

Thematic Progression in Uncovering Paragraph Coherence: Some Evidences in Indonesian Secretarial Academy Context

Wawan Hendrawan

Department of Linguistics Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia
wawan18003@mail.unpad.ac.id

Eva Tuckyta Sari Sujatna

Department of Linguistics Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia
eva.tuckyta@unpad.ac.id

Ekaning Krisnawati

Department of Linguistics Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia
ekaning@unpad.ac.id

Nani Darmayanti

Department of Linguistics Faculty of Cultural Sciences
Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia
n.darmayanti@unpad.ac.id

Bio-profiles:

Wawan Hendrawan is a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, concentrating in studying the contribution of systemic functional linguistics for the writing of research articles in the areas of language and linguistics.

Eva Tuckyta Sari Sujatna is a full professor of linguistics in the Department of Linguistics Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia. Her research interest includes linguistics, education, culture, and tourism.

Ekaning Krisnawati is an associate professor of linguistics in the Department of Linguistics Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia. Her research interest embraces cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics.

Nani Darmayanti is an associate professor of linguistics in the Department of Linguistics Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia. Her research interest covers critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics.

Abstract

Thematic progression can be applied as one of the techniques to analyse whether the paragraphs written are coherent or not. To this end, the present study scrutinized six English final reports written by the sixth semester students learning at an academy of secretary in Indonesia. The data originated from the six final reports were identified, parsed, analysed, and interpreted using qualitative approach with descriptive analysis related to theme and thematic progression patterns of systemic functional linguistics. Moreover, this was equipped by descriptive statistics showing the sum of data evaluated. The results of deciphering the data supported the claim that thematic progression can be administered as an alternative in seeing the coherence of students' writing work. This manifested by ninety-five percent of the paragraphs jotted down utilized thematic progressions and the clauses developed them formed theme patterns, hence they were coherent. The most encountered thematic progression was zigzag, as for the theme pattern, the unmarked topical structure dominated. These results indicated that the secretary academy students whose works investigated proven capable of writing final reports in English. From the overall findings, there are some steps to consider, especially in the field of writing final reports resides in secretarial academies. First, this study demonstrates how the theme patterns and their thematic progressions can be used as an instrument to see whether the addressed paragraphs are coherent or not. This, in turn, can assist lecturers, teachers, and instructors of language to determine whether the students

need to be given some enrichment or not. Second, from this, it can be taken some measures to ‘nurture’ supervisors in terms of theme and thematic progression patterns before assigned to supervise the students while writing the final reports in the context of secretarial academies. Finally, the sixth semester students learning in academies of secretary can be introduced to the process of writing in which the theme and thematic progression discussion employed as the focus of the learned materials. This, at the end, might give contribution to the enhancement of their paragraph writing.

Keywords: *thematic progression, theme pattern, coherence, English final report, secretarial academy*

Introduction

Knowing the students’ work coherently written or not is a great asset for lecturers, teachers, and instructors of language. This will further help them to decide whether the students need to be given some enrichment or not (Kopple, 1991; Jalilifar, 2010; Wei, 2016). However, to reach this stage is not easy since they must have a tool to assess the students’ composed work (Muroda, Madjid, & Jati, 2018). It can be in the form of writing technique like applying thematic progression. It has been claimed to have the property to probe the article’s structure effectively (Huang Guowen cited in Guan, 2015) and to see the degree of cohesion and coherence of a writing product (Muroda, Madjid, & Jati, 2018). In addition, there are certain advantages of utilizing it (Huang Guowen cited in Guan, 2015). First, it can be used to inspect the coherence of the discourse from its internal structure. Second, it forms the coherence of text by structuring the clauses logically thus the message will be easier to be transmitted. Third, it provides the interpretation of the message from the perspectives of the readers. And finally, it supports the means of how the human beings thinking.

The studies of thematic progressions reside in students’ works as well as in other modes have been well catalogued both inside Indonesia (e.g. Astuti, Suryani, and Kurniati, 2010; Gunawan and Aziza, 2017; Muroda, Madjid, & Jati, 2018; Emilia, Habibi, and Bangsa, 2018) and outside Indonesia (e.g. Jalilifar, 2010; Herriman, 2011; Tshotsho, 2014; Alyousef, 2015; Wei, 2016; Ghaleasadi, 2012). In the domain of undergraduate thesis, Astuti, Suryani, and Kurniati (2010) analyzed the background of it. The results indicated that the most used theme pattern was

the topical unmarked theme. Yet, seen from the coherent aspect, represented by the thematic progressions, most of the scrutinized paragraphs were incoherent or broken. In the same line, Gunawan and Aziza (2017) investigated the theme choice along with its thematic progression that resided in parts of undergraduate theses. The results revealed that the dominant theme was topical, and as for thematic progression the iteration pattern dominated.

Slightly different focus but still in the same level, Muroda, Madjid, & Jati (2018) examined twelve backgrounds of thesis proposal. They discovered that there were two types of thesis proposal background, the coherence and incoherence. The coherence text utilized multiple, reiteration, and zig-zag theme patterns, among these, the most used theme patterns were reiteration, zigzag, and multiple successively. Whereas, the incoherence text applied brand new theme, disuse of the word 'there', and the application of dummy 'it'.

In the realm of senior high school, Emilia, Habibi, and Bangga (2018) investigated the works of the first graders of senior high school. After analyzing six texts produced by six students, mirroring high, middle, and low achievers, they inferred that the students were capable of using reiteration and zig-zag theme patterns. As for the multiple theme pattern, it only exploited by the high achiever students.

In the foreign context, Jalilifar (2010) reviewed the students' English compositions at a university level. He found that the use of themes was varied and the flows of thematic progressions applied determined by their language ability. Moreover, the number of unmarked themes outran the marked themes suggesting that topical themes occupied both thematic and subject positions. In the same scope, Herriman (2011) examined how the contribution of the theme patterns used in the writing of advanced-level learners in Sweden, how it influenced the formation of the text written and what kind of thematic progressions composed. The study signaled that the themes of the interaction type were mostly found in the analyzed writing. In the same line, Tshotsho (2014) found that the first-year students at a University in South Africa faced an issue related to the coherence of paragraphs. This was illustrated by disjointed sentences and paragraphs and de-contextualized topics written in their essays.

In the postgraduate level, Alyousef (2015) investigated 19 writings of Master's students learning accounting. The results indicated that the application of theme reiteration patterns was very high compared to linear theme patterns and the very few applications of multiple-theme

patterns were found. This research has contributed to the teaching and learning process of writing courses especially in the context of English for business purposes.

