



East African Journal of Education Studies

eajes.eanso.org

Volume 7, Issue 4, 2024

Print ISSN: 2707-3939 | Online ISSN: 2707-3947

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-3947>

EASO
EAST AFRICAN
NATURE &
SCIENCE
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

A Discourse Analysis Perspective of Thematic Structure and Thematic Progression in Students' Written Narrative Texts: A Case of Mjimpya Secondary School Students in Morogoro Municipality

Julius Eustace^{1*} & Dr. Godfrey Muganda, PhD¹

¹ Muslim University of Morogoro, P. O. Box 1031 Morogoro, Tanzania.

* Author for Correspondence Email: JuliusEustace1983@gmail.com

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.7.4.2419>

Date Published: **ABSTRACT**

17 November 2024

Keywords:

*Theme,
Rheme,
Thematic Structure,
Thematic Progression,
Narrative Text.*

The study investigated the thematic structure and thematic progression in students' written narrative texts. Specifically, it analysed types of themes and identified types of thematic progression patterns employed in students' written narrative texts. It also examined the implications of the theme and thematic progression pattern's predominance in students' written narrative texts. 85 participants were selected from among Form Three and Form Four students. Data was collected using the closed test and documentary reviews. Data was coded and analysed using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Thematic Progression (TP) theories by Halliday, Mathiessen, and Danes respectively. The findings indicated that students employed the taxonomy of four types of themes in their narrative texts: topical theme, textual theme, interpersonal theme, and macro theme. The topical theme was predominantly used followed by textual theme and interpersonal theme. The findings also revealed the taxonomy of seven types of thematic progression patterns in students' written narrative texts, namely: constant pattern, zigzag pattern, and multiple patterns, constant-zigzag or zigzag-constant, constant-zigzag-multiple, zigzag-multiple, and constant macro pattern. The constant pattern was predominantly used followed by a zigzag pattern and then multiple patterns. The predominance of topical themes and constant thematic progression patterns implied that students tended to rely on thematic selections like topical themes and constant which seem simpler to use rather than textual themes, interpersonal themes, zigzag patterns and multiple patterns, all of which seem complex for students since they need advanced and sophisticated knowledge and skills to apply these thematic structures and progression patterns in their texts. Thus, students' dependence on simple thematic selections indicates a lack of knowledge or ability to use complex thematic structures and thematic progression patterns in their written narrative texts while these thematic structures have a crucial role in their writing. Therefore, a systematic approach to teaching thematic selections is crucial. The findings of the current study contribute to the body of knowledge on thematic structure and progression in academic writing due to the detailed taxonomy of thematic structure and progression patterns revealed in this study. The study recommends that educational planners and implementers ensure that the theory of thematic structure and thematic progression are systematically integrated into the teaching and learning of writing activities from lower levels of education, specifically secondary education. Further, the study recommends further research in this area

to use different approaches, genres and respondents from different settings such as advanced-level secondary school students.

APA CITATION

Eustace, J. & Muganda, G. (2024). A Discourse Analysis Perspective of Thematic Structure and Thematic Progression in Students' Written Narrative Texts: A Case of Mjimpya Secondary School Students in Morogoro Municipality. *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 7(4), 588-598. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.7.4.2419>

CHICAGO CITATION

Eustace, Julius and Godfrey Muganda. 2024. "A Discourse Analysis Perspective of Thematic Structure and Thematic Progression in Students' Written Narrative Texts: A Case of Mjimpya Secondary School Students in Morogoro Municipality". *East African Journal of Education Studies* 7 (4), 588-598. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.7.4.2419>

HARVARD CITATION

Eustace, J. & Muganda, G. (2024) "A Discourse Analysis Perspective of Thematic Structure and Thematic Progression in Students' Written Narrative Texts: A Case of Mjimpya Secondary School Students in Morogoro Municipality", *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 7(4), pp. 588-598. doi: 10.37284/eajes.7.4.2419

IEEE CITATION

J. Eustace & G. Muganda "A Discourse Analysis Perspective of Thematic Structure and Thematic Progression in Students' Written Narrative Texts: A Case of Mjimpya Secondary School Students in Morogoro Municipality" *EAJES*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 588-598, Nov. 2024. doi: 10.37284/eajes.7.4.2419.

