

Exploring thematic structures in Indonesian vocational students' descriptive texts

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ABSTRACT

Coherence and cohesion are some aspects that create clarity and readability of genres from academic and workplace contexts. Therefore, ESP teachers need to pay attention to students' abilities in this matter and take quick actions to improve them, such as by conducting a theme system analysis. For this reason, this study aimed to analyze how Indonesian EFL vocational high school students use themes and thematic progression in their descriptive texts. Six texts were analyzed using qualitative content analysis by presenting the frequency analysis of theme choice and thematic progression and creating meaningful inferences through the obtained data. They were obtained through participants who were categorized into low, middle, and high achievers based on their academic performance in ESP class. The results show a discrepancy in the ability to utilize theme choice and thematic progression between participants in the high achiever category and participants from the low and middle achiever categories. Furthermore, this data also found one extended finding in which only 4 out of 6 texts were able to achieve the purpose of descriptive texts. It indicates how some participants have not fully grasped the characteristics of descriptive texts. Therefore, these findings create several pedagogical implications for educational institutions and the Indonesian government.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received

20 June 2022

Published

31 October 2022

KEYWORDS

Theme system analysis;
descriptive texts;
vocational high school

INTRODUCTION

Writing a coherent and cohesive text is not specifically a required ability for students in General English only but also a highly demanded skill for students in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This ability is especially important for vocational high school students, who are educated to be skillful human resources in the workplace. After all, the ability to create a readable means of textual communication with great structure and clarity is highly sought and encouraged in the workplace context. In addition, previous studies also provide more evidence regarding its importance by discovering professionals' perceptions regarding workplace texts. They are mainly concerned with readability and clarity in order to be effectively comprehended (Forey, 2004; Albino, 2017). These aspects are important in engineering because engineers must present their data to avoid miscommunication precisely (Almeida et al., 2020). Besides, engineers were said to spend 20%

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to 40% of their working time writing various workplace genres, such as reports, publications, guidelines, or emails (Beer & McMurrey, 2013). Thus, ESP teachers in vocational high schools need to be aware of this issue, prepare the necessary strategies to recognize students' strengths and weaknesses in writing, and take action based on the results.

One of the ways to distinguish the students' problems and issues in writing is by doing a theme system analysis. Theme system is the realization of the textual metafunction of a language from the perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Fontaine, 2013; Morley, 2000). Utilizing a theme system will allow users to organize their meanings by creating coherent and cohesive patterns between the paragraphs, which is important in creating a comprehensible text (Devira, 2017; Bui, 2022; Rizki et al., 2022). As previously mentioned, it can be seen how coherence and cohesion also become some of the aspects responsible for creating readability and clarity of a text, which is needed in constructing workplace genres. On the contrary, the absence of coherence and cohesion in a text will lead to the inappropriate logical link between meanings in a text, failing to develop locally and globally. Thus, doing theme system analysis is a great step in supporting students' improvement in the future. It will allow teachers to discover students' problems, issues, and current writing abilities and let them take further action. Furthermore, theme system analysis has been previously brought up in several studies in the context of ESP.

Studies involving theme system analysis in the ESP context have been done in the last three decades. It is commonly part of genre analysis where the researchers use corpora to identify patterns of thematization on texts (Green et al., 2000; Hawes & Thomas, 1997; Leong et al., 2018). These studies have generated several implications, such as the effect of markedness in topical themes on how the text is perceived and how it reflects the students' writing ability (Green et al., 2000; Hawes & Thomas, 1997). Another implication is the use of pronouns as the subject of a clause (Leong et al., 2018). Some studies also compared the works of professionals and students to discover students' needs in the workplace context versus the current practice that occurred at the academic level, such as what has been done by Hawes (2015), Chang and Lee (2019), and Khan (2021). It was found that professionals tend to have a balanced use of theme choices and prioritize whole-text coherence by perceiving the text (whether it is spoken or written) as a mode of communication. Even so, the workplace reality is not reflected in the current academic practice because previous studies involving the analysis of students' works found that students tend to overuse certain themes (Chang & Lee, 2019) and thematic progression (Hawes, 2015), which result on problems respectively in achieving the text purpose and the whole text coherence.

In the Indonesian context, Kailani (2017) conducted a study on the same topic among students who majored in nursing in higher education, which implied several things about theme choices and thematic progression. This study found that student theme choice reflects on the nature of the text, such as how interpersonal meaning indicates the text most likely contains opinions rather than facts and how textual meaning indicates a chronological order to organize one's experience. Findings on thematic progression used by students are also aligned with the previous studies (Forey, 2004; Hawes, 2015) and theories (Daneš, 1974; Eggins, 2004) on how the use of simple linear or reiteration patterns reflect the student's ability to create a semantic bond between clauses. Their ability is still considered basic because they have not yet been able to use other higher thematic progression, such as derived themes or multiple theme patterns.