In the college level, Wei (2016) performed a study involving Chinese and native speaker learners. The composed works of both learners were compared in terms of the choice of themes used. The outcomes of the study indicated that there were differences in the application of themes carried out by Chinese learners compared to their native counterpart. The Chinese learners tended to use fewer topical themes and applied more interpersonal themes in the form of modal adjuncts and mood-marking themes. Furthermore, the difference was also clearly seen in terms of the application of textual and marked themes. The use of marked themes was more often in the form of adjuncts of manner and contingency. Meanwhile, in relation to textual themes, they deployed fewer conjunctions and more often administered conjunctive adjuncts.

In the professional level, especially in the short story context, Ghaleasadi (2012) explored the differences and similarities of themes in romantic and criminal short stories written in English and Persian and how their existence affected readers. The results revealed that the construction of themes could be used to help learners read short stories effectively by tracing the information conferred by the author. Likewise, theme constructions could also be used to guess the information presented by looking at the theme selection used. Not only that but also, in this study, it was confirmed that thematic progression and its organization employed helped the text be more cohesive. As the consequence, this made learners easier to focus on the story and better understand it more practically.

Carefully analyzed, most of the aforementioned studies tried to measure how theme and thematic progressions employed in the student and professional contexts. If compared, there were some differences found and these related to the results and loci of the studies. The results of the studies demonstrated diverse outcomes as indicated previously. As for the loci, those studies conducted at the levels of senior high school up to the postgraduate and dominated by bachelor level. Unlike the previous studies, the present study was performed in the context of secretarial academy which is included into higher education yet its degree is diploma III or three-year study program. In an academy of secretary, in Indonesia, the students must write a final report as a precondition to graduate and this done, commonly, at the end of their studying process.

In addition, there are several underlying reasons why the present study is performed in an academy of secretary. First, to the extent of the researchers' knowledge, the theme and rheme

concepts are scarcely taught in it. Second, since the theme and rheme concepts are rarely taught then, as the consequence, resulted to the lack of knowledge in knowing them. Third, this also impacted on the availability of literature regarding the application of theme and rheme notions in the context of academy secretaries. Finally, due to the dearth of the studies performed, the present study intends to fill the gap in the literature by revealing some of the evidences in relation to the application of theme and thematic progression patterns in the context of academy of secretary.

Departing on the above rationales, this study is expected to enrich the literature, both theory and practice, related to how theme and thematic progression patterns applied by the students of an academy secretary. In reaching this goal, it will try to map how the academy of secretary students realize the theme and thematic progression patterns in their writing. More specifically, the theme and thematic progression patterns scrutinized are used to unmask the coherence of paragraphs written in the final reports composed by them. Moreover, what makes this study interesting is, some of them, it tries to explore how the students of secretary academy put important information in their clauses and how the clauses form coherent paragraphs in their English final reports. This study is very important in that it, again, will provide a model of the utilization of theme and thematic progression patterns for academies of secretary.

To make this study run on its purpose, it exploits some guidance in the form of questions such as what dominant theme patterns discovered in the overall students' English final reports; what common thematic progression utilized; and how thematic progressions contribute to the paragraph coherence of English final reports. At the end, it will be closed by the implications emerge from the findings taking from the results of discussing the issues investigated.

Literature Review

The representation of a textual meaning for a certain degree is always present in the clauses of a language (Halliday: 1994; Eggins: 2004). The realization of this meaning in the systemic functional linguistic perspective is called the theme and rheme (*ibid*). The theme is the message written at the beginning of the clause in which this message expresses the overall understanding of the clause (Halliday, 1994; Bloor & Bloor, 1995; Gerot & Wignell, 1995; Lock, 1996; Thompson, 1996; Eggins, 2004; Butt, *et al.*, 2006; Wiratno, 2018). While rheme is a part of a series of messages that exists in a clause other than the theme or in the conception of Halliday

(1994), it is understood as "the rest of the message in which the theme exists" (Halliday, 1994: 37).

There are three types of theme such as topical, textual, and interpersonal themes, the last will not be depicted since the evidence of its existence was not found in the analyzed data. Topical themes are themes illustrating ideational meanings and in the context of unmarked themes these usually occupy a role as a subject (Halliday, 1994; Bloor & Bloor, 1995; Gerot & Wignell, 1995; Lock, 1996; Thompson, 1996; Martin, Matthiessen, & Painter, 1997; Eggins, 2004; Butt, *et al.*, 2006). It means that this theme has two roles at once namely the role of the subject and theme. The last understood as the focus of the information transferred (Bloor & Bloor, 1995) in a clause. This can be divided into two parts, marked and unmarked themes.

Marked theme is unusual theme (Eggins, 2004) meaning that it is chosen to attract the attention of readers (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). Besides that, it is to some extent also used to signify the changing of settings from spatial to temporal (North, 2005; Wei, 2016). Furthermore, it can be identified by analyzing elements written before the subject (Halliday, 1994; Thompson, 1996; Eggins, 2004). Thus, the realization of this theme in a clause is to place it before the subject. Elements included in the marked theme are adjuncts, preposition groups, and complements (Halliday, 1994).

The implementation of marked themes like adjunct, prepositional phrase, and complement as a theme to a certain degree shows that the writers want to convey information which is usually considered as a rheme into very important information in a series of structure of a clause (Bloor & Bloor, 1995). This has implications for the text in which the contents will become more coherent (*ibid*). Yet, the overrate of marked theme in the form of circumstantial elements may hamper the ability of the learners to extend the main notions and essential information since these components create difficulties to "draw on the rheme of a previous clause for the theme of the next clause" (Qian *et al.* as cited in Wei, 2016). Moreover, Wei (2016) points out that in some studies the learners of English usually used some adverbial adjuncts referring to time, space, and circumstance or as the first topic in their marked themes. This was done to bridge the ideas between discourses (Moyano, 2016).

Dissimilar to marked theme, unmarked topical themes are themes occupying the position of the subject (Gerot & Wignell, 1995; Eggins, 2004; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). These can be filled by noun groups, embedded clauses (Gerot & Wignell, 1995), or nominalization of subject

and pronouns (Halliday: 1994). There are several implications, based on some studies, when unmarked themes are utilized by students in their writing works. First, they will provide topic continuity assisting the discourse to become more coherent by identifying major participants and providing identity chains in the text (North as cited in Wei, 2016). Second, they behave as a scaffolding textual continuity (Moyano, 2016). Therefore, in brief, their existence is very crucial in the students' works due to their functions as alluded.

