

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon

Abstract—This paper investigates theme and thematic progression by systemic functional grammar approach. Academic writing is one of the important fields where these two aspects can be traced. The incentive behind shedding the light on these elements is to examine the performance of Iraqi M.A. candidates while preparing their term papers in methods of writing research course . The aim of this study is to show how different themes and thematic progression targeted by subject serve to expose the concept and the field of their term papers in this course. The study adopts a mixed techniques of analysis, qualitative and quantitative statistics. It is found that themes can yield useful information; successful writings triggers using various types of themes. Besides, thematic choices and thematic progression help a lot in spotting the readers' attention on the topic and field understudy.

Index Terms—systemic functional grammar, theme, thematic progression, academic writing, Iraqi EFL M.A. candidates.

تحليل نحوي وظيفي منهجي للموضوع والتقدم الموضوعي في البحوث الاكاديمية لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية

المستخلص -تتضمن الدراسة الحالية تحليل نحوي منهجي للموضوع والتقدم الموضوعي للكتابة الاكاديمية وهي احد المجالات المهمة لتتبع هذه المواضيع والدافع وراء تسليط الضوء على هذه العناصر هو فحص اداء المرشحين للماجستير اثناء اعداد ورقتهم البحثية في مادة كتابة البحث والهدف من هذه الدراسة هو اظهار كيف تعمل الموضوعات المختلفة والتقدم الموضوعي المستهدف حسب الموضوع عن مفهوم ومجال اختصاص اوراقهم في فصل دراسي .تتبنى الدراسة تقنيات مختلطة من التحليل والاحصائيات النوعية والكمية وقد وجد ان الموضوعات يمكن ان تسفر عن معلومات مفيدة فالكتابات الناجحة تحفز استخدام انواع متعددة من الموضوعات الى جانب ذلك ,تساعد الاختيارات الموضوعية والتقدم الموضوعي كثيرا في جذب انتباه القراء الى الموضوع ومجال الدراسة.

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is generally quite different from casual or conversational language. It gains its formal and objective characteristics by avoiding direct reference to people or feelings, and instead emphasizing objects, facts and ideas. The language of the scholarly or academic writing provides background

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

information as a goal. Writing a scholarly research paper is to include the reference to other people's research, the criticism of the other's research and the researcher's own findings and the ideas resulted from the findings of his scientific product. As such, the researcher tries to communicate the ideas and findings in a logical and convincing way. In general, any academic research paper includes at least the introduction, the body of the research, and the conclusion (American Psychological Association, 2020).

With the theory of systemic functional linguistics , The language of interaction influences the choice of words and the structure of sentences (Ingold, 2017). This involves the use of language to organise the text itself by making the language contextually and co-textually relevant. Textually, a text is “a flow of information or waves of information” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 45). These waves of patterns extend from the whole text through the rhetorical paragraphs to local waves or messages (quantum of information) that are realized by clauses in the textual metafunction and by information unit (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Whitelaw and Argaman (2004, p. 74) add that the textual metafunction provides “a resource for presenting information as text in context”. Language, for Bakuuro (2017), is to organize discourse and create continuity and flow in texts or conversations .The textual metafunction as an organizer for a coherent text appropriate for a particular situation. Halliday (1978, p. 113) points out that textual metafunction is an “enabling function”. It reveals the choices a speaker/writer makes to combine the ideas and the reality he/she wishes to express along with the relation he/she wants to develop (Forey and Sampson, 2017). Halliday regards textual metafunction as the “construction of message, and essentially what creates discourse by the interpersonal and experiential function linguistically both within and between clauses” (Castello, 2014, p.6). In the text, the speaker/writer organizes the way his/her message is worded to signal how the present point of the message fits in with the other parts (Thompson, 2014). Fahlevi (2015) declares that the textual meaning, which is expressed by the textual metafunction, has a text –forming function of language .Such a function is realized by the thematic structure that includes the theme and rheme. Not only the thematic structure realizes that function but also the thematic progression. It enables the textual metafunction to organize the clauses within a complex text and to link and develop them to form a cohesive whole (Forey and Sampson, 2017). Within theme structure, the study tackles only the theme since it is the point of departure for the message any clause tries to convey. Thematic progression, on the other hand, is investigated fully.

The current study contributes showing Iraqi EFL M.A. candidates choices while writing the themes of the clauses of their term papers. It offers insights into the differences in their writing production in reflecting the concept of the term papers. Additionally, the study spots valuable insights into the workability of the two

adopted models in revealing the production abilities of the subjects under study. Several studies discussed theme and thematic progression. These studies include (Abdelrady, 2023), (Alboghobeish & Sedghi, 2014), (Anis, 2023), (Ijam & Al-Ameedi, 2024), (Nasrulloh, 2019), (Rahmawati, 2016), (Siahaan et al., 2022), and (Yan, 2015). However, none of them analyzed those two topics in M.A. program candidates' term paper. Therefore, the research gap in this study is that as far as the author's observation, there is no previous study that focuses on the study of theme and thematic progression in such data, especially the subjects are Iraqi EFL M.A. candidates.