Despite the increasing interest in theme system analysis in the ESP context, the existing previous studies rarely investigate the theme system use of students in secondary education and tend to focus only on higher education students. The disparity of studies between these two participants creates an urgent need for more empirical evidence that can contribute to the improvement of secondary education students in the ESP context. This need is also supported by a suggestion made by Hawes (2015) and Albino (2017), which suggests that future researchers should conduct a study on the topic of theme system analysis in other contexts. For this reason,

this study aimed to fill the population gap by analyzing how Indonesian EFL vocational high school students use themes and thematic progression in their descriptive texts. In order to achieve the research aim, this study has chosen several theories as the basis for establishing the foundation of knowledge of the topic under research.

Coherence and Cohesion

Coherence and cohesion are inseparable grammatical elements to create a text. These elements are often difficult to distinguish due to their unclear boundaries (Bui, 2022). However, there is a way to differentiate them by understanding two important points. First, coherence is related to the context of the situation, which means it is an element that states a text is understandable in terms of semantic and pragmatic meanings (Carter & McCarthy, 2006; Halliday & Hasan, 1976). On the other hand, cohesion is related to how the context of a situation is linked, which means it is an element that states a text has semantic ties that indicate continuity between meaning units (Carter & McCarthy, 2006; Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Understanding how to generate coherence and cohesion in a text is an important ability that assists in daily life, including in workplace and academic contexts. It has been previously mentioned that professionals perceive readability and structure clarity as essential in workplace genres. These aspects can be attained by creating coherence and cohesion in a text, and one of the ways to realize this is by utilizing the theme system effectively. Albino (2017) implies that “teachers in the workplace, and probably elsewhere, can focus learners’ attention on the effective writing of a subject line, staging of a text and choice of Theme to help the EFL learners improve readability (p. 13).”

Theme System

Theme system is the realization of the textual metafunction, one of the important notions in Systemic Functional Linguistics. It constructs one of the textures of a text by creating connectedness between clauses (Fontaine, 2013). It builds the text environment by the use of Theme and Rheme (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The theme is the clausal element containing “given information,” and it orients the readers on what the clause is about. Meanwhile, what comes after the theme is called Rheme, a clausal element containing “new information” that acts as the remainder of the message.

Theme is categorized into three types representing different meanings (Eggins, 2004; Fontaine, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The topical theme represents the experiential meaning and is usually assigned to the first position in a clause. It can be in the form of participants, circumstances, or processes. Next, the interpersonal theme represents the interpersonal meaning by showing the users’ personal judgment or opinion regarding something. It is realized through modal adjuncts, auxiliary verbs, interrogative pronouns, vocative, and unfused finite. Finally, the textual theme represents the textual meaning. It creates continuity and connectedness between ideas through conjunctions, continuatives, and conjunctive adjuncts.

The use of theme and rheme creates several thematic patterns called thematic progression. Eggins (2004) asserted thematic progression happened because of the dynamic and unplanned nature of the discourse. Through thematic progression, the users can show order, hierarchy, and the relationship between themes (Daneš, 1974). As stated by Eggins (2004), Emilia (2014), and Daneš (1974), there are three types of thematic progression that set a certain focus on a text. The first type is known as the zig-zag or simple linear pattern, and it is considered the most elementary basic thematic progression. It builds new information by continuously using rheme as a theme in the next clause. The second type is known as the theme reiteration or constant pattern. As the name suggests, it repeatedly uses one theme in every clause to reinforce focus. To avoid excessive word use, the users can utilize various nouns, nominalizations, or noun phrases that all

refer to that one theme. Lastly, the third type is the multiple theme or derived T pattern. It introduces several new pieces of information that will be explained in the other clauses that come after. If the zig-zag or simple linear pattern is the most basic thematic progression, then the multiple theme or derived T pattern is the most advanced. It indicates the users' ability to create a carefully planned text with better organization and connectedness (Emilia et al., 2018.)

Descriptive Method

Descriptive texts are one of the academic texts that Indonesian EFL students, including vocational high school students, should learn. It is one of the basic competencies stated in the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture number 37 of 2018 that Indonesian students in upper secondary education should master:

3.4 differentiate the social function, the generic structure, and the language features of several spoken and written descriptive texts by giving and asking for information regarding tourist attractions and famous historical buildings, short and simple, according to the contexts of its use (p. 380).

