

COHERENCE ANALYSIS ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING

(A case study in Daily Conversation Class of 1st Semester Students of English Education Department, Faculty of Humanities, Jenderal Soedirman University)

Tuti Purwati

*Faculty of Humanities, Jenderal Soedirman University
e-mail: tuti.purwati.unsoed@gmail.com*

Abstract

This paper presents a study on students' speaking especially in Daily Conversation class. It is aimed at finding talks' coherence by using the analysis of thematic progression. Five talks of the students are randomly taken into the analysis. A certain topic is given to develop the idea and a text type namely recount is chosen to be presented by those students. Next, those utterances are examined whether they are coherent or not. It is found out that all of the texts have good coherence. Regardless the grammar and vocabulary aspects, all five students are able to develop the idea coherently. Based on the result of analysis, the students tend to use Unmarked Topical Theme as their theme in the form of pronouns either singular or plural. In line with this, reiteration or constant thematic progression is mostly chosen by the students, instead of zig-zag or multiple patterns which only happen in 1 or 2 texts.

Keywords: theme, rheme, thematic progression, speaking

A. INTRODUCTION

There are at least four skills in learning English as foreign language namely reading, listening, speaking and writing. They are classified into two groups, receptive skills (reading and listening) and productive skills (speaking and writing). The first group refers to skills which can be acquired as language competence by using learners' understanding and good listening while the second group the competence can only be performed by showing the ability to speak and to write in good English.

Among the productive skills, most learners usually like speaking better than writing. They argue that it is easier to produce words to create meaningful utterances than to write sentences. It is said that speaking does not need any effort, when people can produce utterances in English, then it is assumed that he has been mastering it. Of course this idea is not correct. There are requirements to meet before someone is said to be a master in English, especially dealing with speaking skill.

To be a good English speaker, one needs to at least have four criteria, good fluency and coherence, good vocabulary, good grammar and good pronunciation. Sometimes learners produce good pronunciation, but they are bad at fluency and coherence as well as at vocabulary and grammar. In other case, they are good in grammar and vocabulary, but they have lack competence of coherence and pronunciation.

Daily conversation is one of subjects taught for the 1st semester students of English Education Study Program in Jenderal Soedirman University. This subject is mainly aimed at preparing students to master basic English speaking. Neglecting to grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, I am interested in assessing the students' fluency in speaking English especially dealing with the coherence by using thematic pattern which they use when they present a story in English. There are some incoherence ideas when they speak in English.

Speaking is actually not easy. It involves much work and practice. Trying to put ideas on a speech in just the way someone wants them is never easy. When people speak, they have to think of several things at the same time. Some of them are ideas, vocabularies, spelling, grammar, and punctuation. They have to think all of these things even in a very simple piece of speech or presentation.

Finding the theme is very useful. In speaking, the main idea gives unity and order to a speech. In addition to unity, coherence plays a crucial role in making a speech. Every coherent

speech contains smoothly –connected ideas. Each utterance moves on naturally. The speech is like a well – built high way. A coherent speech consists of interrelated utterances which have in such a way that they smooth the way, one for the other.

To make a coherent speech, students should employ thematic progression pattern in their speaking. Thematic progression refers to the way in which the theme of a clause may pick up, or repeated, a meaning from a preceding theme or rheme (Paltridge, 2002:140). He also stated that the notion of theme and rheme are also employed in the examination of thematic progression, or method of development of a text. There are three kinds of thematic progression patterns, they are: reiteration or constant theme pattern, zig-zag/ linear theme pattern, and multiple theme/split rheme pattern.

