

# An Analysis of Thematic Progression Pattern Found in Thesis Abstracts by Postgraduate English Education Students

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the thematic progression patterns used in thesis abstracts written by postgraduate English education students. The fourth abstract thesis are analyzed the theme and rheme structured within for each clause then examined whether the types of thematic progression are applied. In a short, it explores how themes are used and structured in written text. It examines all three types of thematic progression based on Brian Paltridge's theory were applied in thesis abstracts. To ensure the data, the researchers analyzed the frequency of the thematic progression occurrences as well. A qualitative research method employs to analyze, categorize, and understand the patterns of thematic progression. The findings showed that among the varying thematic progression patterns applied in abstracts, constant themes are the clear favorite (30%), followed by linear themes (12%) and split rheme (4.3%). It can be interpreted that the limited use of thematic progression patterns in the analyzed thesis abstracts indicates that some postgraduate English education students may need further guidance on constructing clear and concise abstracts. To enhance the coherence and readability of their abstracts, these students should be encouraged to employ thematic progression strategies more effectively.

**Keywords:** *Postgraduate Student; Thematic Progression; Thesis Abstract*

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## Introduction

In the broad field of academia, the academic contributions of postgraduate students are especially important, acting as the foundation upon which new knowledge is formed and refined. These aspiring academics, via their hard research efforts, not only increase the clarity of many subjects, but also push the bounds of intellectual inquiry even farther. Within the specialized sector of English Education, postgraduate students have a significant impact on the growth of educational practices and theoretical frameworks (Rahimi, Yousoffi, & Moradkhani, 2018). As they negotiate the complicated landscape of research, the theses they write evolve as pivotal objects, including insights achieved by comprehensive inquiry and critical analysis. Thus, analyzing the underlying thematic progression patterns within the abstracts of postgraduate theses becomes critical, providing significant insights into the changing environment of academic discourse in English Education.

The abstract, which serves as a brief overview of the entire thesis, is the first point of readers' attention, providing an insight into the major ideas and results examined in the research (Lifah, et. al. 2020; Khatri, 2022; West & Turnbull, 2023). Crafting a successful abstract for postgraduate students in English Education is more than just summarizing; it is also an exercise in linguistic strategy and intellectual communication (Khatri, 2022). A well-written abstract makes readers understand the main points of the entire thesis, thus, the writing of the abstract should be concerned, including the coherence and the cohesion of each sentence. One way to know the coherence and cohesion of a text is by analyzing

the thematic progression (Muroda, et. al., 2017). The theme progressions inherent in these abstracts serve as a structural framework, directing readers through the research process. Thematic progression describes how the theme of a sentence can bring up or repeat a meaning from a previous theme or rheme. This is an important way in which information flows through a text (Paltridge, 2006). Tracing the development and structuring of key themes allows us to separate the complex web of concepts that these researchers have attached, as well as identify the strategic decisions they made in presenting their study aims, methodology, and results.

Beginning to investigate these thematic progression patterns, it becomes clear that they are not accidental but planned creations, reflecting the author's scholarly aim and communicative aspirations (Okta, et. al., 2023). A detailed examination of language indicators and rhetorical devices reveals the underlying logic that governs the organization of concepts within abstracts (Lifah, et. al., 2020). Each element of the topic development, from context formation to research objective formulation and findings synthesis, serves a specific role in influencing reader comprehension and engagement (Njobvu & Simwina, 2022). Furthermore, by contextualizing these patterns within the larger landscape of academic discourse, researchers can ensure writing coherence and consistency. Studies show that thematic progression can be used to assess the coherence of EFL/ESL writing and determine its efficacy.

In this study, the researchers aim to uncover the types of thematic progression patterns found in thesis abstracts written by postgraduate students majoring in English Education at State Islamic Institute of Kediri, uncovering the broad patterns of ideas and arguments that define these scholarly texts. Presenting examples of quality thesis abstracts can inspire novice authors and improve their comprehension of text organization.