Descriptive texts aim to give information about a thing or a person (Emilia, 2011; Nafisah & Kurniawan, 2007). It consists of two generic structures, namely the general statement and descriptions. The first structure is the general statement, which is used to introduce what is being described in the text. Next, descriptions are used to describe the aspects or characteristics of the topic, such as by utilizing sensory details for describing physical features. According to Emilia (2011), descriptive texts are realized by the use of specific participants, action verbs, linking verbs, present tense, and factual descriptive language. Due to their nature, descriptive texts are often confused with other texts, such as report texts. Hynd and Chase (1991) implied that the nature of this text could be problematic because it is often embedded in other texts but not as the genre that overrides the text. Even so, it needs to be remembered that instead of using specific participants, report texts use general participants to describe a general class of things in detail (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Emilia, 2011).

METHOD

Qualitative content analysis was chosen as the research methodology to answer the research aim of this study. Qualitative content analysis is suitable for understanding the participants' meaning from textual analysis (Forman & Damschroder, 2007; Given, 2008; Krippendorf, 2019). Through this technique, the frequency analysis of theme choices and thematic progression use was obtained and interpreted into meaningful inferences that showed the commonly used units and issues experienced by the participants in writing. Thus, the qualitative content analysis allowed this study to identify the use of theme choices and thematic progression and the context of their use by the participants to generate answers to the research question and create pedagogical implications.

This study involved 36 vocational high school students in the 11th grade from the Industrial Automation Engineering program in Cimahi, West Java, Indonesia. Currently, the participants are using the Emancipated Curriculum and taking English for specific purposes (ESP) as one of the compulsory subjects. Moreover, they have also experienced learning General English for 3 to 4 years, at the very least, in formal education.

In order to attain data that represents students from all academic performances, this study employed purposive sampling by categorizing the participants into low, middle, and high achiever categories. The categorization of participants was based on their overall performance in ESP class according to their ESP teacher. Moreover, the texts involved in this study need to fulfill these criteria: (1) The text should be made by the students, and therefore, there should be no plagiarism

detected; (2) The text is readable and understandable enough with less syntactical ambiguities and inconsistencies; and (3) The text should contain enough information (problems and issues) about the topic under this study.

Components of content analysis by Krippendorff (2018) were adapted to the process of collecting and analyzing the data. The first component is sampling, which was done by following the sampling plans stated above. The second component is reducing by choosing six texts that meet the criteria stated above. The third component is unitizing, which was done by breaking down the texts into clauses. The number of clauses from each text can be seen in Table 2.1 below.

Table 1

Number of Clauses in the Texts

Category	Text	Total
Low-achiever students	1	7
	2	8
Middle-achiever students	3	9
	4	6
High-achiever students	5	18
	6	10

Fourth, the clause units were categorized according to the coding component. This study conducted deductive coding by utilizing predetermined categories taken from the notion of theme choices by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and thematic progression by Eggins (2004). The categories are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Next, the data was analyzed, and the fifth component, inferring, was used to create inferences based on the data obtained while validating it with previous studies and established theories. Lastly, the data went through the sixth component of narrating to attain the answer to the research question and pedagogical implications in the ESP context.

Figure 1

Theme Choice Categories Based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2014)

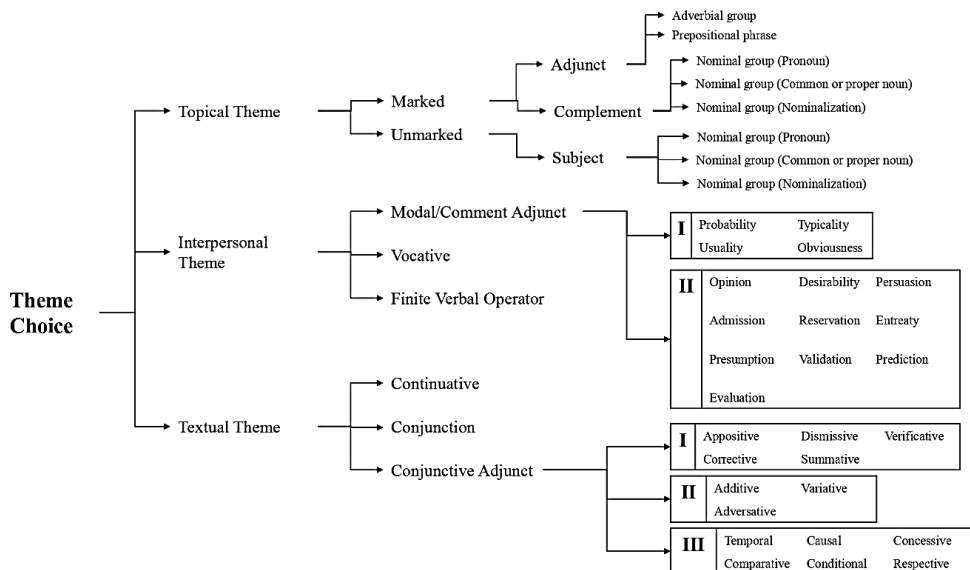
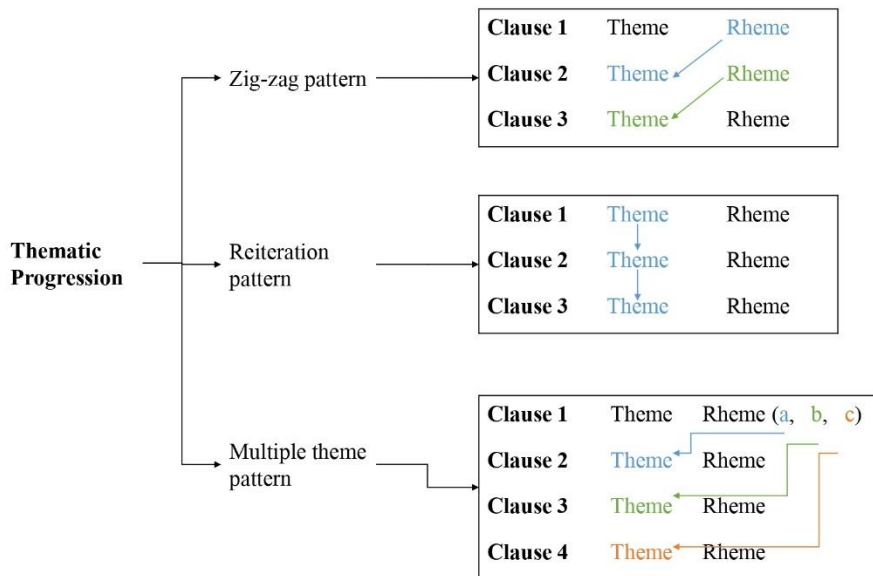