Narrowing down the scope to the policy context of this study, it is noteworthy that theme and thematic progression are examined in 12 collected term papers for all the M.A. linguistics candidates who are Iraqi EFL learners in the method of research course in the first semester through the academic year (2023-2024) in the University of Babylon, College of Education for Human Sciences, Department of English. The study is limited to the introduction part of the term papers for those candidates as foreign language learners. This study tries to provide answers to the following inquiries:

1. What are the types of themes used by Iraqi EFL M.A. candidates?
2. What is the dominant type of theme employed by M.A. candidates and in which part of the introductory section?
3. What are the kinds of thematic progression used by M.A. candidates?
4. What is the predominant kind of thematic progression employed by M.A. candidates and in which part of the introductory section?

1.2 Aims of the Study

There are two primary aims of this research. First, by utilizing theme and thematic progression, the study aims to explore Iraqi EFL learners' performance in writing their academic research term papers in the method of research course in the M.A. program. Second, it seeks to examine the disparities in the use and focus of themes and thematic progression while they introduce the concept and the field of the research they are presenting and the effect of their choices in their writing production through systemic functional grammar.

1.3. Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that Halliday's and Matthiessen's (2014) and Thompson's (2014) model concerning systemic functional grammar reveal Iraqi EFL M.A. candidates' abilities and focus on employing themes and the way they create cohesion and unity by keeping the themes of each clause tied together to develop the text to be coherent for the readers via thematic progression.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THE CLAUSE AS A MESSAGE

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

Halliday regards textual metafunction as the “construction of message , and essentially what creates discourse by the interpersonal and experiential function linguistically both within and between clauses”,(Castello,2014, p. 6) .Thompson (2014) explains that with the textual metafunction , the speaker/writer constructs his/her message smoothly into the unfolding language event in addition to interacting with the listeners. In the text, the speaker/writer organizes the way his/her message is worded to signal how the present point of the message fits in with the other parts (Thompson, 2014). Fahlevi (2015:35) declares that the textual meaning, which is expressed by the textual metafunction, has a text –forming function of language .Such a function is realized by the thematic structure that includes the theme and rheme. Theme is defined by Matthiessen in Sinar (2002:49) as “ a set of textual systems “ carrying a meaning realized in the message of the clause in a specific context.

Castello (2014,p. 6) and Schleppegrell (2004,p. 67) confirm what is mentioned above by saying that the “theme is a construct of grammar that reveals how a clause in English is organized as a message” .The Theme is a point of origin for the message that is the heart of the matter people are concerned with. Thematic system is concerned with the point of departure in relation to what has come before, so it is clear where the clause is located in the text and how its contribution fits in (Feng 2013). Bartlett and O’Grady (2017) declare that the point of departure is the semantic label and Theme is the lexicogrammatical element .Theme has a vital role in focusing and organizing the message and contributes to the coherence and success of the message (Ijam & Al-Ameedi, 2024).

By identification, the Theme is the first element that comes in first position in the clause .It is realized by what is initially positioned in the clause. This initial position gives the Theme its “special status” within the clause (Halliday, 1994; Horinza, 2020). Martin (1992) asserts that different patterns and meanings made by the choice of theme can be manipulated and exploited consciously or unconsciously, by the writer to convey his/her point of view. Each choice of the Theme is regarded as a different starting point of the message conveyed in the clause. Therefore, there are different types of Theme (Ijam & Al-Ameedi, 2024) .As a result, the Theme boundary starts from the beginning of the clause incorporating every element extending up to include the first participant ,process ,or circumstance of the experiential meaning (Castello,2014).

2.1.1 Types of Theme

Theme includes two major types, topical and non-topical. The non-topical is either multiple or special thematic structures. They are to be clarified in the following sub-sections:

(a). *The Topical Theme*

Topical theme is either unmarked subject, (un)marked complement, (un)marked process, or (un)marked circumstances. As in:

- 1- **John's friend** came to see me yesterday. (Unmarked subject). (Paltridge, 2006, p. 148).
- 2- **What** do you want to know? (Unmarked complement). (Halliday & Matthiessen ,2014,p. 99)
- 3- **This responsibility** we accept wholly. (Marked complement). (Thompson, 2014, p.149).
- 4- **Leave** that door open. (Unmarked process). (Feng, 2013, p. 90).
- 5- **Don't you argue** with me! (Marked process). (Halliday & Matthiessen,2014,p. 92).
- 6- **How** did you come to employ them? (Unmarked circumstances). (Thompson, 2014, p. 151).
- 7- **Last night**, we went down town. (Marked circumstances). (Thompson, 2014, p. 151).