## Research Method

This descriptive qualitative study uses discourse analysis under the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework. The descriptive qualitative technique provides detailed descriptions and analyses of a single entity. According to Creswell (2012), a descriptive qualitative design is ideal for interpretive purposes. This descriptive qualitative study was chosen to analyze, describe, categorize, and interpret data on the usage of thematic progression. In addition, discourse analysis examines the order of language beyond sentences or clauses, focusing on larger linguistic units like conversations or written text (Widdowson, 2007).

In analyzing data, the research specifically employs a thematic progression pattern theory outlined by Paltridge (2006). There are three types of thematic progression pattern by Paltridge as follows:

### 1. Constant Theme Progression (CTP)

One of the thematic progression patterns by Paltridge is a constant or linear theme. In this pattern, the main idea (Theme 1) keeps reappearing at the start of each new sentence. This signifies that every sentence will somehow contribute to developing that central theme.

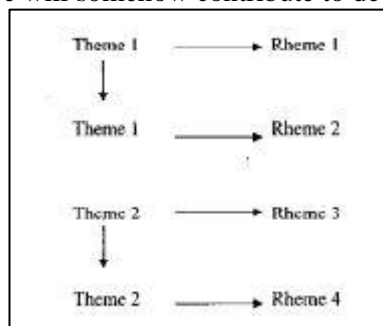


Figure 1: The Example of Constant Theme

### 2. Linear Theme Progression (LTP)

Another frequent thematic progression pattern is the zig-zag or linear pattern. In this structure, the information introduced as new (the rheme) in one sentence becomes the main focus (the theme) of the next sentence.

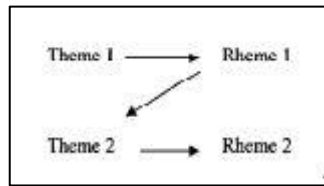


Figure 2: The Example of Linear Theme

### 3. Split Rheme Progression (SRP)

The other type of thematic progression possibilities like “multiple-theme” or “split rheme” patterns. Here, a single theme might cover several details, and each of those details can then become the main idea (theme) in following sentences. This creates a branching structure where the opening theme appears in the various sub-themes that are explored individually.

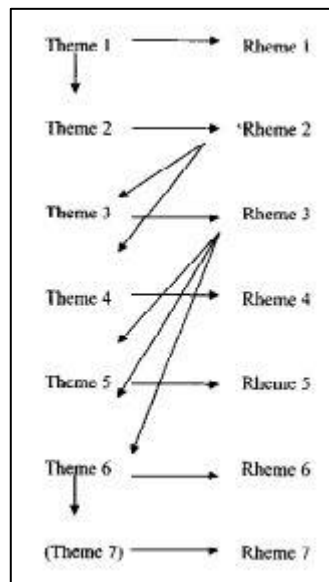


Figure 3: The Example of Split Rheme

Based on the Theory above, this approach aims to uncover how postgraduate English Education students at the State Islamic of Kediri construct their ideas in abstract. This research intends to analyze thesis abstracts because they are typically single, coherent paragraphs, making them a suitable data source for thematic analysis.

To gather the data, the researchers take the postgraduate students majoring in English education at State Islamic Institute of Kediri. The thesis abstracts analyzed in this research are from website e-theses IAIN Kediri. The scope of the analyzed thesis abstracts is limited to those published in 2024. There are four thesis abstracts that will be analyzed in this study. It involved the ninety three (93) clauses of the abstract thesis which have gathered within the thesis abstract.