In addition to topical themes that focus more on the representation of experiential meanings, textual theme is a theme representing the meaning of a clause in relation to their context (Gerot & Wignell, 1995; Eggins, 2004). Due to this, it is comprehended as a 'cohesive device' among clauses when put together in a context (Eggins, 2004). It is identified at the beginning of a series of clauses (*ibid*) and consisted of elements included into conjunctions, conjunctive adjunct, and modal adjunct (Thompson, 1996).

Based on the research findings (*cf.* Yunita, 2018), the implementation of the textual theme in students' work can be used to measure the students' ability whether they have been able or unable to develop clauses' relationship logically. Moreover, it can also be utilized as an indicator to reflect whether their works are cohesive and coherent. In the same manner, Wang (2007) contends that theme and rheme must be presented equally in clauses to make a cohesive text. Otherwise, the text will not be easily to digest due to the absent of signposts leading the readers to follow the notions or argument.

The types of themes as presented above, can be written separately or combined. Both of these bring different understandings from one another. If the types of themes above are written only according to their own category, not combined with other categories, then they belong to a simple theme (Thompson, 1996). Meanwhile, if they are written together, unified with others, then they belong to multiple theme category (*ibid*).

In addition to the types of themes that exist in a clause, there is more information relating to how the development of these themes is realized in a paragraph. The development of themes in the conception of functional perspective is known as 'periodicity' (Martin & Rose, 2007; Wiratno, 2018). This concept or better known as thematic progression is coined by the Czechoslovakian linguist Frantisek Danes (Alyousef, 2015; Kang, 2016) and later developed by Fries and Halliday (Alyousef, 2015). Furthermore, it can be embodied in three forms namely reiteration, zig-zag, and multiple rheme patterns (Eggins: 2004).

Theme reiteration pattern is a writing technique done by repeating the theme of the previous clauses (Egins: 2004). Thus, in its realization, it is taken from the topical theme of the previous clause (ibid). Although this technique is effective in creating a cohesive effect of a text in that it repeats previous information, this technique can make the reader or listener become bored because the text has a tendency not to lead anywhere (ibid). Figure 1 describes how this theme is materialized in a paragraph.

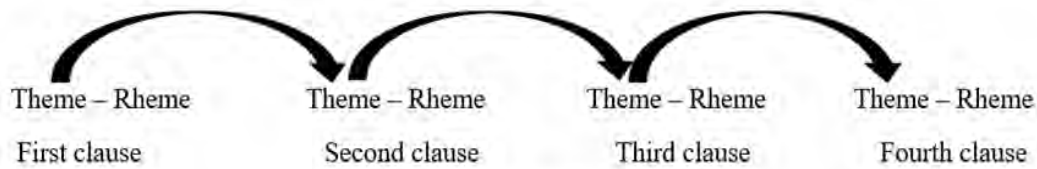


Figure 1. Reiteration theme pattern

Source: adapted from [Egins \(2004: 324\)](#)

Figure 1 illustrates how the reiteration theme pattern is expressed in a paragraph. It comes from the same theme that is the theme of the previous clause. Therefore, in its realization, it is rewritten in the subsequent clauses.

In contrast to the theme reiteration pattern, zig-zag or linear pattern belongs to the form of theme development as well as thematic progression (Egins, 2004). It is a theme adopted from the rhemes of the preceding clauses (ibid). In its presentation, it forms a rhythmic pattern that follows one after another (Wiratno, 2018) and realizes the cohesiveness of the text by developing new information in its rheme hence there is a cumulative development (Egins, 2004). This what makes it different from the theme reiteration pattern (ibid). Figure 2 portrays how this theme is occurred in a paragraph.

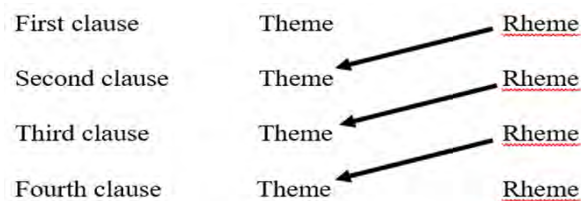


Figure 2. Zigzag or linear theme pattern

Source: adapted from [Egins \(2004: 324\)](#)

Figure 2 describes how zigzag or linier theme pattern is implemented. It is the theme of a clause originated from the preceding rhemes of the previous clauses. Thus, as the name implies, it is written in a zigzag or linear format.

Multiple rheme pattern is a thematic progression system in which the information contained in the main sentence of a paragraph, positioned as a rheme, is used as the themes of the subsequent clauses or main topics of the next paragraphs (Egins, 2004). Generally, it is found in the initial paragraph of an exposition paper (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). It is used to provide understanding that the paragraphs written form the overall unity of the topic (Wiratno, 2018). With such intention, this theme can be referred to as 'hyper-rheme' (ibid). Figure 3 exhibits how this theme is constructed.

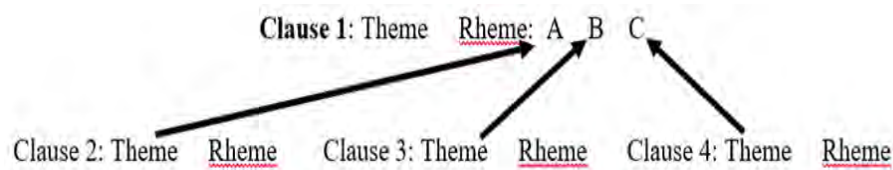


Figure 3. Multiple rheme pattern

Source: adapted from Egins (2004: 325)

Figure 3 visualizes how a multiple rheme pattern is described. This theme is created to give the impression that the whole paragraph is unified since the sources of the information come from the rheme of the first clause.

The significance of analyzing the thematic progression in a text is to know the development of information existing in it. Of course, in its implementation there will be a discrepancy depending on the purpose of the text containing it. Take for example, academic text tends to have zigzag or linear theme pattern (Fries cited in Wang, 2007). This occurred since it brings complex argument in which the subsequent ideas are the expansion of idea in the previous sentence (ibid). Moreover, the employment of thematic progressions will assist the learners to recognize the text's patterns by highlighting the beginning and end of the text's focal points represented by the effective meaning organization of clauses, paragraph, and discourse (Arancón, 2013). Another use of thematic progression is it gives texts a cohesive development resulting in a coherence of the text (Butt, *et. al.*; 2006). With it, structurally and semantically the texts will be more coherent (Guan, 2015).

From the explanation above, it can be inferred that the choice of theme patterns and their thematic progressions influences how the information is presented and this further will impact on the level of coherence of the writing composed. If the information given is in the form of a simple theme pattern, then the theme used for a certain level is a simple theme as well, the opposite

applies. As for the coherence of a text, theme and its thematic progression play a significant role in that they create a text more structurally and semantically intact.

