: Theme and Rheme based on its simplicity and its markedness and Thematic Progression Patterns. Creswell (2009) said that descriptive qualitative research design was a means of exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social or human issue. The data of this research were the clauses of 20 students' writing descriptive texts at SMP Negeri 1 Delitua. To obtain the data, documentation technique were applied. Finally, Interactive Model proposed by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2014) were applied in this research as the technique of data analysis namely: data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusion.

DATA ANALYSIS

The clauses in the students' writing were classified based on the types of themes in textual metafunction.

1. Types of Theme

It was found that there were 4 types of themes in 267 clauses in students' descriptive texts. Theme is generally classified according to its Simplicity and Markedness (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). The cross-classification of the criteria give four classifications of Theme. First classification is Unmarked Simple Theme (UST), Marked Simple Theme (MST), Unmarked Multiple Theme (UMT), and Marked Multiple Theme (MMT).

Table 1. Types of Themes in Students' Descriptive Texts

Types of Themes	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentages (%)
Unmarked Simple Theme	208	77.9
Marked Simple Theme	8	3
Unmarked Multiple Theme	31	11.6
Marked Multiple Theme	20	7.5

a. Unmarked Simple Theme (UST)

UST held the highest frequency of occurrences in the students' descriptive texts. Saragih (2019) states UST consists one topical theme. It was found 208 times from 267 total of theme frequency occurrences. The theme was the most dominant theme used in students' descriptive texts, counting up to 77.9% of occurrences.

Data 1 (Text 1 My Mother):

Her short hair	was so charming,
Topical Theme	**Rheme**
Unmarked Simple Theme	

In the clause above, the word *her short hair* was identified as topical theme. Therefore it was categorized as Unmarked Simple Theme since the clause only had one type of theme that appear, which was topical theme and it was normally-used subject in a sentence.

b. Marked Simple Theme (MST)

MST held the lowest frequency of occurrence in the students' descriptive texts. Saragih (2019) states that MST is type of theme which consist one topical theme. It was found 8 times from 267 total of theme frequency occurrences counting up to only 3% of occurrences.

Data 2 (Text 7, My Friends):

Every morning	we always go to school together.
Topical Theme	**Rheme**
Marked Simple Theme	

In the clause, the word *every morning* was identified as topical theme. Therefore it was categorized as Marked Simple Theme since the clause only had one type of theme that appear, which was topical theme and it was an abnormally-used subject in a sentence.

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c. Unmarked Multiple Theme (UMT)

UMT held the second highest frequency of occurrences in the students' descriptive texts. Saragih (2019) states that Unmarked Multiple Theme is type of theme which consist two or more themes, which was normally used in a sentence. It was found 31 times from 267 total of theme frequency occurrences counting up to 11.6% of occurrences.

Data 3 (Text 4 My Friend):

And	her hobby	is swimming.
Textual	**Topical**	**Rheme**
Unmarked Multiple Theme		

In the clause above, the word *and* was identified as textual theme, while *her hobby* was identified as topical theme. Therefore it was categorized as Unmarked Multiple Theme since the clause had two types of theme that appear, which were textual theme and topical theme and it was normally-used subject in a sentence.

d. Marked Multiple Theme (MMT)

MMT held the third highest frequency of occurrences in the students' descriptive texts. Saragih (2019) states that MMT is type of theme which consist two or more themes, which was unusually used in a sentence. It was found 20 times from 267 total of theme frequency occurrences counting up to 7.5% of occurrences.

Data 4 (Text 1 My Mother):

Even though	There	was a little gray hair,
Interpersonal	**Topical**	**Rheme**
Marked Multiple Theme		

In the clause above, the word *even though* was identified as interpersonal theme, while *there* was identified as topical theme. Therefore it was categorized as Unmarked Multiple Theme since the clause had two types of theme that appear, which were interpersonal theme and topical theme and it was unusually-used subject in a sentence.