MLA CITATION

Eustace, Julius & Godfrey Muganda. "A Discourse Analysis Perspective of Thematic Structure and Thematic Progression in Students' Written Narrative Texts: A Case of Mjimpya Secondary School Students in Morogoro Municipality". *East African Journal of Education Studies*, Vol. 7, no. 4, Nov. 2024, pp. 588-598, doi:10.37284/eajes.7.4.2419

INTRODUCTION

Thematic progression is saving a vital role across several education sectors, particularly in academic writing (Jing, 2015; Xiao, 2017 & Saeed et al., 2021). Thematic progression is used as a tool for facilitating cohesiveness and coherence in students' academic writing (Xiao, 2017). According to Devira et al., (2020), Liu and Zhang (2018), and Saeed et al. (2021), there are three main patterns of thematic progression which include: reiteration pattern, zigzag pattern and multiple patterns. Theme reiteration is the thematic progression pattern that involves taking the previous theme and repeating it as the next theme. It is a simple way to maintain focus and cohesion in a passage. This pattern helps to connect the ideas and maintain continuity. The Zigzag theme is another thematic progression pattern where an element introduced in the rheme of the previous clause is promoted to become the theme of the next clause. This pattern creates a back-and-forth movement between the rheme and the theme, establishing a connection between related ideas. Multiple patterns are the thematic progression pattern where the rheme of one clause introduces multiple pieces of information, and each piece is then developed as the theme in subsequent clauses. This pattern allows for the expansion and exploration of various related ideas within the text.

Contrary, Njobvu (2022) identified four types of thematic progression patterns: simple linear, constant, derived hyper thematic pattern, and split progression.

Generally, researchers across the world revealed the use of thematic progression in teaching and learning writing activities was little. For instance, China, Indonesia and Zambia stated difficulties with thematic progression in writing activities (Njobvu, 2022). Bonhnacker (2010) in Wei (2015) stated that "there has remained little more than theoretical advice as to how teachers could apply the theory of thematic progression". Thus, this insufficiency might impact the utilization and usefulness of thematic progression as a means for teaching and learning successful writing. Therefore, encouraging the significant use of thematic progression in academic writing activities worldwide is fundamental.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Thematic progression in academic writing and in other fields has been researched by different scholars across the world (e.g. Almurashi, 2016; Devira et al., 2020; Kuo, 2016; Kuswoyo, 2016; Liu & Zhang, 2018; Saeed et al., 2021; Susilowati et al., 2022; Utomo et al., 2020 and Xiao, 2017). Susilowati et al. (2022) conducted a descriptive qualitative study to

investigate the use of theme-rheme development and thematic progression patterns in research articles as well as their relationship in producing textual coherence. The findings of the study showed that the connection between theme and rheme development and thematic progression pattern influences the logical connection of clauses to produce coherent texts.

Saeed et al. (2021) conducted an experimental research design with forty university graduates by analyzing their argumentative essays to find out if the teaching of cohesion and coherence improves essay writing. The research findings revealed that the thematic progression approach assisted students improve the quality of their writing since the experimental group with twenty participants improved while the control group with twenty participants underperformed.

Saeed et al. (2021), and Xiao (2017) examined whether theme and rheme and thematic progression are successful methods of topic development in EAP discourse and the study revealed that theme and rheme serve as the building bricks for textual cohesion and coherence. The study recommended that the theme, rheme and thematic progression patterns will have a positive impact if they are introduced in class to help students create effective and successful texts.

In the African context, studies revealed little use of thematic progression as a tool for teaching successful and effective writing in the academic sector. In South Africa, a study by Panamah and Sharndama (2013) explains that one of the problems of writing both in and outside academic settings is the structuring or packing of information by the writer. Poor structuring and packaging of the information that the writer wants to convey to the target audience results in communication breakdown. Supportively, a study by Njobvu (2022) commented that thematic progression in written discourse is essential in structuring cohesive and coherent texts. Thus, all students need to be exposed to the knowledge of thematic progression. Therefore, this limited use of thematic progression in academic writing tasks accentuates the necessity for examining the thematic progression in students'

written narrative texts to improve its application for academic writing.

In East Africa, Enyi and Orji (2018) investigated how Ngugi, an African writer, used lexical tools to create cohesion and coherence and how this led to the meaning of his non-fiction essay. The study reported a positive contribution of thematic progression in developing textual coherence and recommended the systemic teaching of cohesive devices at all levels of education. The study is important to the present study as the researcher gained insights into how themes are introduced, developed, and resolved within a narrative framework. However, the findings found by analysing the story or novel written by a professional figure like Ngugi would not reflect the way secondary school students apply theme-rheme theory and thematic progression in their narratives. Hence, the present study filled this intellectual gap by analysing SWNT as raw data to gain the real picture.