A Concept of Coherence

The notion of coherence is viewed differently among experts (McCrimmon, 1963; Halliday and Hassan, 1976; Moe, 1979; Kuo, 1995; Murcia and Olshtain, 2000; Van Dijk via Wang & Guo, 2014; Mann and Thomson as cited in Hellalet, 2016). McCrimmon (1963) explains that coherence is achieved when readers can read the text effectively and understand the content wholly. Whereas, Halliday and Hassan (1976) highlight coherence purely as a written work characterized by the togetherness or closeness of its content. In the same manner, Moe (1979) contends that in a composed work, coherence is accomplished when the sentences in a passage relate to one another and when the sections in the paragraphs are displayed in a sensible grouping.

Similarly, Kuo (1995) defines coherence as a type of relationships of the elements of a text in terms of its thematic development, organization of information, or its communicative purpose and these are not merely based on the surface links. Murcia and Olshtain (2000) say that coherence is related to the unity of sentences or utterances that make a content of the paragraph solid. Van Dijk (cited in Wang & Guo, 2014) mentions that coherence is a semantic property that comes from interpreting the relationships between sentences in a discourse. On the same page, Mann and Thomson (as cited in Hellalet, 2016) explain that coherence is defined, according to Rhetorical Structure Theory, as the solidity of a discourse in which every part is connected to one another.

Based on the insights as alluded, thus, coherence is an obligatory component existing in a discourse. It becomes a prerequisite or a “*sine qua non* in a written discourse” in that if it is missing in a written discourse, as a consequence, the discourse intended message will almost certainly fail to be conveyed to readers (Bamberg, 1983: 417). To shed the light on this concept, below given an example taken from Wang and Guo (2014: 461).

John was reading China Daily. Newspapers published in America usually contain several pages. The first page of this book was lost. The lost child had been found by policeman.

Based on Wang and Guo (2014) the above excerpt contains the elements of cohesion signified by the enhancement of the rheme parts. Yet, in fact, based on them, it is not coherent in that the sentences are not connected semantically. By some linguists this phenomenon is termed as pseudo-coherence since it presents a false impression of being coherent to its readers (ibid).

Again, a coherence writing can be identified by seeing how the information is construed in the clauses and the clauses are organized into paragraphs. Therefore, the concept of coherence used in the present study is seen from the relation of information presented and this manifested in theme patterns and their thematic progression. If the theme patterns, information written, is explicitly developing a thematic progression, then the paragraph is said to be coherent. On the reverse, if there is no relation among themes in the paragraph, and of course no form of thematic progression identified, anew it is categorized as incoherence or in Wikborg's word it is called as a coherence break (Wikborg as cited in Kuo, 1995). Following this argument, then, the level of paragraph incoherence is determined by the absence of a thematic progression or no relation among theme patterns in it. From the explanation as alluded, it can be deduced that the relation of theme patterns and their thematic progression to the paragraphs' coherence is parts making up the whole.

Methodology

In this study, the research approach adopted was qualitative (Creswell, 2003). By this, all of the research design would follow its patterns. The qualitative design was chosen because the present study tried to describe, analyze, interpret, and implicate the issue related to theme and thematic progression patterns resided in the English final reports composed by the students of an academy secretary. This design was also complemented by a simple descriptive statistic technique. The aim of employing it was to know the sums of the most exploited theme patterns and progressions in the students' written works. Therefore, from this, it could be implicated the further steps to make use the findings. In addition, the qualitative design as applied in this study was consisting of several elements like place of study, research data (the number of data used, data selection time, the process of its selection, and participants), and method of data analysis (time of data analysis, instrument of data analysis, and procedures of data analysis).

As illustrated by the title of this paper, the locus of the study happened in a secretarial academy located in the city of Bandung, West Java Province, Indonesia. The school runs a diploma degree, three-year studying program, focusing on studying secretarial science. Since it specializes in teaching its students to master secretarial tasks, all of the students learning in it are female, thus it is called as a single-sex school and their ages ranging from 18 until 21 years old, sometimes more than that. Among these age ranges, the 21 years of age are commonly considered as the last semester students learning in this academy.

As a prerequisite of graduation, it obliges its students to write a final report. The final report made is usually written in Indonesian yet for the past three years, starting from 2017, it has proposed a policy urging the students to write the final report in English. This policy taken to increase the students' competitiveness in the job market. Even so, it is not a binding policy it means that the students can choose whether writing their final report in Indonesian or English. Due to the students' willingness, caused to some extent by their English ability, only few students were enthusiastic to write the final report in English.

Since few students were willing to write the final report in English, thus the data used for the present study was six final reports. They were taken from the final reports composed in 2018. There were several reasons underlying why the 2018 final reports employed as the data. First, compared to the final reports written in 2017, the 2018 final reports were steadier in terms of the contents. Second, the final reports composed in 2018 were more than the final reports written in 2017 which were fewer than five. Finally, the final reports jotted down in 2018 were more elaborate in terms of topics.

The final reports were written by the sixth semester students or last semester students. Every final report investigated had different topic or focus yet, in general, the topics covered the administrative working processes as commonly performed by a secretary. The final report was consisted of five chapters commenced by introduction, literature review, phases of job practice, analysis and constraint, and conclusion and recommendation successively.

In the present study, the data scrutinized were in the forms of paragraphs. However, not all of the paragraphs available in the final reports were analyzed. Only the paragraphs comprising of minimally three clauses, simplex or complex, were investigated. The reasons why the three-clause paragraphs applied as the data were first the present study focused on thematic progression thus, again, it must have formed an overt relation among the elements resided in the sentences written. Second, the three-clause paragraphs would, to some degree, illustrate the pattern of thematic progressions deployed. Finally, following the second argument, since they would show the logical relation of every clause, they would in turn be applied as a signifier of a coherence or incoherence paragraph.

The data analysis was done in 2019, especially in the beginning of February until the end of June 2019. During that time, the researchers collected and analyzed the data. Thus, the present

study happened in 2019 and last for about eight months. The frameworks applied when analyzing the data were Halliday (1994), Thompson (1996), Eggins (2004), and other relevant sources.

Following the qualitative design, the data were analyzed manually. In so doing, the researchers were acting as the instruments while evaluating the data. There were several measures performed in this process. First, all of the data in the form of final reports were collected. Second, they were read detailly. Third, text was broken into paragraphs. Fourth, the paragraphs consisting of more than three clauses were highlighted and summed up. Fifth, they were scrutinized in terms of theme and rheme patterns existing in their clauses. Sixth, the theme and rheme patterns found in each paragraph were classified into their kinds and then put into their thematic progressions. Seventh, the paragraphs containing thematic progressions as well as broken thematic progressions were counted using simple statistical measurement related to percentage. Eighth, the number of thematic progressions and theme patterns were scored. Thematic progressions were valued based on the number of paragraphs. Whereas, theme patterns measured referring to the number of clauses resides in every paragraph. Ninth, all of the data in the forms of percentages were tabulated and presented. Eventually, the tabulated data were interpreted based on the theories and previous research findings.