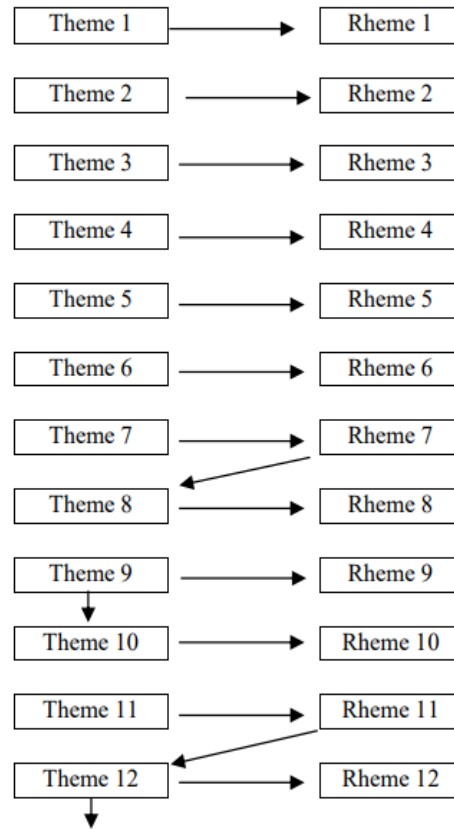
The data analysis process involves a six-step approach. Initially, the researcher performed a close reading of all the texts. Following that, each text breaks down into clauses, which are then categorized and organized within a specific data collection tool (instrument datasheet). Third, classifying the thematic progression patterns within the data. To achieve this, the researcher relied on Paltridge's (2006) theory to identify and categorize these patterns. Fourth, tabulating the thematic progression patterns. The fifth stage involves interpreting the data. This means the researcher will go beyond just classifying the patterns and offer their own analysis and insights based on the findings. Essentially, they provided a personal evaluation of what the data revealed. The last, drawing the conclusions based on

the interpreted data. These conclusions likely included recommendations or suggestions inspired by the research findings.

## Findings and Discussion

### Findings

The findings present a tabulation of each abstract's thematic progression pattern. Four abstracts from postgraduate students majoring in English Education at the State Islamic Institute of Kediri were reviewed. The tabulating of the patterns can be observed in Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7.



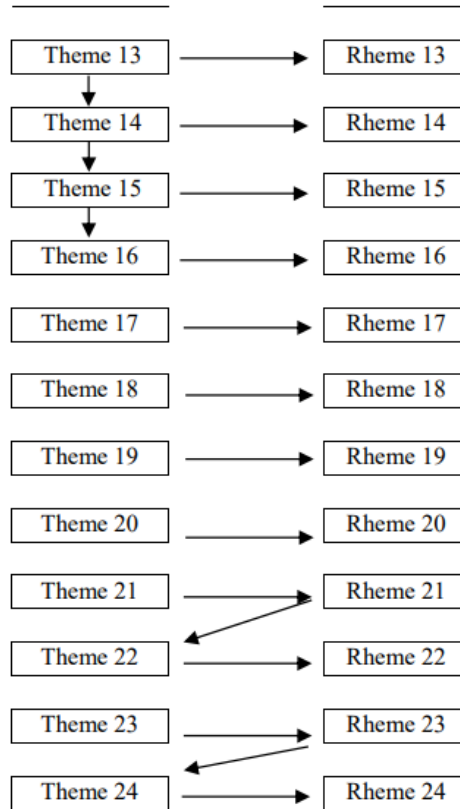
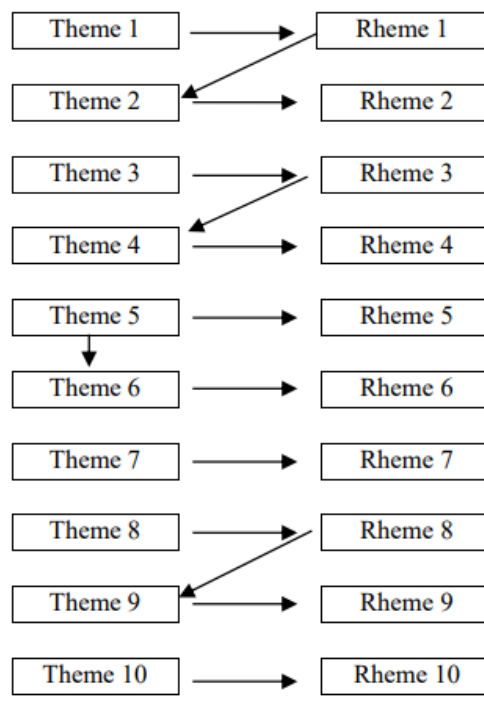


Figure 4. Thematic Progression Pattern in the First Abstract

The abstract thesis, titled ‘The Effectiveness of Using Hand Puppet in Teaching Speaking for Students having Different Imagination Level at MI Hidayatus Shibyan’, only applied two forms of thematic progression patterns. The constant theme pattern found in five clauses. The linear theme pattern is indicated in four clauses. The author skipped using the split theme pattern in the abstract. Finishing the review of the Figure 4, turning now to the pattern used in abstract two.