(b.) *The Multiple Theme*

Multiple theme is extended to three types: textual, interpersonal, and a combination of the previous two. As far as the textual theme is concerned, it may be a continuative, conjunctive, or a conjunctive adjunct:

- 8- **Well**, I can tell you. (Continuative). (Fahlevi, 2015,p. 38)
- 9- **But** all the rooms look out onto the secluded garden.(Conjunctive).(Thompson,2014,p. 161)
- 10- **Alternatively**, she came out of the door. (Conjunctive adjunct).)Thompson,2014,p. 162)

Modal /comment adjunct, vocative, and finite verbal operator are the subtypes of interpersonal theme, as:

- 11- **Admittedly**, he took the trouble to destroy all the papers in the cottage. (Comment adjunct). (Eggins, 2004, p.303).
- 12- **Maybe** Stephen could help. (Modal adjunct). (Eggins, 2004, p.304).
- 13- **Senator Rudman**, what does it say to you? (Vocative) (Halliday & Matthesien ,2004,p. 84)
- 14- **Did** he tell you where I was? (Finite verbal operator). (Thompson ,2014,p. 151)

It is possible for more than one theme to appear in one clause in which the textual precedes or follows the interpersonal:

15- *Well, unfortunately*, we discussed it the other night. (Halliday
& Matthiessen, 2004, p. 84)

16- *Not surprisingly, then* its operations were viewed with admiration.
(Thompson, 2014, p.164)

(c). *Special Thematic Structures*

Such kind of structures include thematic equative, predicated theme, and preposed theme. Thematic equative is a textual source in which the speaker can group together more than one element of the message in a single constituent (Thompson, 2014). It is where theme equals rheme (Ijam & Al-Ameedi, 2024). In contrast with the WH-interrogative, the WH-element as theme is where speaker/writer completes his/her message by filling the gap. The starting point in the thematic equative is a question that the speaker imagines the hearer might want to ask at this stage in the text (Thompson, 2014, p. 154). The predicated theme is where the speaker /writer picks out a single element with an emphatic thematic status (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 124). The last type, the preposed theme is a separate constituent that is substituted by a pronoun in its appropriate place:

17- *What the duke gave to my aunt was that teapot*. (Thematic equative) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p.93)

18- *It was bold that Diana had denoted for the 36th time*. (Predicated theme) (Eggins, 2004, p. 316)

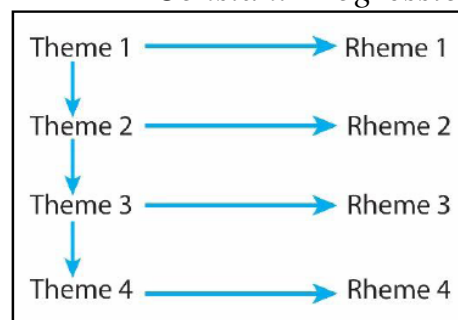
19- *People like us, in the middle*, we have to be careful about the children we have.
(Preposed theme)
(Thompson, 2014, p.185)

d. Thematic Progression

Another way to scrutinize theme is via thematic progression (Thompson, 2014). With the mapping of thematic progression, "the information flow can be determined" (Anis, 2013, p. 453). Eggins (2004) considers thematic progression as information exchange. Hawes (2010) adds that thematic progression is a repeated process of transforming information. Thematic progression helps in creating the cohesion of the texts. This gives a chance for the understanding of how "the choice of what comes first in a clause is made, and how those choices serve to link ideas together to form the text" (Ijam & Al-Ameedi, 2024, p.89). Adopting Thompson's (2014) classification, there are three types of thematic progression. Constant, linear, and derived progression.

With constant progression, the theme of the next clause is the same as that of the previous one. As in the following figure:

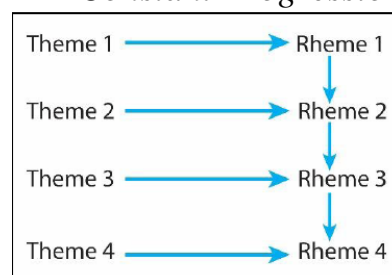
Figure 1
Constant Progression



Note. Constant progression .From “Theme and Thematic Progression in Jochebed’s Journey” by D. M. M., Ijam & R. T. K., Al-Ameedi, 2024. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 15(1), p. 90.

Also, it includes cases where the rheme of the next clause is the same as that of the previous one, as in figure 2:

Figure 2
Constant Progression



Note. Constant Progression .From “Theme and Thematic Progression in Jochebed’s Journey” by D. M. M., Ijam & R. T. K., Al-Ameedi, 2024. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 15(1), p. 90.

For example:

20- *My English teacher* is from Shanghai. *She* graduated from Fudan University in 2005. *She* works as an English teacher... (Yan, 2015, p.39).

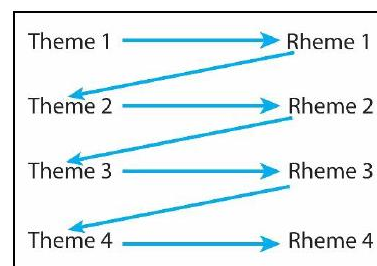
21- Everybody loves **Boogie Burgers**. Children love **Boogie Burgers**. Teenagers love **Boogie Burgers**. Parents love **Boogie Burgers**. Grandparents love **Boogie Burgers**. (Kuswoyo, 2016, p. 260).