In the Tanzanian context, prevailing literature revealed little use of thematic progression in academic writings (Mushi & Nkya, 2018; Komba & Katundu, 2021). Factors such as teachers concentrating much on teaching writing through grammar rather than discourse analysis hinder the integration of thematic progression in teaching and learning writing activities, consequently, leading to serious less cohesive and coherent academic writings. Mwakasaka (2016) investigated thematic progression patterns in political speeches delivered by former Tanzanian president Jakaya Kikwete to describe how thematic progression patterns develop speech cohesion and coherence. The research used Halliday and Matthiessen's model of theme rhyme to analyse a corpus of speeches. The study revealed that President Jakaya Kikwete tended to use textual thematic structure, meaning that themes were developed gradually throughout the speech leading to cohesion and coherence of the speech. Lastly, the study recommended that theme-rheme progression structure and thematic progression patterns play a significant role in ensuring that cohesion and coherence of the speech are achieved.

Komba and Katundu's (2021) study on thematic progression in research articles used the concept of

theme-rheme theory to examine how themes are introduced, developed and connected throughout research articles. The study revealed that both linguistics and education research articles exhibited simple linear, multiple and mixed progression patterns. However, the difference was noted in the types of themes used in the two fields whereby education articles used themes related to teaching and learning whereas Linguistics articles used themes related to language description and analysis. Finally, the research recommended that further research is still needed in different research articles from different domains as well as on the relationship and other features of academic writing including argumentation. Therefore, this study intends to examine thematic progression in students' written narrative texts from Mjimpya Secondary School in Morogoro Municipality, Morogoro.

METHODOLOGY

The present study employed a descriptive qualitative design that falls under the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Thematic Progression Theory by utilizing a discourse analysis approach. The research was conducted in Mjimpya Secondary School from Morogoro Municipality with a total sample of 85 forms three and four. Both purposive sampling and simple random sampling were used to select the streams or classes and the participants respectively. The researcher collected

the data using both a closed-test method and a documentary review. In this approach, the data collection process involved providing coupons to students. Each coupon contained a predefined and specific topic.

In analysing the data for this study, the researcher employed the thematic structure framework proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), and the thematic progression theory by Danes (1974). The data analysis process followed five steps. Firstly, the texts' images were scanned and presented in chapter four. Secondly, the texts were carefully read to ensure mastery of the content. After careful reading, the texts were coded to enable the researcher to identify clauses in each text. Furthermore, the researcher used symbols such as Th1, Th2, Th3 and Rh1, Rh2, Rh3 and so forth for themes and rhemes respectively. Moreover, the researcher used the horizontal arrows to demarcate the theme and rheme of a given clause. Lastly, the researcher used upside-down arrows to indicate constant patterns and oblique arrows for zigzag and multiple patterns. The analysis revealed three basic thematic progression patterns as indicated in Table 3.1. Other four types of patterns such as constant-zigzag or zigzag-constant, constant-zigzag-multiple, zigzag-multiple, and constant macro patterns were revealed as the result of a combination of more than one pattern.

Table 3: Three Basic Thematic Progression Patterns in SWNT

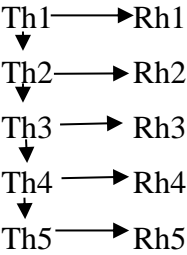
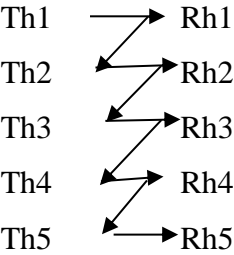
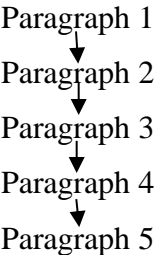
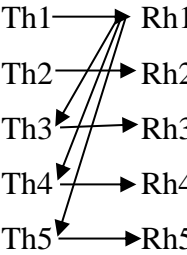
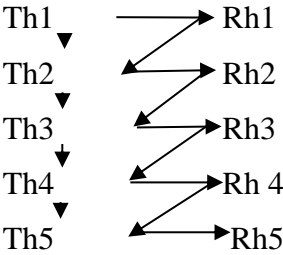
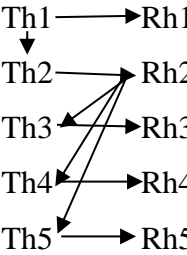
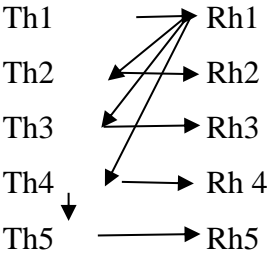
Constant Pattern	Zigzag Pattern	Multiple Pattern
3	1	10
7	2	
12	5	
11	8	
10	5	14
12	14	
8	4	8
4	3	
5	2	
72	44	32