2. Types of Thematic Progression

Danes (1974) explained that the classification of Thematic Progression or Thematic Development is divided into four patterns, namely: Simple Linear Progression (SLP), Constant Theme Progression (CTP), Split Rheme Progression (SRP) and Derived Hyper-Theme Progression (DTHP).

After collecting and analyzing the data, it was found that there were 4 patterns of thematic progression in 20 texts produced by the students. In one text, more than one pattern sometimes found.

Table 2. Thematic Progression Patterns in Students' Descriptive Texts

Thematic Progression Patterns	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentages (%)
Simple Linear Progression	41	28.7
Constant Theme Progression	90	62.08
Split Rheme Progression	10	6.9
Derived Hyper-Theme Progression	4	2.75

a. Simple Linear Progression (SLP)

SLP held the second highest frequency of occurrences in the students' descriptive texts. Dane (1974) states that a paragraph was identified using SLP when the Rheme of previous clause is taken to be the next clause Theme. It was found 41 times from 145 total of thematic progression pattern frequency occurrences, counting up to 28.27% of occurrences.

Data 5 (Text 3 My Bestfriend):

No	THEME	RHEME
8	She	also can play ukulele.
9	It	was her birthday gift last year.

In the clause above, the theme 9 **"it"** was derived from rheme 8 which refers to the *ukulele*. Therefore, it was identified as Simple Linear Progression since the rheme of previous clause (rheme 8) was taken to be the next clause Theme (theme 9).

b. Constant Theme Progression (CTP)

CTP held the highest frequency of occurrences in the students' descriptive texts. Dane (1974) states that when a Theme is picked up and repeated at the beginning of each clause, a paragraph is recognized using CTP. It was found 90 times from 145 total of thematic progression pattern frequency occurrences, counting up to 62.08%.

Data 6 (Text 5 My Garden):

| No	THEME	RHEME
1	My garden	is very wide
2	And (the garden)	has many kinds of plants
3	And my garden	also has a place to shelter and rest
4	My garden	also has a guard dog named Hilow
5	And my garden	is very cool

In the clause above, it could be seen using the same element *"My Garden"* as the point of departure for all clauses, and the rheme for each clause gives further information and explanation regarding the Theme. Therefore it was identified as Constant Theme Progression since the theme of previous clause (theme 1) was derived to be the next clauses Theme (theme 2, 3, 4, and 5).

c. Split Rheme Progression (SRP)

SRP held the third highest frequency of occurrences in the students' descriptive texts. Dane (1974) states that a paragraph is recognized using SRP when a Rheme may include several different pieces of information, each of which may be taken up as the Theme in several subsequent clauses. It was found 10 times from 145 total of thematic progression patterns frequency occurrences, counting up to 6% of pattern occurrences.

Data 7 (Text 17 Mount Merapi):

No	THEME	RHEME
12	It	give positive and negative impacts for local residents.
13	The negative, every time an eruption	comes,
14	They	have to evacuate.
15	On the positive side, the agricultural land there	is very fertile.

Clause	Theme (T)	Rheme (R)
(12)	T	R
(13)	T	R
(14)	T	R
(15)	T	R
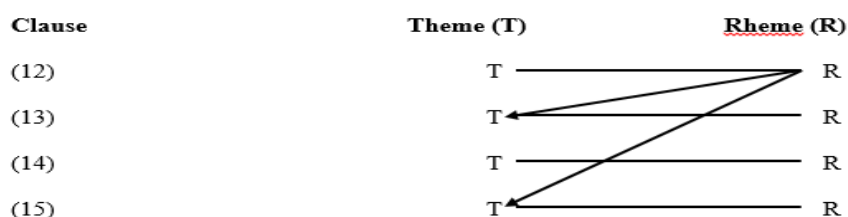
The above example shows that the rheme has been divided into two parts: *positive and negative impacts*. Each of these elements is the theme of the following clauses. In this case, the theme of theme 13 is *negative impact*, and the theme of the theme 15 is *positive impact*. This pattern increases information flow because fresh information in the rheme 12 becomes given information in the next sentence's theme.

d. Derived Hyper-Theme Progression (DTHP)

DTHP held the lowest frequency of occurrences in the students' descriptive texts. Dane (1974) states that when specific themes from subsequent clauses are derived from a Hyper-theme or the same overriding theme, a paragraph is identified using DTHP. It was found 4 times from 145 total of thematic progression patterns frequency occurrences, counting up to only 2,75% of pattern occurrences.