Linear progression is just as described by Eggins (2004, p. 324) a “zig-zag pattern” where the theme of the next is the rheme of the previous one or vice versa, as in the following figure:

Figure 3
Linear Progression

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

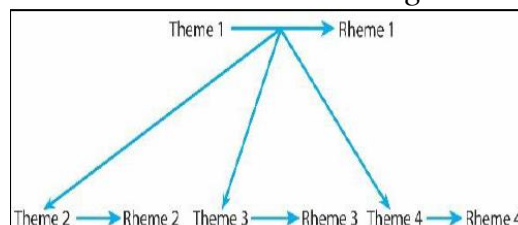


Note. Constant Progression .From From “Theme and Thematic Progression in Jochebed’s Journey” by D. M. M., Ijam & R. T. K., Al-Ameedi, 2024. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 15(1), p. 90.

22- My friend bought me **a gift**. **It** is a beautiful bag of **Gucci**. **Gucci** is a famous bag maker. (Yan, 2015, p.40).

Derived progression targets to develop the theme of the first clause through the themes or rhemes of the coming successive clauses.

Figure 4
Derived Progression



Note. Derived Progression .From From “Theme and Thematic Progression in Jochebed’s Journey” by D. M. M., Ijam & R. T. K., Al-Ameedi, 2024. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 15(1), p. 91.

23- **Color** in our life is meaningful. **Red** represents enthusiasm and ardor. **Green** symbolizes hope. **White** a mark of chasteness. (Yan, 2015, p.40).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data Description and Collection

The data set is a collection of 12 term papers,(479) clauses, written in English by Iraqi EFL M.A. linguistics candidate students in methods of writing research course .These term papers were collected in one semester in the academic course offered at the University of Babylon/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ Department of English during 2023-2024. For analysis, the first chapter in each term paper is analyzed .This chapter is the introduction that includes the problem, the aims, the hypotheses, the procedures, the limits, and the value of the study.

3.1.1 The Tools for Analysis

In systemic functional linguistics, Halliday and Mathiessen (2014) display themes and the subtypes within the textual metafunction of language. Thompson (2014) exploits thematic progression and how the subtypes of progression affect the cohesion of the paragraphs in the texts. This all happens at the clause level.

3.1.2 Method of Analysis

Following Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) Halliday's Introduction to Functional Grammar, and Thompson's (2014) Introducing Functional Grammar, the first step of analysis is following a qualitative analysis, identifying the topical themes, multiple themes, and the special thematic structures. Then, moving precisely to identify the subtypes of each. Topical themes include the unmarked subject, (un)marked complement, (un)marked process, and (un)marked circumstances. Multiple themes include textual, interpersonal, and interpersonal-textual themes. Special thematic structures include thematic equatives, predicated theme, and preposed theme.

The second step is to identify the thematic progression. In other words, identifying the subtypes of thematic progression as constant, linear, and derived progression. After conducting a qualitative analysis, a quantitative analysis is held to support the qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis is according to descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics gets benefit from the frequencies and percentages whereas the inferential statistics is applying the chi-test and the probability value, henceforth p-value. Through using the qualitative and quantitative analysis of Theme and thematic progression with the aid of the inferential analysis, it is still hoped that this study offers answers concerning the Iraqi MA. candidate choices that reveal the candidates' focus while writing to be the point of departure for each clause and how to link the clauses of the paragraphs to keep the cohesion and unity of the text.

3.2 Procedures

For the analysis of the data under study, the researcher has followed the procedures listed below:

1. Examining carefully the collected term papers for the Iraqi M.A. candidates in the method of research course in one semester through the academic year 2023-2024 in the University of Babylon, College of Education for Human Sciences, Department of English.
2. Identifying the exact extracts for analysis including the introduction section in each.
3. Revealing textual metafunction meaning through explaining its relation with the Theme and thematic progression that appear in the selected data.

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

4. Applying a descriptive analysis supported by an inferential analysis to enrich the findings of the analysis.

5. Unveiling theme and thematic progression each term paper exploits to deliver how the Iraqi MA. candidate choices reveal the candidates' focus when writing to be the point of departure for each clause and how to link the clauses of the paragraphs to keep the cohesion and unity of the text.

4. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results of the analysis are shown in the following subsections:

A. The Results of Types of Themes Analysis

Descriptively, the candidates employ all the types of themes but with different rates. Totally, they employ (479) themes within (479) clauses. This indicates that the candidates use one theme for every clause regardless of its type. Delicately, almost half of the types of the themes are topical themes since they have (244, 50.94%) occurrences per clause. The inferential statistics supports this since the topical Theme is the highest and more than the p-value 0.05. As it is clear in Table 1 and 2:

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF TYPES OF THEME IN TEXTUAL
METAFUNCTION IN THE DATA

The Textual Metafunction							
Types of Themes							
Topical		Multiple		Special thematic Structures		Total	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
244	50.94	197	41.13	38	7.93	479	100
Total Clauses in the Data						479	
Ratio of Types of Themes per Clause						100	

TABLE 2
INFERENTIAL STATISTICS OF TYPES OF THEME IN TEXTUAL
METAFUNCTION IN THE DATA.