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified an extensive taxonomy of seven different thematic progression patterns. These include constant patterns, zigzag patterns, multiple

patterns, constant-zigzag patterns or zigzag-constant patterns, zigzag-multiple-constant patterns, and constant-macro patterns. These patterns are clearly represented by the figures in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4: Thematic Progression Patterns in SWNT.

Figure 4.1 Constant Pattern	Figure 4.2 Zigzag Pattern	Figure 4.7 Constant Macro Pattern
		
Figure 4.3 Multiple Pattern	Figure 4.4 Constant-Zigzag Pattern	
		
Figure 4.5 Constant-Zigzag-Multiple	Figure 4.6 Zigzag-Multiple-Constant	
		

Constant Thematic Progression Pattern

Based on Table 3, the present study found that the constant thematic progression pattern was predominantly employed in the SWNT. The patterns occurred 72 times followed by zigzag and multiple patterns. The extract below indicates this pattern. It is also represented in Figure 4

“Khadija Binti Kamba was a girl who played a big role in making sure that Tanganyika got her independence. Khadija started entering in political activities when she was very young. She was 19 years old. She enters in political activities influenced by another lady Bibi Titi Mohamed...” (Extracted from Text 23)

The extract above indicates that the theme ‘Khadija Binti Kamba’ is used as the theme of the subsequent clauses in the student’s narrative text. The theme is repeated by the equivalent personal pronoun ‘she’ so as to avoid monotony or repetition. This is a typical feature of a constant progression pattern. The constant patterns help the writers keep and maintain the focus of the texts. This finding conforms to earlier studies (Devira et al., 2020; Njobvu, 2022; Utomo et al., 2020; Yunita, 2018; Dewi et al., 2019; Pasaribu et al., 2019; and Suwandi, 2016) which found that the constant pattern was the dominant pattern. Contrary, the finding deviates from Sukawatie (2018) who found the multiple patterns to be the most used pattern in third-grade students’

writing as well as Xiangyun and Xiaolan (2020) who identified the zigzag pattern as the leading pattern in journalism texts.

The similarity of findings among several researchers indicates that the constant thematic progression pattern is the most preferred pattern applied by students while structuring their narrative texts. This is attributed to the fact that the pattern is simpler than other patterns as it enables students to maintain the focus of the text throughout. In addition, a constant thematic progression pattern was applied at the paragraph level or in consecutive clauses in a particular text. Constant macro pattern incidences were noted in text 73.

Zigzag Thematic Progression Pattern

Table 3 revealed that students demonstrated the use of the zigzag pattern which occurred 44 times in the SWNT. The pattern is clearly represented in Figure 4.2. The extract below illustrates this pattern

“And when he asked his father for the pocket money. The father told him that he has no money. And he will never have some money for him. Choko started to cry and apologize to his father and promised he will never be lazy anymore...” (Extracted from Text 32)

From the extract, the rheme ‘his father’ from the first clause is picked and used as the theme ‘the father’. Similarly, the rheme ‘he’ in the second clause is promoted as theme ‘and he’ in clause 3. The same applies to rheme 3 ‘for him’ is used as the theme ‘Choko’ in clause 4. This pattern, where the piece of information from the rheme is picked and used as the theme in the subsequent clause maintains cohesion and coherence of the texts. In other words, the zigzag pattern is a method for maintaining text cohesion as it establishes a cross-referential relationship between the rheme and the following theme which eventually directs the reader through the narrative. However, its incidences are also revealed at the paragraph level or in consecutive clauses in almost all the SWNT except texts.

The findings resonate with Utomo et al. (2020) who identified the zigzag pattern as the second most dominant pattern in students' descriptive texts. Similarly, Njobvu (2022) revealed the second position of the zigzag pattern after constant patterns

in students' argumentative and expository essays. This similarity offers worthiness to the findings of this study and shows that the use of the zigzag pattern might be a wider tendency not only in students' written narrative texts but also in other genres.