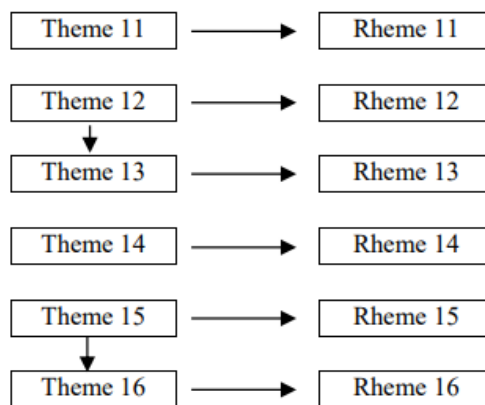
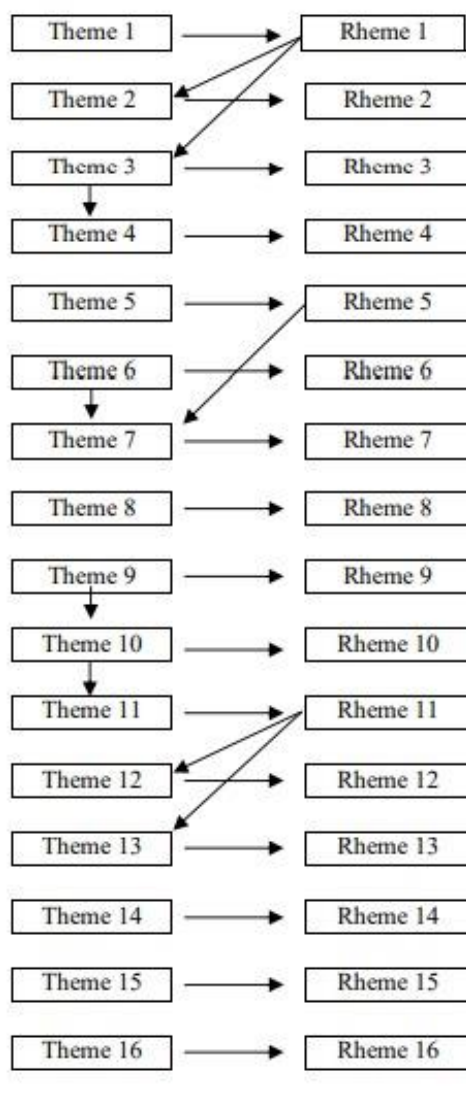


Figure 5. Thematic progression Pattern in the Second Abstract

The second abstract thesis, titled ‘The Effect of ClassDojo Learning Application on Teaching Speaking for Students having Different Learning Styles at Kampung Inggris Language Center Pare’, used two types of thematic progression patterns. There are three clauses that demonstrate a constant theme. The linear theme pattern is indicated in three clauses. The author excluded the split theme pattern in the abstract. Despite this, the following analyzed abstracts revealed that they applied all three types of thematic progression.