Result and Discussion

The dominant theme patterns in the English final reports

This part deals with the dominant theme patterns discovered in the data. After investigated, the data demonstrated several findings. First, as a whole, the dominant theme pattern disclosed is the unmarked topical themes. Second, the number of marked topical theme found is below the unmarked topical themes. Finally, multiple theme patterns are the fewest themes detected. From this, it can be inferred that the unmarked topical themes are the themes that mostly applied by the students in their final reports, and this further becomes the obvious fact that the use of unmarked topical themes outnumbered the marked and the multiple themes. This can be identified from the table 1 below.

Table 1. Types of theme patterns and their sums

Number of Data	Total clauses	Theme Patterns		
		Topical		Multiple
		Marked	Unmarked	

1	79	22 or 28%	50 or 63%	7 or 9%
2	56	20 or 36%	34 or 61%	2 or 3%
3	99	21 or 21%	72 or 73%	6 or 6%
4	70	11 or 16%	49 or 70%	10 or 14%
5	122	35 or 29%	74 or 61%	13 or 10%
6	83	28 or 34%	45 or 54%	10 or 12%
Total	509	137 or 27%	324 or 64%	48 or 9%

Table 1 illustrated the entire sums of the clauses scrutinized. There are 509 clauses existing in the overall data. As can be seen, the number of data, in the form of clauses, taken is not the same. The most number of clauses analyzed is available in the fifth data. In contrast, the fewest investigated taken from the second data. In general, the total theme patterns found are consisted of unmarked topical theme around 324 or 64%, marked topical theme about 137 or 27%, and multiple theme pattern over 48 or 9% consecutively.

As can be noticed in the table 1 above, the number of clauses in the paragraphs is diverse. This, further, does not refer or incline to any particular theme patterns. It means that the sum of the highest theme as discovered in this study is not in line with the number of sentences evaluated. Take for example the highest occurrence of topical theme falls on the third data, around 73%, if compared with the other data this included into the middle range in terms of the number of clauses figured out. The same goes with the other types of theme.

The unmarked topical themes mostly recognized in the data are manifested in the form of noun groups. They become the ‘favorite’ elements used as the subjects in the final reports investigated, to some extent, it might be happened due to their ‘concrete’ appearance of the subjects or activity being discussed in the final reports. This is in line with Gerot & Wignell (1995), Eggins (2004), and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) stating that the unmarked topical themes are

usually employed as subjects. Below given one of the examples of the unmarked topical theme uncovered in the data. The excerpt is originated from the first data.

<p>The procedure in handling incoming mail in every organization or company</p> <p>Theme</p>	<p>usually varies.</p> <p>Rheme</p>
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The above excerpt shows that the theme pattern is categorized into the unmarked topical theme (Halliday, 1994; Gerot & Wignell, 1995; Thompson, 1996; Eggins, 2004). This is composed of a noun group with the head ‘procedure’ and ‘the’ as its modifier. The ‘procedure’ is a singular word identified by no ‘s’ ending in it. And ‘the’ as a definite article signifies that the ‘procedure’ has been alluded in the previous clauses. If examined thoroughly, the noun group, ‘the procedure’, is modified by prepositional phrases clarifying what procedure is occurring in a company or organization. These separate between its subject and verb, forming a complex sequence of words.

The domination of unmarked topical themes found in the analyzed data is in line with the results of previous studies (cf. Astuti, Suryani, and Kurniati, 2010; Gunawan and Aziza, 2017; Jalilifar, 2010) claiming that unmarked topical themes reigned in the data examined. By this, in essence, the present study strengthens the previous researches despite of its different locus and levels. Hence, it contributes to the existing literature.

Moreover, the implication of applying the unmarked topical theme by the students in their final reports can, to some degree, be interpreted as the students’ understanding in comprehending that the topic or subject written should be relating to each other and directing the readers to the contents of the written text (Eggins, 2004). By so doing, thus, they want to present that there is a ‘constancy’ of the discourse which at the end forging a coherent text (Eggins, 2004; Moyano, 2016; North as cited in Wei, 2016).

Dissimilar to the unmarked topical themes, the marked topical themes, as discovered in the data, are composed of, predominantly, adjuncts embodied in the prepositional phrases. Their highest occurrence happened in the second data about 36%. This finding is surprising in that the second data only comprised of 56 clauses which is considered as the fewest data dissected. Again, this strengthened the viewpoint alluded that the number of clauses does not determine the sum and types of themes detected.

The application of marked topical themes in the students' final reports is, besides, to 'entice' the readers (Gerot & Wignell, 1995), it also functions to bridge the idea between paragraphs or clauses, especially when dealing with spatial or temporal contexts (North, 2005; Wei, 2016). These will be resulted in the coherence of the text both in the topics presented and the ways they narrated. Following presented one of the instances of marked topical theme found in the data. The excerpt taken from the fifth data

In opportunity,	this	I will explain about the work I do during carrying out practical work in KPP Pratama Bandung Karees (a tax office in Bandung region).
Theme		Rheme

If dismembered, the marked topical theme in the above excerpt is consisted of a prepositional phrase. It is composed of three words with 'in' and 'this' as the modifiers and 'opportunity' as the head. By applying it in the beginning of the paragraph, the writer tries to bridge the ideas written from the previous paragraph. In addition, this also illustrates that the writer wants to convey that she is at a particular time frame while telling what done during her internship process. This signified by the word 'in'.

The significance of implementing the marked topical themes in the students' final reports demonstrated that the students had the ability to produce new issues in their written works (Martin, 1992). And this, also can be interpreted as the condition enabling them to 'escape' from the ideas jotted down previously in order to avert boredom as well as feature that they are in some process or circumstance (Butt *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, the utilization of marked topical theme reveals that they are able to yield more dynamic writing identifying a scholarly writing (Wang, 2007) leading to the ability in arranging good arguments (Nwogu & Bloor, 1991). Yet, the exaggerating application of the marked themes, especially those related to circumstantial constituents, by the students in their works will to some extent cripple their ability in elaborating the topics and important message written (Qian *et al.* as cited in Wei, 2016).

Similar with the marked topical themes discovered, multiple theme pattern built by the combination of themes. Although its case is quite limited compared to the topical themes found in the data, it played a very essential role in making the students' final reports more coherence. The most discoverable multiple theme in the data is the mix between conjunctive adjunct and noun groups. The conjunctive adjunct, in this context, acting as the cohesive tools to glue the other

elements so that they form a unified construction (Eggins, 2004). This can be exemplified by the excerpt below. It is taken from the fourth data.