Data 8 (Text 18 My House):

No	THEME	RHEME
5	Every room	has a different color.

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6	The living room	is white.
7	The family room	is yellow.
8	The bedroom	is green.
9	The kitchen	is orange.

Clause	Theme (T)	Rheme (R)
(5)	T	R
(6)	T	R
(7)	T	R
(8)	T	R
(9)	T	R
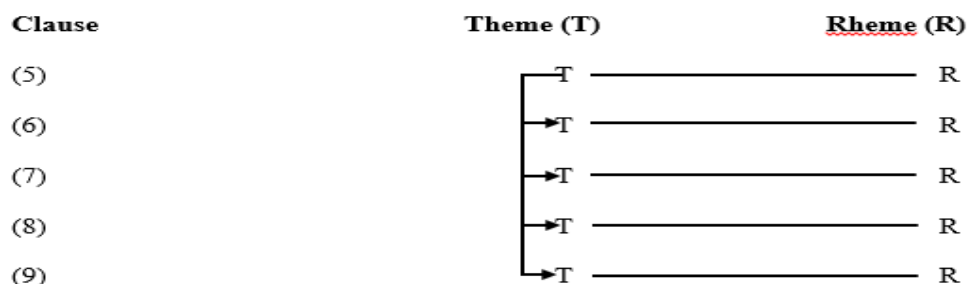
The above example demonstrates that each theme in clauses differs from one another. The theme is *every room* in clause five, whereas the subsequent themes are in order from clause six to clause nine are *the living room, the family room, the bedroom,* and *the kitchen*. Despite these differences, the themes are all linked by the same hyper theme, *every room*. This pattern uses a variety of words referring to the same hyper-theme, which can be used as problem solver for unnecessary repetitions in writing.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, it was found that Unmarked Simple Theme (UST) and Constant Theme Progression (CTP) domination occurred because of seventh grade students' English abilities were quite low. The other themes such as Unmarked Multiple Theme (UMT), Marked Multiple Theme (MMT), and Marked Simple Theme (MST) occurred only few times. The other Thematic Progression Patterns such as Simple Linear Progression (SLP), Split Rheme Progression (SRP), and Derived Hyper-Theme Progression (DTHP) also occurred only few times. It indicated that some students faced writer's block, difficulty in expressing ideas, feeling less confident, and afraid of making mistakes. Thus, students tend to write monotonously and have a few variations in their writing.

Additionally, the analysis showed that the students made the paragraph that overuses Constant Theme Progression. The students put the same theme over several clauses. In this case, the students tend to provide more explanation for the theme instead of developing the theme. Therefore, the rheme is not further explained. The similarity with previous studies were with the study conducted by Dewi et. al (2019) which Constant Theme Progression was also the dominant thematic progression patterns in students' descriptive text.

CONCLUSION

After doing the research, it can be concluded that (1) Four types of themes occurred in seventh grade students' descriptive texts. They are Unmarked Simple Theme (UST), Marked

Simple Theme (MST), Unmarked Multiple Theme (UMT), and Marked Multiple Theme (MMT). UST held the highest frequency of occurrences or the most frequently used in students' descriptive texts. The order of the most to the least types used is UST (78%), UMT (11.5%), MMT (7.5%) and .MST (3%); (2) Four types of Thematic Progression patterns occurred in seventh grade students' descriptive texts. They are Simple Linear Progression (SLP), Constant Theme Progression (CTP), Split Rheme Progression (SRP), and Derived Hyper-Theme Progression (DHP). CTP held the highest frequency of occurrences or the most frequently used in students' descriptive texts. The order of the most to the least patterns used is CTP (62.08%), SLP (28.27%), SRP (6.9%), and DHP (2.75%).

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