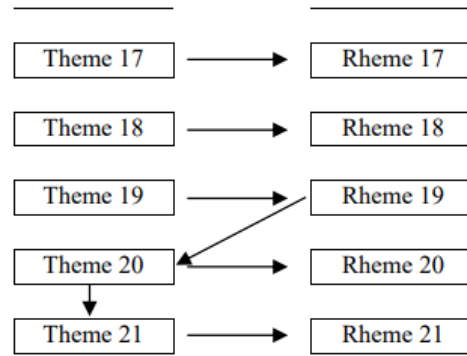
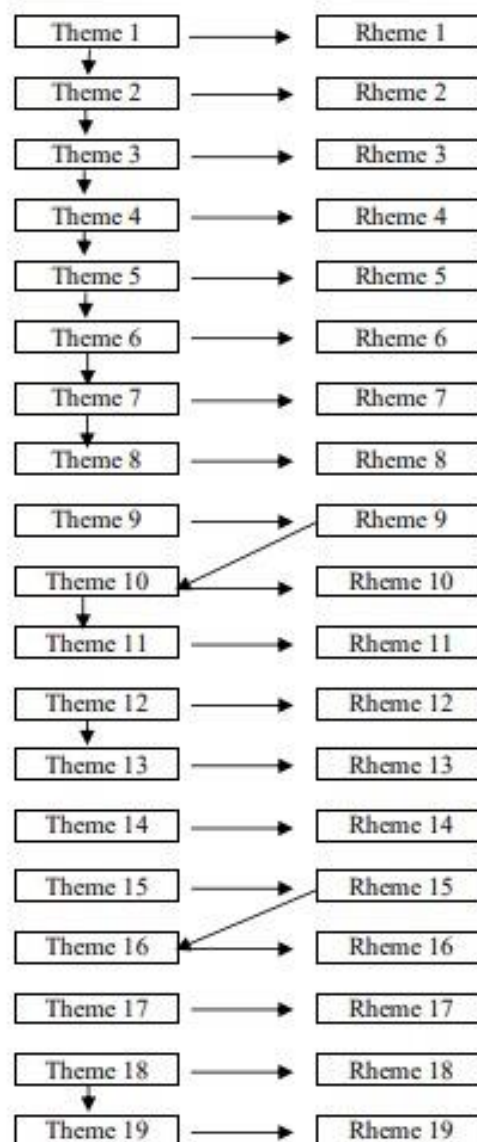


Figure 6. Thematic progression Pattern in the Third Abstract

Figure 6 reveals that split rheme progression is applied in the analyzed abstract. The third abstract thesis entitled ‘The Effect of English Podcast in Teaching Listening for Students with Different Learning Styles’, the writer applied three types of the thematic progression pattern. Constant thematic progression was found in five clauses. The linear thematic progression is applied in two clauses, as is the split rheme progression. Having defined the thematic progression used in the third thesis, the final analyzing of thematic progression in thesis abstract is displayed in Figure 7.



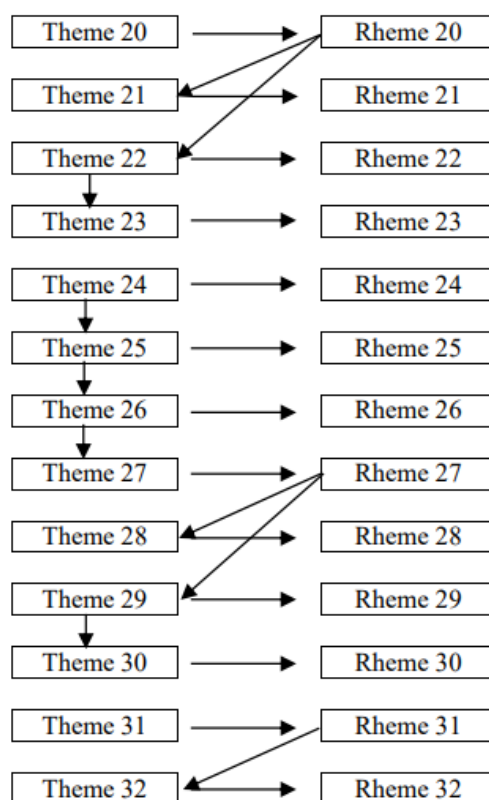


Figure 7. Thematic progression Pattern in the Fourth Abstract

This figure shows that the thematic progression applied in the last thesis is more varied. In the last analyzed thesis abstract entitled ‘The Effect of Fishbowl Strategy to Reading Comprehension Skill for Students having Different Learning Motivation’, the writer applied all the thematic progression proposed by Paltridge (2006). In this thesis abstract, the theme pattern that the most applied is constant thematic progression, it can be seen that there are 15 clauses applied this thematic progression. Following that, linear thematic progression is applied in three clauses, and the less applied of thematic progression is split rheme progression, it only appears in two clauses.