Lastly, findings revealed that the zigzag pattern is the best pattern for writing narratives since it enables students to manage the given - new information and create connections between clauses which results in coherence of the text. The findings agree with Sharndama and Panamah (2013) who found that the cross-referential link from the rheme of the preceding clause to the following clause facilitates cohesive and coherent texts. Therefore, the use of a zigzag thematic progression pattern is a logical way of developing cohesive and coherent narrative texts through the construction of newly introduced messages. However, the pattern may result in disruptions if not carefully used. For instance, Figure 4.9 among others revealed the disruption as the rheme ‘the man’ of clause 5 is used as the theme ‘the man’ of clause 6 which has no connection with the theme ‘Lucy’ in clause 7. Thus, the writer must be conscious of the use of this pattern to avoid such breaks that may bargain on the cohesion and coherence of the text.

Therefore, the findings associated with the zigzag pattern are an encouraging step forward that indicates that students might comprehend their writing skills, particularly in narrative writing if continuous assistance and effective approaches are adhered to. Thus, appropriate instructions on the proper usage of several thematic progression patterns, with the inclusion of the zigzag pattern can support students to improve their ability to develop coherent and appealing narrative texts.

Multiple Thematic Progression Pattern

The findings revealed multiple patterns as the third and rarely used pattern. It occurred 32 times in the SWNT which was subjected to analysis. This study considers the rarity or uncommonness of the multiple patterns as a remarkable difference from the most predominant use of patterns such as the constant and zigzag patterns. Despite their rare use, this study showed that understanding the appropriate use of multiple patterns may perhaps be an effective

skill for the betterment of students' writing, particularly narrative writing. The occurrence of this pattern is clearly shown in Figure 4.3 in Table 4. It is further illustrated in the extract below:

"...One of the young people in that village is known as Victor Patrick Mvule. He was an intelligent boy who studies at Mokoena Secondary School. And he wanted to be a Doctor. In this journey of education, he was faced with different problems. But he struggled for studying hard in order to reach his dream. He found which subject can help him to meet his dream to be a Doctor. So he knows most of science subject is very important for him. During living at school he put more effort in science subject in order to pass and reach his dream..."
(Extracted from Text 40).

From the extract above, themes such as 'and he', 'in this journey of education he', 'but he', 'he', 'so he', and 'during living at school he' of the subsequent clauses have been derived from the rheme 'Victor Patrick Mvule' which is the hyper name.

These findings support Devira et al. (2020), Njobvu (2022), Sukawatie (2018), and Utomo et al. (2020) which found that multiple patterns were seldom employed in students' academic writing. Contrary, the study's findings differ from Arunsirot (2013) who reported massive application of the multiple patterns in Thai EFL students' academic writing. This divergence indicates that a variety of factors such as instructional approach, proficiency level of participants, and genre type may contribute to determining students' thematic progression patterns.

Lastly, the findings of this study revealed that the multiple patterns play a vital role, as they enable readers to predict the flow of information and follow the logical progression of the narrative. The findings align with Danes (1974), Devira et al. (2020), Njobvu (2022), Sharndama and Panamah (2013), Sukawatie (2018), and Utomo et al. (2020) confirming that the multiple rheme patterns structure the texts in a way that assists the audience to predict what to come next in the next clauses within a discourse. Hence, appropriate use of this pattern is also an essential area to focus on.

Interestingly, the findings of this study revealed the interplay or combination of more than one pattern in the SWNT. This study has for instance revealed the interplay of constant-zigzag thematic progression patterns, constant-zigzag-multiple patterns, and zigzag-constant-multiple patterns (See Figures 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6). These patterns are herein explained below.

Constant-Zigzag or Zigzag-Constant Thematic Progression Patterns

The findings revealed the interplay between two patterns, constant and zigzag in the SWNT. This is illustrated in the extract below:

'Khadija Binti Kamba was a girl who played a big role in makes sure that Tanganyika got her independence. Khadija started entering in political activities when she was very young. She was 19 years old. She entered in political activities after the influence from another lady Bibi titi Mohamed...' (Extracted from Text 23).

From the extract, the finding revealed the interplay of two patterns constant-zigzag or zigzag-constant where the theme 'Khadija Binti Kamba' has been reiterated as themes 'Khadija', 'She', and 'she' in clauses 2, 3, and 4. On the other hand, the rheme 'a girl who' in clause 1 has been used as the theme 'Khadija'. Similarly, rheme 'when she' in clause 2 has been employed as the theme 'she' in clause 3.