Thus, the bank || can determine the amount that must be paid by the customer every month.

Textual topical

Theme

Rheme

In the above excerpt, the multiple theme is constructed of a conjunctive adjunct and noun group. The conjunctive adjunct representing by the word ‘thus’ performing a role as cement to tight the preceding clause with its clause. In this context, it becomes a resultant element caused by the earlier statement. By putting the conjunctive adjunct in this position, the both clauses, the earlier and the latter, are more intact in terms of meaning and form leading them to more cohesive structure.

The textual themes discovered in the students’ final reports bring some thoughts to consider. First, the students have been able to link (Martin, Matthiessen, Painter, 1997) between the clauses as demonstrated by the above excerpt. Second, the word ‘thus’, to some extent, represents the writer’s logical ability or argumentative skill in putting what the cause is and what result is in the written paragraph. Third, by the existence of the textual theme, in this regard expressed by the word ‘thus’, the paragraph is more coherence in terms of content.

The very few findings of multiple themes in the students' final reports are in line with the results of research conducted by Alyousef (2015). Moreover, the frequent use of conjunctive adjuncts in the written final reports is in conjunction with the results of study performed by Wei (2016) asserting that the students deployed fewer conjunctions and more often administered conjunctive adjuncts.

At last, the findings from analyzing the theme patterns, unmarked and marked topical themes as well as textual themes as described above, are in line with the previous studies performed by Astuti, Suryani, and Kurniati (2010) and Gunawan and Aziza (2017) identifying that the most used theme applied by the undergraduate students was topical theme. Even this study is quite dissimilar in term of locus, again, it has contributed to the existing literature related to the application of theme patterns in the context of an academy of secretary.

Common thematic progressions utilized in the English final reports

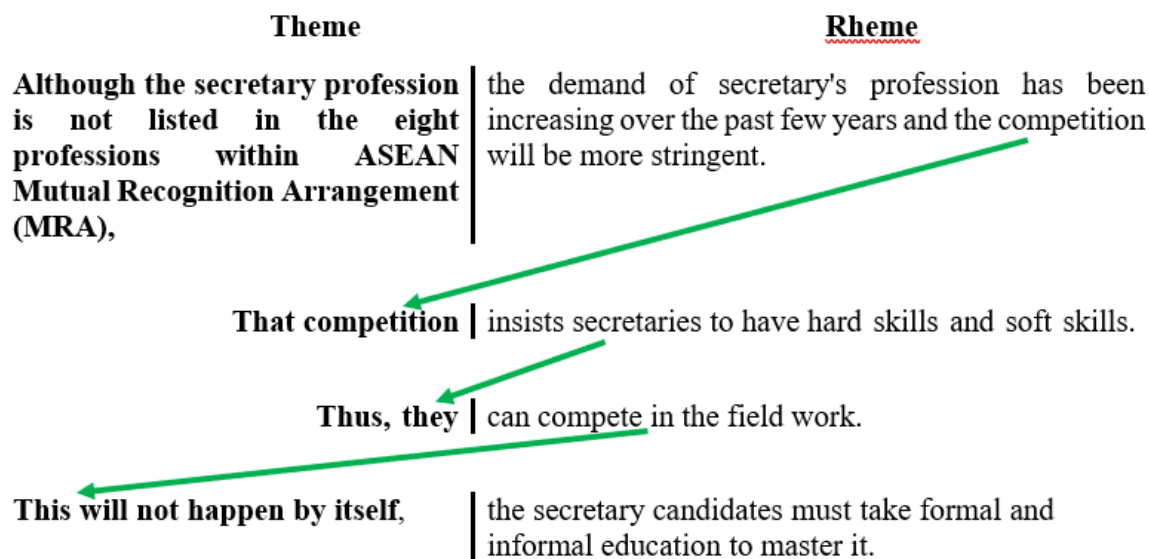
As suggested, the existence of a thematic progression can be diagnosed in a paragraph. Proven this, thus, the entire paragraphs classified as data were investigated. After analyzed, it was found that the thematic progressions frequently used are zigzag, iteration, and multiple thematic progressions. The total number of thematic progressions detailly occurred in the data can be observed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Frequency of common thematic progression in the data

No	Data	Total paragraphs	Thematic progressions		
			Zigzag	Iteration	Multiple
1	Data 1	24	16 or 67%	7 or 29%	
2	Data 2	18	14 or 78%	3 or 17%	
3	Data 3	27	17 or 63%	7 or 26%	1 or 4%
4	Data 4	19	11 or 58%	7 or 37%	
5	Data 5	33	24 or 73%	8 or 24%	
6	Data 6	23	16 or 70%	6 or 26%	
			98 or 68%	38 or 26%	1 or 0.69%
	Total	144	Total	137 or 95%	

As depicted in the table 2 above, there are 144 paragraphs scrutinized and from these 137 thematic progressions were found. The most used pattern is zigzag accounted for about 68%, followed by iteration around 26%, and multiple 0.69% respectively. Therefore, overall percentage of thematic progressions existing in the entire paragraphs is 95%.

As indicated, the zigzag or linear pattern becomes a thematic progression which is commonly revealed in the analyzed data. This surpasses the finding of iteration thematic progression which, if compared, almost tripled. Moreover, if the finding of the zigzag pattern compared with multiple thematic progression, the gap would be very wide. Another interesting incidence discovered was that the quantity of paragraphs does not determine the types and sums of thematic progressions found. For example, the highest number of zigzag thematic progression is manifested in the second data in which its total paragraphs are the fewest among the other data. To make it clear, an instance of zigzag thematic progression is given in the following excerpt. It is taken from the fifth data.



Having been probed, the above paragraph utilizes zigzag theme progression pattern proven by the monopoly of the zigzag theme patterns in it. The trace of them can further be detailly identified by the rheme of the first clause, competition, is used as the theme for the second clause. The same goes with the third clause, its clause theme taken from the second clause rheme, secretaries. Moreover, the rhemes of the first and second clauses are adapted without any modification. It means that the writer does not apply any extension nor using other tools like synonym or antonym replacing those words. She rewrites the words wholly. As for the fourth clause, its theme is originated from the rheme of the third clause. Yet, she makes a slight alteration by using the pronoun, this, to replace the words in the third clause's rheme.