## Discussion

After finishing the analysis process, this study highlights the employment of thematic progression patterns found in the abstracts made by postgraduate students majoring in English Education at the State Islamic Institute of Kediri. Based on analyzing the abstracts, all three types of thematic progression patterns provided by Paltridge (2006) are applied in the abstracts in various percentages of occurrence. The patterns are Constant Thematic progression (CTP), Linear Thematic progression (LTP), and Split Rheme Progression (SRP). Table 1 presents the data on applying thematic progression in the thesis abstract.

**Table 1. Thematic progression found in the Abstracts**

No.	Abstract	Total of Clauses	Thematic Progression		
			CTP	LTP	SRP
1.	Abstract 1	24	5	4	0
2.	Abstract 2	16	3	3	0
3.	Abstract 3	21	5	2	2
4.	Abstract 4	32	15	3	2
	Total	93	28	12	4
	Percentage		30%	12%	4.3%



Table 1 displays a thematic progression pattern commonly used in abstracts. Simply put, the constant thematic progression pattern exceeds the other two patterns (linear thematic progression and split rheme progression) by 28 times. The writers' wide application of the constant thematic progression pattern indicates that they successfully maintain the major emphasis of the abstracts by repeating the theme base of the previous clause in the following clause (Paltridge, 2006).

The findings revealed the exceeding of constant thematic progression pattern matches up with earlier studies (Rahman, et. al., 2017; Muroda, et. al., 2018; Lifah, et. al., 2020; Susilowati, et. al., 2022). These studies figured out that constant thematic progression pattern exists generally the thematic progression patterns applied in the script because it is simple writing strategies to maintain cohesion of the text as it focuses on a specific theme.

Contrariwise, the linear thematic progression pattern is quite rarely applied in thesis abstracts, occurring only 12 times. This finding aligns with findings from some previous studies (Darmila, et. al., 2019; Sari & Agustina, 2022; Sulastri, 2022; Siahaan, et. al., 2023). However, Okta et al. (2023) discovered that linear thematic progression was the most commonly used in their study. The frequent use of the linear thematic progression implies maintaining textual relationships by adding new information to the rheme. Thus, using the linear thematic progression pattern in the texts helps to produce cohesiveness by shifting a rheme constituent from the preceding phrase to be a theme in subsequent clause.

Furthermore, the final thematic progression pattern applied in the abstract is the split rheme progression. This sequence appears as the rarest applied thematic progression in thesis abstract of postgraduate students, occurring only 4 times. Most of previous studies showed the same findings for the rarest used of split rheme progression. However, study conducted by Susilowati (2022) showed that the split rheme is the second dominant pattern used after constant thematic progression. The presence and occurrence of the split rheme pattern may indicate the writers' ability in composing the texts using a predetermined strategy. They effectively concentrate on the rheme of one clause and use it to define the topics in future clauses (Thomas and Hawes, 1997 as cited in Crompton, 2004).

Because the majority of the samples appear to be unorganized texts regarding a lack of theme patterns, this may indicate the challenges that students have when writing abstracts. The challenge they should overcome is how to compose a clear abstract and build a proper logical relationship between sentences in their work. Students may also struggle in creating abstracts due to word count constraints. An abstract should be about 200 words long and include the most important information or main points of the research. As a result, students might feel frightened about how to synthesize or simplify their study into 200 words, resulting in an abstract that lacks consistency. However, as the postgraduate students, they are expected can construct understandable thesis abstract as the summary of the entire research report.

## Conclusion

Overall, this research reports that thesis abstracts written by postgraduate students at State Islamic Institute of Kediri majoring in English Education applied three thematic progressions, namely Constant Thematic progression, Linear Thematic progression, and Split Rheme Progression. The constant thematic progression is dominantly applied in writing abstract (30%), followed by linear thematic progression (12%) and split rheme progression (4.3%). From the percentage, it can be seen that the writers' employing a minimum thematic progression implies that they do not understand how to compose readable texts. Otherwise, the postgraduate students are expected can apply the thematic progression in constructing the thesis abstract to maintain the text's cohesion and coherence. Despite that, the postgraduate students may face challenges in constructing the abstracts due to their own challenges.

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