Topical	Multiple	Special thematic Structures	Chi-square	P-value
F	F	F		
244	197	38	145.98	5.99

(a). *The Result of Topical Theme Analysis*

The topical theme invades (50.94%) at the clause level through the whole data. The subtypes of the topical themes include, whether marked or unmarked, the subject, complement, process, and circumstances. The highest is the unmarked subject with (178) and a percentage of (72.95%). Most of the unmarked subjects used in introducing the problem of the study are references to the concept of the term paper. For instance *“academic research need to be designed systematically and symmetrically in order to make the ideas of the research, **Systematicity in designing research** is beneficial for both , the researcher and the reader. **The present study** deals with designing a linguistic research in light of bridging technique; **Politics** is inherently dependent on language .**This** is the reason why language has an instrumental power, **language** is evident. **It** has been and continues to be a potent instrument in the hands of political leaders; **the effectiveness of inductive techniques of grammar instruction** is still a matter of heated argument, especially in EFL language teaching. **This study** is set out to examine whether or not this kind of teaching could affect EFL learner’s accuracy. **The issue of grammar teaching** has always been and continues to be at the forefront of language teaching studies; **Understatement and overstatement** are two figures of speech, which serve two different functions, exaggerating and understating. **This paper** is an attempt to highlight the importance of those two figures of speech; **many learners of English as a foreign language** are unable to speak and use language correctly in their post-graduate careers. **This problem** can be attributed to certain social issues. **The term ‘language learning’** describes the procedure of picking up new foreign languages. **This process** passes through different stages”... . The second highest is the use of circumstances, the marked precisely, with (34) occurrences and a percentage of (13.93%). Marked circumstances are sometimes thematically necessary to reflect the importance of time, place, and manner to link between clauses, heavily in introducing the problem of the paper. To mention some *“**Evidently**, they have difficulties that stand in the way of their achievements, **Considering teaching experience**, it is believed that without the assistance of the students, it would be challenging to find these issues... **At English departments in the college of Educations**, there is no assistance by modern tools or technology to be used to improve the language teaching process, **theoretically**, literature review of both understatement and overstatement are presented. **Practically**, selected extracts from the American novel are analyzed according to the adopted model, **When it comes to a wide range of circumstances or settings** , communication is a process that takes place, **Generally**, tag questions are designed to elicit agreement or support from the audience, **Consequently**, the current study attempts to answer the following questions, **Having such an important function**, politeness markers constitute a prerequisite for foreign learners who usually face difficulty in acquiring the**

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

*pragmatic principles of the target language”... The third goes to the unmarked complements, (17) times with a percentage of (6.97%). They are employed to introduce the inquiries of the study. For example, “**What** is meant by diglossia? **What** is the dominant verity used by Ja’far al-Ibraheemy? **Which linguistic feature** is highly used by Ja’far al-Ibraheemy? **What** are the linguistic forms of understatement that are used by Mark Twain? **What** are the pragmatic aspect of understatement that are used by Mark Twain? **What** are the forms of understatement used by Mark Twain? **What** can the study of meiosis in selected political speeches reveal about the communication strategies of Mandela and Nasrallah to convey their messages? **What** are the functions that tag questions serve in political discourse? **What maxim** is violated more than the other maxims?”...*

According to the inferential statistics for the whole data, the chi-square test supports the descriptive statistics in the marked employments of the unmarked subject, marked circumstances, and unmarked compliments as the prominent themes. This is due to the p-value in the whole data which is higher than 0.05. It is illustrated in the following tables:

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF TOPICAL THEME IN THE DATA

Topical Themes in the Data															
Subject		Complement				Process				Circumstance				Total	
Unmark ed		Unmark ed		Marke d		Unmark ed		Marke d		Unmark ed		Marke d		F	%
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
17	72.9	17	6.97	1	0.4	0	0	4	1.6	10	4.10	3	13.9	24	10
8	5			1	1			4	4			4	3	4	0
Total Clauses														479	
Ratio of Topical Themes per Clauses														50.94	

TABLE 4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF TOPICAL THEME IN THE DATA

Subject	Complement		Process		Circumstance		Chi-squa re	P- valu e
Unmark ed	Unmar ked	Marke d	Unmar ked	Marke d	Unmar ked	Marke d		
178	17	1	0	4	10	34	657.7 4	12.5 9

(b). The Result of Multiple Theme Analysis

Such kind of theme includeS the textual , interpersonal, interpersonal- textual themes. They are used to link between the ideas of clauses to create unity and coherence. They are also used to proceed the focus or project the idea of the previous clause or give reasons or justifications .Each kind is used for a different purpose. Textual themes are to join, to connect, or manage turn taking in conversations. Interpersonal themes are to focus on the vocatives, give side subjective comments, of the writer's, or introduce polar inquires. The last kind is a mixture between the two. Multiple themes are found in the following table:

TABLE 5
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF MULTIPLE THEME IN THE DATA.