Figure 2

Thematic Progression Categories Based on Eggins (2004)



RESULTS

Theme Choice

After conducting the analysis of six students' descriptive text, it was found that most students have employed various theme choices in their writing, and as can be seen in Table 2, Topical Theme was the type of theme that the students used the most.

Table 2

Overall Participants' Theme Choice Frequency

Category	Text	Totals	Topical Theme		Textual Theme		Interpersonal Theme	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
Low achiever	1	11	9	81.8%	2	18.2%	-	0.0%
	2	11	8	72.7%	3	27.3%	-	0.0%
Middle achiever	3	15	10	66.7%	4	26.7%	1	6.6%
	4	7	6	85.7%	1	14.3%	-	0.0%
High achiever	5	25	19	76.0%	5	20.0%	1	4.0%
	6	13	10	76.9%	3	23.1%	-	0.0%

Based on the findings, the participants mostly employed the topical theme compared to other types of themes. It is specifically frequently used by the low achiever participants, with a percentage mean of 77%. Meanwhile, the second frequently used theme is the textual theme. Similar to the findings for the topical theme, the participants from the low achiever category also became the participants who frequently used the textual theme, with a percentage mean of 22.75%. Lastly, the least used theme type is the interpersonal theme. Unlike the other findings, it is frequently employed by middle achiever participants. However, the data showed that the low-

achiever participants did not use the interpersonal theme in their text. Further explanations regarding the types of themes employed by participants from each academic performance category can be found below.

Topical Theme

The topical theme choice reveals whether the purpose of the participant texts has been achieved or not. It was found that only 4 out of 6 texts succeed in achieving the text's social function. As mentioned in the introduction, descriptive texts are often mistaken for report texts. Descriptive texts are used to describe a specific object in detail rather than to describe something in the general classes. Hence, possessive pronouns (e.g., my, our) and the proper name of something (e.g., pet's or relative's name) are often used as the topical theme. Moreover, this topical theme needs to be further explained in the rheme for its specific features or descriptions, not the general ones.

However, the topical theme for texts 3 and 5 did not reflect these characteristics. Instead, it reflected topical theme use in the form of a proper name followed by general descriptions of it in the rheme. Both used the name of a famous tourist place in Indonesia, namely Mount Bromo and Pangandaran Beach Tour, as the focus of their texts. Rather than writing their perspective on it, the participants explained the topical theme using general facts known by most people. Texts 3 and 5 were made by participants from middle and high achiever categories, respectively.

This mistake may indicate several issues that occurred in teaching descriptive texts. Besides students' lack of understanding of the text, it may also occur due to improper teaching strategy implementation or, even worse, the lack of clarity in the curriculum. The improper implementation may happen because of the teacher, students, or learning sources. Meanwhile, in regards to curriculum, the researcher notices that in the basic competency of descriptive text, as stated in the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture number 37 of 2018, the government is more likely to refer to descriptive report texts rather than descriptive. It is proven by the subjects the government would like the students to describe as follows:

3.4 differentiate the social function, the generic structure, and the language features of several spoken and written descriptive texts by giving and asking for information regarding tourist attractions and famous historical buildings, short and simple, according to the contexts of its use (p. 380).