The practice of utilizing zigzag thematic progression pattern in the English final reports written by the students carries some significances. First, the zigzag thematic progression as applied assists the learners to smoothly compose the text (Fang & Wang, 2011; Alyousef, 2015) by providing new information to be extended and this will impact to the development of their writing fluency (Alyousef, 2015). In so doing, they prefer to enhance the concepts written through the rhemes of the clauses. Second, by giving the notions to be developed, it will make the text more cohesive due to its cumulative development (ibid).

The dominant finding of zigzag thematic progression in students' final reports is in line with the results of study conducted by Emilia, Habibi, and Bangsa (2018), and this also in accordance with the opinion of Fries (cited in Wang, 2007) claiming that academic writing tends to follow a zigzag or linear theme pattern since the academic text presentations usually consist of complex arguments in which the extension of their notions comes from the previous clauses (ibid).

By this, hence, the writers of the final reports have already applied the writing technique suitably used with the traits of composed work.

Compared to zigzag thematic progression, the findings of iteration thematic progression are fewer. It is found mostly in the fourth data having 19 paragraphs in total (see table 2). Again, as alluded, the number of paragraphs containing the iteration thematic progression is not determined by the sum of paragraphs but it occurred randomly in the data. How the iteration thematic progression is realized in the English final reports can be viewed in the below excerpt. It is one of the instances taken from the second data.

Theme	<u>Rheme</u>
Work Practice ↓	is an activity that must be followed by all students of Academy Secretary and Management <u>Taruna Bakti (ASMTB) Bandung.</u>
Work practice ↓	is implemented for students who have met the requirements set by the institution.
Work practice	is one of the off-campus learning activities as an experience.

This paragraph is written in three clauses. It uses iteration theme pattern identified by the repetition of themes. The theme of the first clause is repeated in the second and third clauses. It is adopted in its entirety without any additions or subtractions. In fact, the verbs of the themes used in those clauses are the same. As seen in the above paragraph, the typical clauses composed are clauses complemented by adjective clauses, especially the first and second clauses. As for the third clause, it is included into a simple clause.

The finding of iteration thematic progression in the data bears several implications. First, by administering it the learners are trying to centralize the topic written by restating it in their composed paragraph (Yunita, 2018). Second, in contrast, by employing it continuously, they will not hone their creative thinking in that they do not attempt to expand the ideas presented in the rheme (Muroda, Madjid, & Jati, 2018). This, to some extent, triggering why the students writing ability is not progressing well.

Contrary to the zigzag and iteration findings, multiple rheme progression is discovered just one case or equals to 4% of the overall data investigated. It is embodied in the third data and if compared to the other data, it includes into median data. Fascinatingly, if compared to the study

conducted by Emilia, Habibi, and Bangga (2018), this finding is not parallel. In their study, the multiple rheme pattern found in the work composed by high achiever students. However, in the present study, this occurred in the median data and apparently it has the most incoherent paragraphs, two incoherent paragraphs, in comparison to the others (see table 3). The finding of paragraph containing multiple rheme pattern can be seen in the below excerpt.

Theme	<u>Rheme</u>
Outgoing mail	is also divided into two kinds, internal outgoing mail and external outgoing mail.
The internal outgoing mails	are made with a mail number according to their respective division numbers.
The outgoing mail of Director	uses outgoing mail number of Director, and the outgoing mail of CMNO using outgoing mail number of CMNO.
However, for external outgoing mail,	it should always use the outgoing mail number of <u>director</u> with director's signature.

The above paragraph embraces four clauses. It utilizes multiple rheme progression diagnosed by the rheme elements of the first clause employed as the themes of the second, third, and fourth clauses. By this, the enhancement of the second, third, and fourth clauses are actually originated from the rheme of the first clause. Therefore, the paragraph will be more intake in term of structure and meaning. Yet, this kind of occurrence is very rare in the data that only found one. Maybe, to some extent, creating this kind of construction is very difficult for the students.

The finding of multiple rheme progression in the data creates some thoughts to consider. First, the student composed it to some degree is able to utilize a complex thought and further she can make use of it well in the foregoing clauses. Second, she can write based on the notions prepared before (Yunita, 2018). Thus, she is a well-planned writer. Finally, on the reverse, the only finding of the paragraph applying multiple rheme progression signified that the majority of the learners whose works investigated is still unable to write a paragraph in which the multiple rheme progression is embodied.

Taken together, the existence of thematic progressions comprising of zigzag, iteration, and multiple signifies that the students have already known how to write an intelligible paragraph. This also can be claimed as a proof that they know how to utilize a suitable writing technique for their work. Therefore, their writing becomes more coherent in term of structure and meaning.

Thematic progressions contributing to the paragraph coherence of English final reports

Based on the results of the analysis and interpretation of theme patterns and progressions described above most of the English final reports composed by the participants are well developed. It means that their works can be comprehended easily. The identified theme patterns build a good theme progression structure and further it directs readers to follow the notions and arguments presented in the composed work. The relationship between theme patterns and theme progression is inseparable since a theme progression is, again, assembled by the theme patterns, without them there will be no theme progression. Furthermore, the solid building of theme progressions manifested and organized in the paragraphs shape a complete unity or coherence of a text (Murcia and Olshtain, 2000). This can be illustrated by the contribution given by the unbroken thematic progression in the paragraphs. Table 3 below highlights the number of findings from the existing paragraphs built from the solid theme progressions. However, table 3 also exhibits the number of incoherence paragraphs.

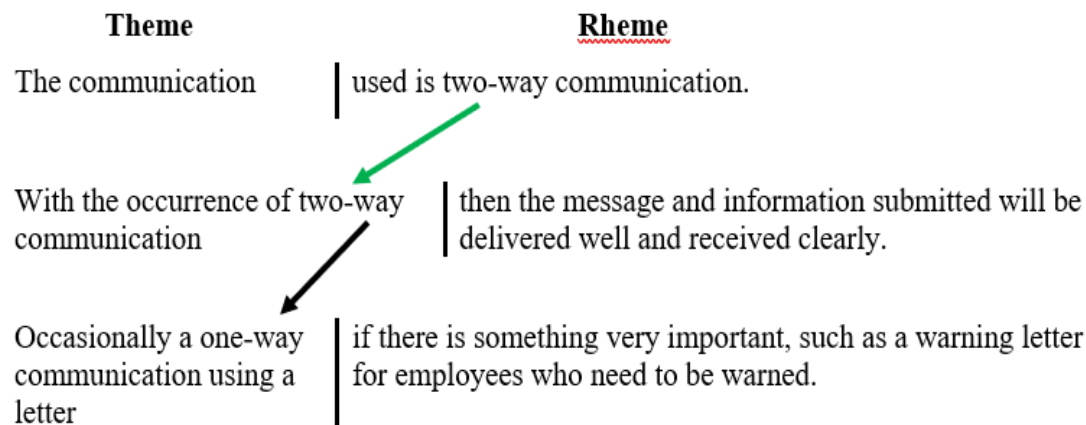
Table 3. The number of occurrences of coherence and incoherence paragraphs