Multiple Themes							
Textual		Interperso nal		Interpersonal -Textual		Total	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
175	88.83	19	9.64	3	1.52	197	100
Total Clauses						479	
Ratio of Multiple Themes per Clauses						41.13	

The second type of themes is the multiple themes with a ratio of (41.13%) per clause. Within, the dominant use is that of the textual themes with (175, 88.83%) occurrences. The least one is the interpersonal –textual themes. With the support of the inferential statistical analysis, the chi-square test and the p-value show that textual themes are highly used than the rest since the p-value is higher than 0.05. It is illustrated in the following table:

TABLE 6
THE INFERENTIAL STATISTICS OF MULTIPLE THEMES IN THE DATA.

Multiple Themes				
Textual	Interpersonal	Interpersonal- Textual	Chi- square	P- value
175	19	3	275.01	5.99

The Iraqi M.A. candidates use the textual themes in various parts in the introduction section. They use it in the problem section as “*in the hands of political leaders **who** exercise control over the instrument to tailor it to their objectives, Being able to communicate is a process **that** continues throughout one's life...*” . In delivering the aims of their research as “*identifying the ways **in which** prior knowledge may be facilitated in instructional situations, pointing out the instrumental and/or environmental situations **in which** second language learning may be enhanced...*” .In writing the hypotheses, as “*It is hypothesized **that** an*

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

*individual's attentional capacity may enable him/her produce correct use of four tenses in English written test, It is hypothesized **that** the success of the two novels is due to the distinctiveness of the characters they contain, **which** affect the audience ...".In the writing the procedures of their studies as "section three presents a selected text of incitement **that** is analyzed in terms of discourse analysis markers, six M.A. theses are to be tackled , three of them are technically well-bridged **and** the other three are ill-bridged ones..." .In the limits of their studies ,as "This study is limited to identifying the forms of underestimation and overestimation **that** are used in the selected extracts , **through** this study , the researcher can find **how** Mandela uses figure of speech , meiosis, **which** entails understatement , to make their points and stir up emotions into their listeners..." . And at the significance of study section, to illustrate: "It is hoped **that** this study will be of value to those interested in studying pragmatics approach to demonstrate **how** language can be used to communicate information **that** is not directly related to the value of linguistics, This study is theoretically significant **because** it makes it easier for the reader to trace the fundamental pivots in the linguistic research. It is practically significant for the researcher himself to check **whether** any pivot has been lost or not, or at least be sure **that** the thesis is constructed without losing any fundamental pivot mistakenly..." . The second is the interpersonal themes with (19 ,9.46%) occurrences, in the significant section, to deliver their own point of view of how and whom this study is addressed to , as "**Hopefully** , this study will be valuable to those who are interested in methodology and syntax , especially EFL learners, **Hopefully**, this study will be valuable in the field of pragmatics and methodology, **Hopefully**, this study will be valuable to those interested in psycholinguistics, language teachers , and syllabus designers. **Moreover**, it is hoped to be of value to those interested in linguistics" ...*

(c). The Result of Special thematic Structures Analysis

Special thematic Structures include neither topical nor multiple themes. They include thematic equatives, predicated and preposed themes. They agree on having an important element to be fronted as theme because of its importance. They are elucidated in the following table:

TABLE 7
THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF OTHER TYPES OF THEMES IN THE DATA.

Special thematic Structures			
Thematic Equative	Predicated	Preposed	Total

F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
5	13.16	28	73.68	5	13.16	38	100
Total Clauses						479	
Ratio of other Types of Themes per Clauses						7.93	

Descriptively, the use is the least since special thematic structures are shown only (38) times with a ratio of (7.93%) per clause. However, within, the predicated themes are the highest (28, 73.68%) whereas the other two show equal use (5, 13.16%) for each. Predicated themes are used by the Iraqi M.A. candidates when they give introduction to the problem, in *“it is the lack of knowledge that needs to be bridged, it is the meaning that is desired to be conveyed in order for us to be able to communicate, that is the argument that when communication involves acoustic blast between at least two people, The speaker is the one who generates the communication in the text, it is believed that without the assistance of students, it would be challenging to find these issues,* The Iraqi M.A. candidates usually use predicated themes in the aims, as *“determining the type of persecution the writer was subjected to, introducing the persecution the two novels are submitted to, identifying the ways in which prior knowledge may be facilitated, pointing out the instrumental and/or environmental situation in which second language may be enhanced”...* Thematic equatives are found in the introductory note of the problem of the study as *“who speak English are the educated people all over the world, who are learning and studying language are foreign language learners, why language is so important to the learners is the real reason, what the problem of this study is the lack of knowledge which needs to be shown”,* and in the hypothesis, in *“where two varieties of language are employed is diglossia”*. The preposed themes are found when stating the aims of the research, in *“knowing the variety that is dominantly used by EFL learners, identifying the meaning we desire, showing the systemic collection of symbols that what language consists of, determining the challenges EFL learners face”,* and *“explaining the techniques of the interactive categories of metadiscourse that the undergraduate B.A. essay writing apply”*.