Thus, it can be seen that Indonesian EFL students are required to be able to describe tourist attractions and famous historical buildings, which makes texts 3 and 5 correct in some sense. However, it needs to be remembered that describing a place, especially a well-known one, is usually done in descriptive report texts. Even if a writer embeds their personal view regarding the subject, it is more likely the text will shift into the recount genre rather than descriptive. For this reason, the researcher assumes the lack of clarity in the current curriculum regarding the descriptive texts may be part of the reasons behind the confusion between descriptive and report texts among Indonesian EFL students.

The markedness of the topical theme also provides insight into the students' writing. Table 3 shows the markedness of the student's writing. The data revealed that the participants most frequently used the unmarked theme rather than the marked theme. These unmarked themes were in the form of nouns (e.g., the visitors), personal pronouns (e.g., I, you), proper names (e.g., Indonesia), and noun phrases (e.g., my room, my duties). Meanwhile, the marked themes were positioned as the adjunct, expressed through prepositional phrases (e.g., in my room, every day) and relative pronouns (e.g., which, where, that).

The markedness of the topical theme contributes to how the 'given' information is introduced. According to Hawes and Thomas (1997), the lack of certain marked theme types can lead to a text being perceived as dull. Even so, some researchers also added the overuse of marked themes would negatively impact the text. It leads to the 'given' information being

excessively loudly announced (Green et al., 2000) and indicates the users excessively focus on the structure rather than communicate their meanings (Khan et al., 2021).

Table 3
The Markedness Frequency of the Topical Theme

Markedness	Low achiever		Middle achiever		High achiever		Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Marked							
Complement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Adjunct	2	1	2	1	5	2	16
Unmarked							
Subject	5	7	7	5	13	8	42

Therefore, in accordance with the previous studies, it can be seen that the imbalance between marked and unmarked topical themes in the data does not contribute positively to the participants' text. Instead, the overuse of the unmarked theme shows how the participants are still unable to consider abstract concerns (e.g., adjunct and complement as the topical theme) and put too much attention to the concrete objects (subject as the topical theme). It resulted in a less engaging text from the readers' perspective.

Interpersonal Theme

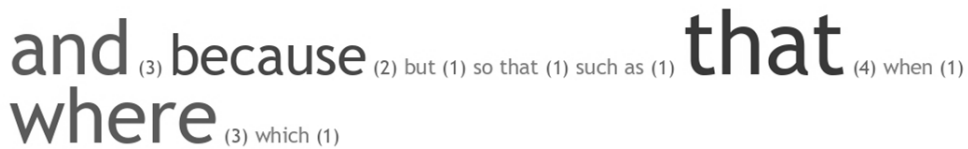
Of the 82 themes found in six texts, only two interpersonal themes were found in the participants' texts. These interpersonal themes were in the form of modal adjuncts, namely the word particularly (typicality) and the phrase as the name implies (obviousness). It is used by middle and high-achiever participants, respectively. However, two low-achiever participants did not employ the interpersonal theme.

Based on previous studies and established theories, the interpersonal theme can reflect various things about the text and the users. For instance, Eggins (2004) asserted that scientific writing rarely has an interpersonal theme because of its nature, which requires more facts than writers' opinions. Additionally, previous studies support Eggins' statement by finding how the use of interpersonal themes is closely related to the text types (Chang & Lee, 2019; Kailani, 2017).

For this reason, the lack of interpersonal themes used by the participants may be due to the nature of descriptive texts. After all, descriptive texts do not require the writers to add much of their personal opinion or judgment compared to other genres, such as argumentative texts. Therefore, it can be said that the participants have already correctly employed the interpersonal theme in their texts. Despite that, the absence of interpersonal theme use in low-achiever participants needs to be further investigated. However, it may indicate that the participants do not necessarily see the importance of interpersonal themes in their texts. It may also indicate that they are not exposed enough to the interpersonal theme or are unable to utilize it for several reasons, such as a lack of understanding.

Textual Theme

It can be seen from Figure 3 how the participants mostly used hypotactic conjunctions (e.g., because, which, when, that, where). The second most commonly used textual theme is paratactic conjunctions (e.g., and, but, so that). And the least used textual theme is conjunctive adjuncts (e.g., such as). As mentioned above, the low achiever participants have the highest percentage mean in textual theme use, which is 22.75%. It is followed by the high (percentage mean of 21.55%) and middle (percentage mean of 20.5%) achiever participants.

Figure 3*Wordcloud of the Textual Theme Frequency*

The textual theme represents textual meanings and is used to connect ideas between clauses. It is especially used in a text that needs to explain something in chronological order (Kailani, 2017). Examples of texts that have this characteristic are procedure and explanation texts. Besides that, the textual theme can also be used to add clarity, such as by adding adversative conjunctions to show two contrasting views in argumentative texts (Chang & Lee, 2019).