Data	Total paragraphs	Coherent paragraphs	Incoherence paragraphs
1	24	23 or 96%	1 or 4%
2	18	17 or 94%	1 or 6%
3	27	25 or 93%	2 or 7%
4	19	18 or 95%	1 or 5%
5	33	32 or 97%	1 or 3%
6	23	22 or 96%	1 or 4%
Total	144	137 or 95%	7 or 5%

Table 3 displays the overall numbers of paragraphs found in the data of the present study. The most paragraph discovered in the data is 27 and the fewest paragraph is 19. Moreover, there are two types of paragraphs emerging after analyzing the data. The first paragraph is categorized as a coherent paragraph and the second kind is an incoherent paragraph. The first takes almost 95% of

the overall sums of the paragraphs investigated. Conversely, the incoherent paragraphs only numbered less than 5% or equals to one case averagely for every final report investigated.

As illustrated by the table 3 above, most of the paragraphs written are coherence. This coherence can be indicated by the unbroken thematic progressions embodied in the paragraphs. Thus, they form a union which is supporting each other. This can be exemplified in the paragraph presented below. The following excerpt is originated from the first data.



This paragraph is contained of three clauses identified by the three dots closing them. It is considered as a coherent paragraph in that all of the clauses developing it are related closely to each other. It is confirmed by the presence of explicit relations among them. The word communication signals this overt relation. It is continuously applied as the themes among the clauses. By this, it forms a thematic progression characterized as an iteration theme progression. Again, it is illustrated by the theme of the first clause is repeated in the second clause, so does the second is repeated at the third clause.

The finding showing that most of the paragraphs composed by the students in their final reports are in line with Huang Guowen (cited in Guan, 2015) stating that a coherence text is developed by the logical relation of the clauses forming it. Moreover, the coherence paragraphs are signified by the presence of the relationships of the elements of a text in terms of its thematic development, organization of information, or its communicative purpose and these are not merely based on the surface links (Kuo, 1995).

Contrary to the coherence paragraphs, the incoherent paragraphs or in this context termed as broken paragraphs are paragraphs consisting of no explicit relations among their elements. Following is an excerpt taken from the second data.

Theme	<u>Rheme</u>
While studying in this field,	the students are expected to apply various kinds of knowledge obtained in college.
Students	can understand routine tasks as well as special tasks and tasks outside the secretary.

In line with the dynamics of community progress and agencies and changes in development,	the implementation PKL is always tailored to the needs and vision and mission of ASMTB.

The above excerpt, a paragraph, is regarded as consisting of three clauses proven by three periods ending them. If probed detailly, the first and second clauses are still related. It is demonstrated by the word 'students' and it becomes the part of the rheme of the first clause. Then, it is used as the theme in the second clause. Yet, the third clause has no relation with the second or first clauses. It is indicated by no similar words repeated either from the theme or rheme of the first and second clauses. By this circumstance, the overall paragraph is thought to be incoherent or broken since it does not form a unified thematic progression inherent in it. Moreover, the cause of incoherence is triggered by the appearance of a new topic in the third clause causing it not to be well threaded. Again, this resulted in no unity among the clauses written in it.

The above incoherent paragraph is in line with the results of studies done by Astuti, Suryani, and Kurniati (2010) that investigated undergraduate thesis in English Education Department in Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Muria Kudus University. They found that most of the undergraduate thesis examined was incoherence. This supported by the study executed by Tshotsho (2014) that discovered issues related to the application of themes observed in the writings of the students who had not good abilities. The most prominent matter was incoherence illustrated by disjointed sentences and paragraphs. In addition, this is also on the same page with the finding from the study conducted by Muroda, Madjid, & Jati (2018) that disclosed incoherence backgrounds of thesis proposal is caused by the application of a brand-new theme.

In short, the actualization of thematic progressions will give texts a cohesive development. This is manifested in the good organization of the elements of clauses and paragraphs. If this followed, the texts will be more coherent structurally and semantically (Guan, 2015) and

eventually will make students easily identify the frame of the text by identifying important information existing in it (Ghaleasadi, 2012).

Conclusion

Having analyzed and discussed the data in the present study, the researchers can sum up several important findings. First, most of the paragraphs analyzed, averagely 95 percent of them included into coherence paragraphs. Only one or two cases categorized as incoherent paragraphs. This demonstrates that the English final reports written by the students of academy secretary whose works are being scrutinized to some extent fulfill the criteria of good writing. This means that the works can be read due to comprehensive contents seen from the thematic progression patterns. Moreover, this fact has overturned the previous study done by Astuti, Suryani, and Kurniati (2010). Second, the thematic progressions discovered in the data are zigzag, iteration, and multiple. From all of the paragraphs analyzed, the zigzag is the most number discovered and it is followed by the iteration and multiple respectively. By this finding, most of the students generally put the information in a very linear way or in other words they prefer to enhance the concepts written through the rhemes of the clauses. Third, the theme patterns identified are topical and multiple. The topical theme pattern comprises of marked and unmarked. Compared to multiple, the topical themes outnumber it and further, unmarked theme is the most theme pattern disclosed in comparison to marked theme pattern. Eventually, from the thorough investigation of the data performed, it can be inferred that the number of clauses does not determine the sums and types of themes disclosed and the same goes with thematic progressions. This becomes one of the significant findings in the present study.

Implication

This study brings some steps to consider especially in the field of writing final reports in the area of English as a foreign language prevailed in secretarial academies. First, it demonstrates how the theme patterns and their thematic progressions can be used as the media to see whether the addressed paragraphs are coherence or not. Second, from this, it can be taken some measures when supervisors intend to supervise students when writing the final reports in English. If they well understand the flow of the information presented in the English final reports written by the students, the English final report will be much better in terms of theme-rheme presentation as well

as in its thematic progressions (see Fang and Wang, 2011). Finally, the sixth semester students learning in academies of secretary can be introduced to the process of writing in which the theme and thematic progression patterns employed as the focus of the discussions in the learned materials. This, at the end, might give contribution to the enhancement of their paragraph writing.

Future Research Direction

This study only captures the theme and thematic progression patterns in seeing whether the paragraphs written by the students of a secretary academy are jotted down cohesively or not. Focusing on this, it does not embrace the discussion of the selection of lexicogrammatical features resides in them. Therefore, it is suggested that the lexicogrammatical elements are studied in order to fully comprehend how the students of an academy of secretary make meaning in their writing products.

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