This study is intended to analyze coherence on students' speech in Daily Conversation Subject for 1st Semester Students of English Education Study Program, Jenderal Soedirman University.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Characterization of Theme

The system of theme belongs to the textual metafunction of the language. It is concerned with the organization of information within individual clauses and through this, with the organization of the larger text (Martin *et. al*, 1997:27). Every clause is organized as a message related to an unfolding text. The system of THEME organizes the clause to show what its local context is in relation to the general context of the text it serves in; the system is concerned with the current point of departure in relation to what has come before, so that it is clear where the clause is located in the text – how its contribution fits in. this local context or point of departure is called Theme. The rest of the message of the clause is what is after presented against the background of the local context – it is where the clause moves after the point of departure. This is called Rheme. The clause as message is thus organized into Theme + Rheme.

2. Thematic Development Within a Text

The choice of Theme for any individual clause will generally relate to the way information is being developed over the course of the whole text. Theme involves three major systems: Choice of type of theme. Choice of marked or unmarked theme, and choice of predicated or unpredicted theme. The realization statements indicate that the type of Theme is realized by the insertion of a particular type of constituent in thematic position. Theme markedness depends on the conflation (mapping together) of the Theme constituent with different Mood and Transitivity constituents. Theme predication involves the use of an additional clausal element. Halliday (2004:64) states that in English, as in many other languages, the clause is organized as a message by having a distinct status assigned to one part of it. One part of the clause is enunciated as the theme; this then combines with the remainder so that the two parts together constitute a message.

a. Theme

The definition of Theme as given by Halliday in Eggins (1994:274) can be identified as the element which comes in first position in the clause, and it is one element in a particular structural configuration which, taken as a whole, organizes the clause as a message. Within that configuration, the theme is starting- point for the message; it is the ground from which the clause is taking off. So part of the meaning of any clause lies in which the element is chosen as its theme.

b. Rheme

The remainder of the message, the part in which the theme is developed, is called the rheme. As a message structure, therefore, a clause consists of the theme accompanied by the rheme. According to Eggins (1994:275) definition of Rheme is that it is the part of the clause in which the theme is developed. Since we typically depart from the familiar to head towards the unfamiliar, the Rheme typically contains unfamiliar or 'new' information. The identification criteria for the rheme are simple: everything that is not the theme is the rheme.

3. Boundary of Theme: Types of Theme

Gerot and Wignell (1994:104) say that Theme can be divided into a number of categories: ideational, textual, and interpersonal. A clause can have any, all, or none of these categories.

a. Ideational / Topical Theme

The ideational or Topical theme is usually but not always the first nominal group in the clause. Topical Theme may also be nominal group complexes, adverbial groups, prepositional phrases or embedded clauses. In the unmarked case the Topical Theme is also the subject. A Topical Theme which is not the subject is called marked Topical Theme. The term Marked is used because it strands out. It attracts attention because it is not what we normally expect to find.

Supporting that theory, Martin et. al. (1997:24) state that the ideational stage of the Theme, known as Topical Theme, can be recognized as the first element in the clause that expresses some kind of representational meaning.

b. Textual Theme

Textual Theme relates the clause to its context as described by Gerot and Wignell (1994:105) as follows: They can be continuatives and /or conjunctive adjuncts and conjunctions. The line between conjunctions and conjunctive adjuncts is often fine one. One different is that conjunctive adjuncts are freer to move in a clause whereas conjunctions are pretty well restricted to being at the beginning.

c. Interpersonal Theme

Interpersonal Theme according to Gerot and Wignell (1994:107) is interpersonal elements occurring before the Topical Theme which is almost thematic. They may be Modal Adjuncts, vocatives, Finite or Wh-elements.

4. Coherence

Coherence means to hold together, in basic that paragraph in writing has the right order with the clear process. In addition to unity, coherence plays an important role in making a paragraph read well. Every coherent paragraph contains smoothly – connected. A coherent paragraph consists of interrelated sentences which move in such a way that they smooth the way, one for another.

Coherence concerns the way in which the things that the text is about, called the textual world, are mutually accessible and relevant. The textual world is considered to consist of concept and relations. A concept is defined as a configuration of knowledge (cognitive content) which can be recovered or activated with more or less unity and consistency in the mind, and relations as the links between the concepts which appear together in a textual world (de Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981: 4) in Malmkjer (1991:465).