Therefore, the researcher assumed that the reason behind the lack of a textual theme is similar to the use of interpersonal themes, which are closely related to text types. Since a descriptive text does not explain stages or present various points of view, it does not require to have many textual themes to create connectedness between clauses. However, the textual theme use under the percentage of 20%, which occurred in low and middle-achiever participants, is a dangerous line that needs to be investigated further. After all, not paying attention to the textual theme, such as connectives, may indicate students' inability to construct meanings of a text as a whole because they are focusing too much on the syntactical meanings.

Thematic Progression

Regarding the thematic progression use, the participants only employed the reiteration and zig-zag patterns. Between these two patterns, the zig-zag pattern was frequently used by participants from the middle and higher achiever participants. Those from the low achiever category either used it evenly between the zig-zag and reiteration patterns or only used the reiteration pattern (see Table 4).

Table 4*Thematic Progression Frequency*

Category	Text	TOTALS	Reiteration Pattern (RP)		Zig-zag Pattern (ZP)		Multiple Theme Pattern (MTP)	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
Low achiever	1	2	2	100.0%	-	0.0%	-	0%
	2	4	2	50.0%	2	50.0%	-	0%
Middle achiever	3	5	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	-	0%
	4	3	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	-	0%
High achiever	5	11	4	36.4%	7	63.6%	-	0%
	6	5	2	40.0%	3	60.0%	-	0%

The low achiever participants are found to employ less variance of thematic progression. In text 1, the participant only used the reiteration pattern two times when there were seven clauses (see Figure 4). Meanwhile, the participant who created text 2 only used thematic progression four times when the text consisted of eight clauses (see Figure 5). Unlike text 1, text 2 did not employ one pattern for all clauses but switched from reiteration to zig-zag patterns between clauses.

On the other hand, participants from the middle achiever category have more variance in thematic progression, but it is less compared to high achiever participants. From Figure 6, text 3 employed thematic progressions five times when there were nine clauses. However, it overused

the zig-zag pattern by having a ratio of 4:1 with the reiteration pattern. Meanwhile, text 4 employed thematic progressions three times between six clauses and switched from reiteration to zig-zag patterns (see Figure 7).

Figure 4

The Thematic Progression of Text 1

Paragraph 1		
Clause 1	-	<u>My room</u> is under the middle of the house. ↓
Clause 2	RP	<u>My (My) room</u> is Painted cream color. ↓
Clause 3	-	<u>my (My) bed</u> is small enough for me
Clause 4	-	and <u>everyday</u> (<i>every day</i>) <u>I</u> sleep in it.
Clause 5	-	<u>my (My) room</u> is also affixed with a sticker along with the <u>lessan</u> (<i>lesson</i>) schedule.
Clause 6	-	in (<i>In</i>) my room <u>there</u> is a flower display that can add to the beauty (<i>of the room</i>) when (<i>being</i>) looking at
Clause 7	RP	and <u>there</u> is also a study table for me to do my assignments always at the table.

Figure 5

The Thematic Progression of Text 2

Paragraph 1		
Clause 1	-	<u>I</u> m (<i>I am</i>) a technician, ↓
Clause 2	RP	<u>I</u> work in PLN (<i>adding a period (.) or a coordinating conjunction</i>)
Clause 3	-	<u>my duties as a technician</u> started from taking care the writing system, repairing a panel, set a PLC and (<i>incomplete</i>)
Clause 4	RP	<u>I</u> love <u>my job</u> very much, ↓
Clause 5	ZP	because <u>it</u> is my passion.
Clause 6	-	<u>I</u> will learn more about <u>everything</u> ↓
Clause 7	ZP	<u>which</u> is related to my job,
Clause 8	-	so that <u>I</u> can (<i>be</i>) an expert someday.

Figure 6*The Thematic Progression of Text 3*

Paragraph 1		
Clause 1	-	<u>Indonesia</u> sits on the Ring of fire, an area with <u>some of the most active volcanoes</u> in the world.
Clause 2	ZP	<u>Many of the (this) country's volcanoes</u> , such as Mount Merapi, are <u>famous for their violent eruptions and their stunning, but dangerous beauty</u> .
Paragraph 2		
Clause 3	ZP	<u>Mount Bromo</u> is among the best know, thank <u>largely (largely)</u> to <u>its incredible views</u> .
Clause 4	ZP	particularly <u>when</u> seen standing over (above) the caldera at sunrise.
Clause 5	-	<u>Bromo's peak</u> was blown off in an eruption,
Clause 6	-	and <u>you</u> can still see white smoke spewing from the mountain.
Paragraph 3		
Clause 7	-	<u>The volcano</u> is part of <u>Bromo Tangger Semeru National park</u> .
Clause 8	ZP	<u>which</u> also includes Mount Semeru. The highest peak in Java.
Clause 9	RP	<u>The park</u> is home to the <u>Tengger</u> people, an isolated ethnic group who trace their ancestry back to the ancient <u>Majapahit</u> empire.