In this pattern, the information is developed from a constant pattern to a zigzag pattern or zigzag pattern to a constant pattern (see also Figure 4.4). The interplay of patterns in students' narrative texts indicates that students are capable of developing information from these patterns while keeping the focus of the text and maintaining cohesion and coherence of the text.

These findings are consistent with Sharndama and Panamah (2013) whose study revealed that newspaper writing or texts as the aspect of narrative consisted of the interplay of two thematic progression patterns. Meanwhile, Fitriati and Gayatri (2021) reported that the interplay of zigzag-constant pattern plays a crucial role in influencing the flow of information in the text where the use of a zigzag pattern shows students' knowledge to

develop presented information into brand-new information.

Generally, the evidence that students are able to apply the interplay of two thematic progression patterns in their narrative texts is an important finding. This proposes that, with sustained instructional approaches and regular practices, students can further improve and increase their understanding of the application of these patterns which eventually enhance the coherence of their narrative texts. Additionally, the interplay of patterns proposes that students are not restricted to using one pattern or identical thematic progression approach. Rather, they are free to advantageously integrate two patterns which allow students to maintain the focus through the constant pattern with the improvement of cohesion and coherence via the zigzag patterns.

Constant - Zigzag - Multiple Thematic Progression Pattern

The findings of the present study further revealed another interplay or combination involving three patterns which is constant-zigzag-multiple in the SWNT. This pattern is also represented in Figure 4.5 in Table 4. In this pattern, the information is developed from constant via zigzag to multiple as indicated in Figure 4.1 and it is further illustrated in the following extract:

“Once upon a time, there was a debate at a certain school. There were two sides. Which were proposing side and apposing side. The motion states that "African culture is better than European culture". The motion mover introduced the topic then allows the chairperson to control the debate. Proposing side argues the motion by giving their points...” (Extracted from Text 7)

From the extract above, the theme ‘Once upon a time there’ of clause 1 has been used as the theme ‘there’ in clause 2. This indicates a partial constant progression pattern as it does not form consistency. The rheme of clause 2 ‘two sides’ has been used as a theme in clause 3, though represented by the equivalent relative pronoun ‘which’ that indicates a partial zigzag progression pattern. Furthermore, the segment ‘a debate’ which is a rheme of clause 1 has

been equivalently used as themes ‘the motion’, and ‘the motion mover’ in clauses 3 and 4. Creating information in this way is a sign of multiple thematic progression patterns. Moreover, the ‘proposing side’ which is the rheme in clause 3 has been used as the theme ‘proposer side’ in clause 6. The findings indicated that students are able to generate ideas from the constant pattern. This maintains a central focus, via the zigzag pattern. It lastly enhances cohesion and coherence as it involves multiple patterns. Multiple patterns involve drawing upon pieces of information from multiple rhemes to build new themes in the subsequent or following clauses, signifying an important step. These findings are an important contribution to the knowledge of how exactly students apply thematic progression in their narrative texts.

The findings concur with Fitriati and Gayatri (2021) and Sharndama and Panamah (2013) that well-structured and coherent texts are developed through the combination of different patterns. In connection with constant-zigzag-multiple, this study revealed a zigzag-multiple-constant pattern which is briefly discussed below.

Zigzag-Multiple-Constant Thematic Progression Pattern

The zigzag-multiple-constant pattern refers to developing texts in a way that ideas are generated from zigzag via multiple to constant. The findings of the present study revealed this pattern in students’ narrative texts (see Figures 4.5 and 4.7) as illustrated in the extract below:

“One day I and my family were enjoying the journey. It was like a tour. Where our daddy told us to go to visit in Mwanza. Our journey was very long. And we were all quiet. While we were in car. After three hours while we are on the road...” (Extracted from Text 29)

In the extract above, the part of rheme 1 ‘the journey’ is used as theme 2 ‘it’. This signifies a zigzag pattern. Theme 4 ‘our journey’ is taken from rheme 1 ‘the journey’ indicating multiple patterns. Also rheme 3 ‘us’ supplies themes ‘and we’, ‘while we’, and ‘after three hours we’ in clauses 5, 6, and 7. Lastly, theme 5 ‘and we’ is reiterated in clauses 6

and 7 with themes ‘while we’, and ‘after three hours we’, which is the constant pattern.