B. The Results of Thematic Progression Analysis

Thematic progression means how the text includes unity and cohesion through chaining the themes of the clauses in the text to be understood and comprehended by the readers. It include three kinds: constant, linear, and derived thematic progression. Descriptive statistics declares that thematic progression is used with a ration of (61.79%) per clause .What is more, derived thematic progression is the highest , linear progression is the lowest , and constant progression is in between. With inferential statistics, the chi-square test and the p-value support the dominance of the derived thematic progression over the rest. It is clear in the table below:

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

TABLE 9
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THEMATIC PROGRESSION IN THE DATA

Thematic Progression							
Constant		Linear		Derived		Total	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
107	36.1	59	19.9	130	43.92	269	100
	5		3				
Total Clauses						479	
Ratio of Thematic Progression Per Clauses						61.79	

TABLE 10

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THEMATIC PROGRESSION IN THE DATA

Thematic Progression				
Constant	Linear	Derived	Chi-square	P-value
107	59	130	26.59	5.99

Derived thematic progression among the highest with (130, 43.92%) occurrences, heavily used when introducing the aims and the hypotheses of the term papers. This happens to develop the topic sentence by the subsequent clauses. Some instances, in “*this study aims at : 1-identifying what challenges EFL college students encounter when learning language, 2-showing whether social factors like gender, education, etc., have substantial impact on how difficult it is to acquire a language, It is hypothesized that:1- a specific learning situation or an entire range of different learning situations can facilitate second language learning situations,2- a learning situation or a range of learning situations or an entire range of application and use of situation may enhance second language learning*”. On the other hand, constant progression, as the second highest with (107, 36.15%) occurrences, is used by the Iraqi M.A. candidates to link the themes of the clauses heavily in the introductory note of the problem. In spite of being the lowest with only (59, 19.93%) occurrences, linear thematic progression is also used in the problem’s introductory note linking the theme of the first with the theme of the second and vice versa. As in “*the issues of grammar teaching has always been and continues to be at the forefront of language teaching studies. It is grammar, which permits language users to cord together cluster of words in a manner that is both correct and meaningful; The present study is about incitement. It is dedicated to analyse some selected reports from news about*

incitements. The reports are going to be analysed in discourse analysis features including grammatical and lexical features of the text”....

5. DISCUSSION

Writers in general try to focus on the starting point of the clauses they write. In particular, the Iraqi M.A. candidates use various kinds of theme in order to introduce the topics of their term papers in the master degree programme within one semester. Not only that but also they depend on thematic progression technique to link between the themes of the clauses to create unity and cohesion and let the readers comprehend the topic of the term papers. To dig deeply, all kinds of theme and all kinds of thematic progression are employed by the Iraqi M.A. candidates. Sometimes, a specific kind of theme or progression is used in specific subsection in the introduction section. The unmarked subject is the most dominant within the topical theme to shed the focus of the readers on the topic or the concept of the term paper. The reliability of the first two hypotheses is assured by the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis pictured in Tables 1 and 2. Within the thematic progression, all the thematic progression types are used. Derived progression is the most dominant type of progression. Those two results are proved by the descriptive and inferential statistics in Tables 9 and 10.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Now it is time to come up with the conclusions:

1. Concerning the themes, the topical theme is the dominant whereas the special thematic structures are the lowest with the multiple themes in between.
2. Most of the topical themes are unmarked subject. It is employed by the Iraqi M.A. candidates in the introductory note of the problem to introduce the concept which the study is held for.
3. Within the topical themes, the second dominant topical theme is the marked circumstances. They use it heavily in the introductory note of the problem.
4. The third dominant is the unmarked complement when the Iraqi M.A. candidates try to introduce the research questions of their term papers.
5. With the multiple themes, the Iraqi M.A. candidates focus on linking the clauses together with textual, interpersonal themes, or a mixture between the two. Textual themes are mostly conjunctions, or continuatives. Most of the interpersonal themes are conjunct adjuncts or comment adjuncts.
6. The predominant multiple theme is the textual theme. It is employed in all the subsections of the introduction section of the term papers.

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

7. The interpersonal theme is found heavily in the significance of the study section. They use such kind of multiple themes to intrude their personal judgment about how their papers are going to be of value and to whom.
8. The least within the multiple theme is the special thematic structures. The predicated themes as the highest and thematic equation and preposed themes show equal use.
9. The predicated themes are guides employed for the reader to notice some patterns of emphasis, i.e., they signal out the predicated part as noteworthy since they are picked up among other alternatives. The Iraqi M.A. candidates employ such kind of theme to shed the attraction on some information in the introductory note of the problem and in the aims.
10. Thematic equative expresses the contextual pressure, as the speaker wishes to establish a contrast or an exclusion relation. The preposed themes focus on elements other than the topical or multiple Themes, but related in a way or another to the subject. Thematic equatives are found in the introductory note of the problem and the hypotheses whereas the preposed themes exist in the aims of their study.
11. Thematic progression helps focusing on particular themes, so the themes are either the same by employing constant progression, a chain like where the rheme is the theme of the next or vice versa with linear progression, or the themes are derived or related in some way or another to the theme of the first clause of the text. Delicately, in the data, the subtypes show higher use of the derived progression, and then comes the constant, and finally the linear progression.
12. The derived progression is exploited when the Iraqi M.A. candidates want to introduce the aims and the hypotheses of their study.
13. Surprisingly, in spite of being the lowest, linear progression appears where constant progression is found. They both appear heavily in the introductory note of the problem.
14. Finally, the Iraqi M.A. candidates vary their use of all kinds of themes and all kinds of thematic progression. Particularly, they try to let readers focus their attention on the introductory notes of the problem of the study and its significance.