Figure 7*The Thematic Progression of Text 4*

Paragraph 1		
Clause 1	-	<u>My room</u> is in (on the) first floor, next to my mom's room.
Clause 2	RP	<u>My room</u> is painted light yellow.
Clause 3	-	<u>There</u> is (a) <u>small bed</u> inside my room
Clause 4	ZP	<u>where</u> I sleep everyday (every day).
Clause 5	-	I put <u>some pictures</u> on top of my cupboard.
Clause 6	ZP	<u>There (They)</u> are my family picture, my picture with my friends and my pictures with my pet, Afbas Wick, a <u>persian</u> cat.

As previously mentioned, high achiever participants have the most variance in thematic progression out of all participants. Text 5 employed thematic progression eleven times between eighteen clauses and continuously switched them after using a pattern 1-2 times (see Figure 8). The switch between patterns made the text 5 less monotonous to read. Lastly, as displayed in Figure 9, thematic progression was employed five times between ten clauses and switched from the reiteration to the zig-zag pattern two times.

Figure 8
The Thematic Progression of Text 5

Paragraph 1		
Clause 1	-	<u>Pangandaran beach</u> is a famous tourist attraction in west Java.
Clause 2	RP	<u>This beach</u> is located in the eastern area of west Java.
Clause 3	RP	<u>This beach</u> offers <u>beautiful views, black sand, and clear water</u>
Clause 4	ZP	<u>that</u> stretches out as far as the eye can see.
Paragraph 2		
Clause 5	-	On the left of the beach <u>there</u> is a place called <u>white sand</u> .
Clause 6	ZP	<u>White sand</u> is the prima donna of tourism on pangandaran (<i>Pangandaran</i>) beach.
Clause 7	RP	As the name implies, <u>this place</u> has white sand, small corals, and <u>clear water</u> .
Clause 8	ZP	<u>(It is) so clear</u>
Clause 9	ZP	<u>(that)</u> we can see the coral reefs on the seabed and also the fish swimming.
Paragraph 3		
Clause 10	-	<u>Many tourist who visit</u> choose to snorkel
Clause 11	RP	because <u>they</u> want to enjoy the beauty of the underwater world.
Clause 12	-	<u>This white sand</u> is still the same area as the <u>pangandaran (<i>Pangandaran</i>) nature reserve</u> .
Clause 13	ZP	<u>A beautiful area with residents there, namely monkeys</u> , will welcome tourist from inside the nature reserve.
Clause 14	-	<u>The caves filled with history and beaches from the nature reserve</u> (<i>are</i>) the main destinations on a trip in this nature reverse.
Paragraph 4		
Clause 15	-	<u>This nature tourism</u> is never empty of <u>visitors</u> , especially during long holidays.
Clause 16	ZP	<u>The visitors</u> play in the sand, swim, go around the <u>tourist attractions</u>
Clause 17	ZP	<u>that</u> are there or just take pictures with the beach background.
Clause 18	-	<u>That's</u> (<i>That is</i>) pangandaran beach. (<i>adding a comma (,)</i>) The (<i>the</i>) most beautiful beach in west Java.

Figure 9*The Thematic Progression of Text 6*

Paragraph 1		
Clause 1	-	<u>My room</u> is in first floor, next to my parent's (<i>parents'</i>) room.
Clause 2	RP	<u>My room</u> is painted white.
Clause 3		<u>There</u> is (<i>a</i>) <u>big bed</u> inside my room
Clause 4	ZP	<u>where</u> I sleep every day.
Clause 5	-	I put some <u>laptop</u> on my desk.
Clause 6	ZP	<u>It's</u> (<i>It is</i>) <u>my</u> and my brothers (<i>brothers'</i>) laptop.
Clause 7	-	I also have <u>drawers</u>
Clause 8	ZP	<u>where</u> I put all my clothes inside.
Clause 9	-	<u>My room</u> is not big,
Clause 10	RP	but <u>it</u> is the best place in my house for me.

The analysis of thematic progression used in the data is aligned with previous studies. Students in the secondary level of education, especially those belonging to low and middle-achiever categories, tend to utilize reiteration and zig-zag patterns more than the multiple themes (Emilia et al., 2018; Noprianto, 2017). As mentioned in the introduction, the reiteration pattern is the most basic thematic progression that keeps a clear focus on a subject. However, it cannot give a sense of cumulative development as the zig-zag pattern does (Eggins, 2004). Even so, the zig-zag pattern cannot be categorized as the thematic progression that best explains the users' advanced writing ability.