From the extract above, it is evident that students have the ability to develop ideas from zigzag via multiple to constant in their narrative texts. The findings resonate with Devira et al. (2022) that the amalgamation of thematic progression patterns influences the good flow of ideas in academic writing. Therefore, the fact that this amalgamation of patterns (zigzag-multiple-constant) is not broadly examined in previous studies highlights the contribution of the present study’s findings. The researcher could have exposed an underexplored thematic progression pattern that invites further investigations on the issue.

Moreover, the findings indicated that the interplay or combination of patterns whether two or three patterns should be applied carefully and intelligently to avoid disruptions and breaks. This is due to the fact that, through the interplay of patterns, there is a possibility of developing new themes which may result in inconsistent progressions. These findings support Devira et al. (2020) who affirmed that the more the thematic progression patterns the more incoherent the text might be.

Constant Macro Pattern

The present study revealed that students employed constant macro patterns. In this pattern, the first clause or some elements in the first clause of a paragraph are reiterated as the theme across other paragraphs within a text. This pattern is clearly revealed by Text 73 and it is represented in Figure 4.7 in Table 4.1.

“...Success in infrastructure, like load, railways and so like mama Samia success to influence the infrastructure that do not finished by Dr. John Pombe Magufuli.

Success to influence investors in our country because of distribution of Mama Samia there are many investors who came to invest in our country.

Success to influence tourist, at this period there are many tourists who come in our country to see the beauty of our country because of the film of royal tour that done by Mama Samia.

Success in development of different sector, like health, education and different sector, we are see that there are many building that build for different purpose of different sector.

Success to end conflict between our country and other country. At the period of Dr. John Pombe in our country there are many conflicts with other country but Mama Samia ends that conflict...” (Extracted from Text 73)

This study established that most students used the constant macro patterns in their written texts. This is a remarkable and noteworthy finding. This pattern, as indicated above, consists of the reiteration of some elements of the first clause ‘Success in’, and success to’ across subsequent paragraphs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, students applied the taxonomy of seven types of thematic progression patterns. Three basic types include constant patterns, zigzag patterns and multiple patterns. The constant patterns were dominantly applied 72 times. The second was the zigzag patterns with occurrences of 44. The last were multiple patterns with 32 occurrences. The other four patterns are constant-zigzag patterns, constant-zigzag-multiple, zigzag-multiple-constant, and constant macro patterns.

Generally, the findings entail that most students write their narrative texts without the knowledge of thematic progression which is essential for effective and successful writing. This causes many written narrative texts to be in-cohesive and incoherent as many students relied on constant patterns. They rarely used zigzag and multiple patterns which are equally important for successful writing. The zigzag patterns maintain cohesion of the text while multiple patterns help the readers to predict the following information in the texts. All zigzag and multiple patterns facilitate a smooth flow of information in the texts as suggested by the reviewed literature. Thus, students need intensive exposure to the proper use of thematic selections to enable them to improve their academic writing. This is also cemented by Fitriati and Gayatri (2021) that there is a need for developing a more detailed and systematized approach for teaching thematic progression in a particular EFL teaching-learning discourse environment through the integration of English

language teaching and learning resources with Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Thematic Progression (TP) theories.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study recommends that English language teaching planners (Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), NECTA and the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MOEVT)) utilize the findings of this study for planning, preparing, and moderating teaching and learning materials for effective and successful writing skills. The study also recommends thematic progression be taught as a course or topic in secondary schools, colleges, and universities to inculcate the thematic progression knowledge and skills to students and teacher trainees. This will facilitate the teaching and learning of thematic progressions from lower levels of education of secondary schools to tertiary levels. The study further recommends in-service training seminars on the concept of thematic progression. This could aid and support teachers improve their knowledge for thematic progression for cohesive and coherent academic writings of secondary school students as well as students in higher levels of education in Tanzania. The study recommends for further research, the use of different designs, genres, and different levels of education such as advanced level for wider generalizability.