REFERNCES

- Abdelrady, A. A. H. (2023). A Contrastive Analysis of Thematic and Information Patterning in English and Arabic Contexts. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(3), 16. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n3p16>.
- Alboghobeish, A. K., & Sedghi, H. (2014). Information Development in Arabic Research Article Abstract. *International Journal of English and Education*,

3(2), 581-584. Retrieved from
http://ijee.org/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/4.1152210.pdf.

- Anis, M. Y. (2023). Thematic Progression Pattern in Al-Hikam Aphorism Arabic “Bahasa Indonesia and Arabic “English; Systemic Functional Linguistic Approach. *World Journal of English Language*, 13(7), 453-466.
- Bakuuro, Justine. (2017). Demystifying Halliday’s metafunctions of language. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 5(2), 211-217.
- Bartlett, Tom, & O’Grady, Gerard. (2017). *The Routledge handbook of systemic functional linguistics* (1st ed.): Routledge.
- Castello, Dominic. (2014). *A comparison of three recipes using systemic functional grammar*. (Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics), University of Birmingham, Birmingham.
- Eggins, S. (2004). *An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. Continuum.
- Fahlevi, Reza. (2015). *An analysis of metafunction and context of situation in Martin Luther king's speech 'I have a dream'*. University of Sumatera Utara.
- Feng, Zhiwen. (2013). Functional grammar and its implications for English teaching and learning. *English Language Teaching*, 6(10), 86-94.
- Forey, Gail, & Sampson, Nicholas. (2017). Textual metafunction and theme: What's it about? In *The Routledge Handbook of Systemic Functional Linguistics* (1st ed., pp. 131-145). London: Routledge.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). Ideas about language. *Arts: The Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association*, 11(1978), 20-38.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2nd ed.): Hodder Arnold.
- Halliday, M., & Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. (2014). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*: Taylor & Francis.
- Hawes, T. (2010). Thematic progression and rhetoric in Sun and Times editorials: 1991-2008. *Rice Worling Papers in Linguistics*, 2, 39-51.
- Horinza, A. (2020). *Clause used in testimonials Duolingo application: systemic functional linguistics analysis*. UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi,
- Ijam, D. M. M., & Al-Ameedi, R. T. K. (2024). Theme and Thematic Progression in Jochebed’s Journey. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 15(1), 85-96.
- Ingold, R. (2017). *Society, context and function: An introduction to systemic functional linguistics*. Retrieved on 29th June, 2023 from <https://learningandteaching-navitas.com/language-winnie-pooh-linguistics-can-help/society-context-and-function-an-introduction-to-systemic-functional-linguistics-richard-ingold/>
- Kuswoyo, Heri. (2016). Thematic structure in Barack Obama’s press conference: A systemic functional grammar study. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 7(2), 257-267.

A Systemic Functional Grammar Analysis of Theme and Thematic Progression in Iraqi EFL learners' Term Papers

Asst.Prof.Dr.Wafaa Mokhlos Faisal

- Martin, J. R. (2002). 3. Meaning Beyond the Clause: SFL Perspectives. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 22, 52-74.
- Nasrulloh, N. (2019). Thematic Progression Patterns in Indonesian Opinion Articles. *Eleventh Conference on Applied Linguistics (CONAPLIN 2018)*, 254(Conaplin 2018), 17-21. <https://doi.org/10.2991/conaplin-18.2019.99>.
- Rahmawati, A. (2016). Thematic Progression in Descriptive and Recount Texts Written by Nursing Students. *The 3rd University Research Colloquium 2016*, 102-108.
- Schleppegrell, M.J. (2004). *The Language of Schooling: A Functional Linguistics Perspective*: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Siahaan, H. V. F., Setia, E., Saragih, A., & Hanafiah, R. (2022). Thematic Development Analysis on Sunday Sermon Texts in Batak Christian Protestant Church. *World Journal of English Language*, 12(6), 220-228. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v12n6p220>.
- Sinar, T. S. (2002). *An introduction to a systemic-functional linguistic oriented discourse analysis*. DeeZed Consult. <https://books.google.iq/books?id=y0cvHQAACAAJ>.
- Thompson, G. (2014). *Introducing Functional Grammar*: Routledge.
- Paltridge, B. (2006). *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Publication manual of the American Psychological Association: The official guide to APA style: American psychological association (APA).
- Whitelaw, Casey, & Argamon, Shlomo. (2004). Systemic Functional Features in Stylistic Text Classification. In *Proceedings of AAAI fall symposium on style and meaning in language, art, music, and design* (pp. 74-84). Washington DC, USA.
- Yan, L. (2015). A Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis of the Application of Theme and Thematic Progression Patterns in College English Writing Teaching-A Study of Sample Writings of CET-4. *World Journal of English Language*, 5(4), 33-56.