As stated in the introduction, the multiple-theme pattern is a higher-level thematic pattern that indicates an advanced writing level. Consequently, it also requires the user to possess a high level of maturity in writing. Issues found in thematic progression use also give more evidence regarding students' ability to organize meanings. It is because the lack of advanced thematic progression use indicates similar things to what is reflected from the lack of textual theme use, which is the users' inability to consider the whole-text coherence and excessive focus on local cohesion (Hawes, 2015). Moreover, Jalilifar (2010) also added how thematic progression reflects the language proficiency of the users. Hence, the absence of the multiple theme pattern in the data is more likely to imply the participants' writing level has not yet reached maturity, especially in terms of organizing meanings.

Additionally, the data showed that participants from the high achiever category tend to be more skilled in utilizing thematic progression compared to other participants. They neither lack nor overuse the patterns and occasionally switch them without messing up the text focus. According to research conducted by Green, Christopher, and Mei (2000), an attempt to excessively switch between thematic patterns results in a frequent change of information, which

leads to the loss of text focus by rapidly giving 'new' information. This fact showed that there was a discrepancy in the ability to use thematic progression between the participants. Similar to the previously mentioned issues, it is better to investigate the roots of the problem further and take action based on it. After all, thematic progression is an important aspect of the cohesion and coherence of a text. Overall, the findings of this study can be summarized below.

1. The topical theme is the most frequently used, followed by the textual and topical themes. It may happen because the nature of descriptive texts does not require many personalized views of the writer to be embedded in the text.
2. From analyzing the topical theme, it can be seen only 4 out of 6 texts could achieve the descriptive texts' social function. The researcher assumes two factors contribute to this mistake: (1) Improper implementation of teaching strategies and (2) The lack of clarity in the current curriculum on what classifies a descriptive text.
3. There is an imbalance in the use of marked and unmarked themes from participants in all ranges of academic performances. This indicates that they are more focused on concrete beings than abstract ones.
4. Middle and high-achiever participants have correctly used the interpersonal theme in their texts. However, the absence of the interpersonal theme in low achiever participants' texts needs to be investigated further because it may happen due to the lack of exposure or lack of understanding of interpersonal theme use.
5. High achiever participants have employed textual themes for more than 20% of their theme choices, which is considered to be sufficient in representing connectedness in descriptive texts. Even so, some low- and middle-achieving participants have failed to achieve this percentage, and the researcher suggests that the school conduct further investigation into why this phenomenon could happen.
6. Participants from all ranges of academic performance only employed zig-zag and reiteration patterns, which reflects their writing ability that has not yet reached maturity. On the other hand, high-achiever participants showed more variance in thematic progression use, followed by middle and low-achiever participants.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has conducted a theme system analysis of six texts written by Indonesian EFL vocational high school students in Cimahi. The texts are descriptive text, which is a part of the basic competencies eleventh graders need to attain. They are taken from participants in three categories of academic performance: low, middle, and high achievers. The data were obtained through qualitative content analysis using predetermined categories involving theme choice and thematic progression.

The findings reveal participants' problems and issues regarding the theme system use and one extended finding regarding the inability to achieve the text purpose. In regards to theme choice, all participants are seen to be struggling to balance the use of all theme types. For instance, the participants either used too many or too few marked themes in their text. Overall, high achiever participants have used interpersonal and textual themes accordingly. However, some participants in the rest of the categories used less or none of them. Meanwhile, all participants were not able to use higher thematic progression. However, participants from the high achiever category have shown their capability to put more variation in their thematic patterns than other participants. Lastly, the extended finding found in the data is that two texts failed to achieve the text purpose and were seen to confuse descriptive texts with report texts.

Thereby, the data show several pedagogical implications addressed to all vocational high schools and the Indonesian government. For the vocational high school, the findings of this study show that ESP students are still struggling to utilize the correct theme and put variation in

connecting their ideas with thematic progression. Although SFL, especially functional grammar, is not explicitly taught at the upper secondary education level, it is important to expose students to this matter indirectly. This can be done by giving students more examples and trying to dissect them, just as happened in the stage of Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF) in the Genre-Based approach. Besides that, it is suggested to check their understanding by giving them more writing practice and guiding them through giving feedback. As for the Indonesian government, a detailed description of descriptive texts needs to be added to the regulation so it would not get confused with descriptive reports or report texts. Additionally, creating a curriculum for Indonesian vocational high schools, which adds more consideration to developing students' writing skills, is highly suggested.

The researcher is also aware of this study's limitations and has recommendations for future research on theme analysis in the ESP context. This study is only based on textual analysis and can only represent the results that appeared in the text. For future research, adding more qualitative instruments such as interviews and questionnaires is recommended to gain more insight into students' personal views about their problems and issues. Besides, future research can also conduct theme system analysis in other text types in different contexts, such as job application letters that are highly important for vocational high school students.

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