REFERENCES

- Almurashi, M. N. (2016). Thematic progression in the writing of Saudi EFL. *Journal for the Study of English Linguistics*, URL: [https:// dx.doi. Org/10. 5296 /jse1.v4i1.9423](https://dx.doi.org/10.5296/jse1.v4i1.9423)
- Arunsirot, S. (2013). An analysis of textual metafunction in Thai EFL students' writing. *Novitas Royal (Research on Youth and Language)*, 7(2), 160-174.
- Danes, F. (1974). Functional sentence perspective and the organization of the text. In Danes, F. (ed.), *Papers on functional sentence perspective*. Delhi: NewAge International (P) Limited. *Academia*, 106-128.
- Devira, M., Makhroji, Bania, A.S., & Sari, N. (2020). Constant, Zig-Zag Linear or Multiple? Thematic Progression Patterns on EFL Students' Recount Texts Indonesia. Universitas Samudra, Langsa, Aceh. *Elite Journal Volume 7 Nomor2, December 2020*
- Dewi, M.W., Hernawan, K. F., & Apsari, Y. (2019). Thematic progression in students' description texts. *Professional Journal of English Education* 2 (2) 126-132
- Enyi, A.U., & Orji, E.C. (2019). Lexical cohesion in non-fictional narrative as discourse: A Study of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's decolonizing the mind. Ebonyi State University. *International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies*, 7(3) 2019
- Fitriati, S. W., & Gayatri, N.M. (2021). Thematic progression in EFL Learners' writing: A Literature review. *Lingua Cultural Journal*, 15 (2), 257– 262. <https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v15i2.7645>
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2014). *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar* (4th Ed.) Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jing, W (2015). Theme and Thematic Progression in English Writing Teaching. *Journal of Education and Practice*. 6: 178-187
- Komba, S. A., & Katundu, M. A. (2021). Thematic progression in Tanzanian scientific research articles': The case of linguistics and education. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 11 (5), 580-589.
- Kuo, C. H. (2016). Thematic progression patterns in written English of Taiwanese College students. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 6 (1), 34-43.
- Kuswoyo, H. (2016). Thematic structure in Barack Obama's press conference: A Systemic functional grammar study. *Academic Australian International Journal*, URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.7n.2p.257>
- Liu, J., & Zang, Y. (2018). Thematic progression in the writing of Chinese EFL learners: A comparison of argumentative and narrative essays. *English Language Teaching Journal*, 11 (11), 86-97.
- Mushi, F. M., & Nkya, R. M. (2018). Thematic progression in Tanzanian academic texts: A

- comparative study. *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication*, 6 (1), 14-25.
- Mwakasaka, F. (2016). Thematic progression in political speeches in Tanzania: A case study of speeches delivered by Jakaya Kikwete. *International Journal of Linguistics and Communication*, 4 (1), 1-12.
- Njobvu, N. (2022). Does thematic progression enhance English discourse coherence? The University of Zambia. Zambia. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, 10 (3), 29-41
- Pasaribu, A.N., Pasaribu, T. K., & Panggabean, S. (2019). Thematic progression of students' narrative writing. *Journal Ilmiah simantek*, 3 (2), 155-163
- Saeed, A. Karim, S., & Mughal, S. H. (2021). The impact of theme-rheme progression method on improving textual coherence and cohesion in L2 writing: A Study of L2 Learners of English. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 9 (2), 82 – 92
- Sharndama, E.C., & Panamah, J.H. (2013). Thematic structure and progression in selected business news report of two Nigerian newspapers: Implications for Professional Writing. Nigeria. *Journal of Arts and Humanities (JAH)*, Volume -2, No.-7, August, 2013
- Sukawatie, L.E. (2018). Thematic progression on third grade students' writing in www. The write source. Com. Sebelas Maret University. *Journal of English Language Education*, Vol 1 (1) 2018: 87-96
- Susilowati, E., Faridi, A., & Sakhiyya, Z. (2022). Thematic structure and thematic progression in research articles published in Scopus-Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia. *English Education Journal*, 12 (1) (2022) 55-66
- Suwandi. (2016). Coherence and cohesion: An analysis of the final project abstracts of the undergraduate students of PGRI Semarang. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 5(2), 253- 261. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v5i2.1349>.
- Utomo, A. B., Albaekani, A.K., & Pahlevi, M.R. (2020). Thematic progression of students' writing descriptive texts in junior high school. Indonesia Universit as Singaperbangsa. *Journal of English Language Education*, 1 (1) October 2020
- Xiao, X. M. (2017). Thematic progression theory and its application in EAP writing. Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, P.R. China. *International Conference on Education and Development Journal (ICED 2017)*
- Xiangyun, Z., & Xiaolan, L. (2020). *The study on thematic progression patterns in economic journalist texts from China Daily*. International Journal of lgs, LT & Linguistics Vol.6 No1 march 2020
- Yunita, S. (2018). Theme and thematic progression in students' recount text. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 7(3), 524-530. <https://doi.org/10.17509/>