5. Coherence in a Speech

A speech is a text in spoken form. Speaking task aims at developing a spoken text into a good coherence presentation. A speech is usually a series of utterances that develop one topic. A speech can be as long or as short as necessary to develop the topic.

Ideas in a speech should interconnect each other to create a certain theme. Utterances are presented in such a way that the flow of speech can be logically suitable and build a structure.

6. Thematic Progression

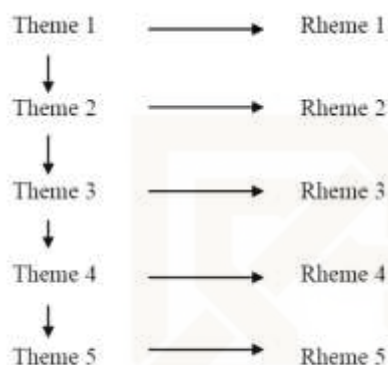
Butt et al. (2000:114) say that if the Theme is the signpost for a speaker or writer's point of departure, then each Rheme is the temporary destination. Usually the bit of the message that the writer or speaker considers interesting or important comes in the Rheme. While the first clause or clause complex in a text will probably contain all new meanings, the thematic choices for the following clauses should not be unexpected. They should be connected with ideas that we have already met in the Theme or Rheme of a clause or not too far before.

Because readers and addressees need to be reassured that they are following the development of the text, many texts are signposted by placing elements from the Rheme of one clause into the Theme of the text, or by repeating meanings from the Theme of one clause in the Theme of subsequent clauses. This kind of text development method is called thematic progression.

Thematic progression refers to the way in which the Theme of a clause may pick up or repeat a meaning from a preceding theme and rheme. According to Martin and Rother in Paltridge (2000:140), there are three kinds of thematic development patterns, they are:

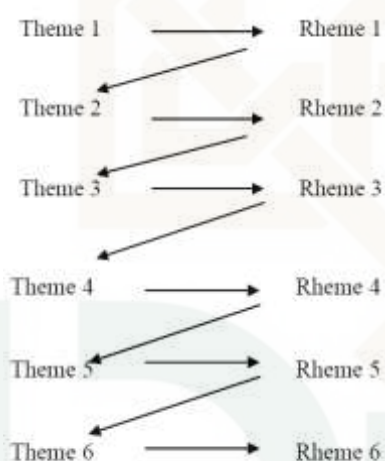
a. Theme reiteration/constant theme pattern

This pattern shows that the first theme is picked up and repeated in the beginning of the next clause. This is the example of this pattern:



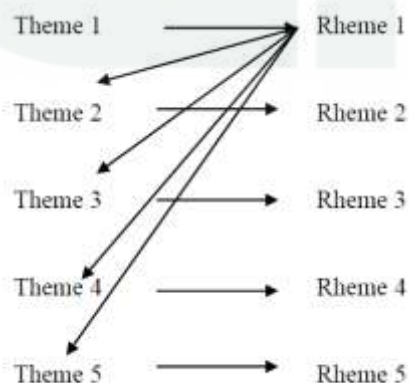
b. A zig-zag/ linear theme pattern

It is a pattern when the subject matter in the rheme of one clause is taken up in the theme of the following clause. The example of zig-zag pattern can be seen below:



c. Multiple theme/ split rheme pattern

In this pattern, a rheme may include a number of different pieces of information, each of which may be taken up as the theme in a number of subsequent clauses. The example of multiple theme patterns can be seen below:



C. RESEARCH METHOD

The object of this research is students' speech in the subject of Daily Conversation for the 1st semester of English Education Study Program, UNSOED. It is in the form of utterances in which there are sets of speech/story presented by students on certain topics. The unit of analysis in this research is utterances in the students' speech.

The data are taken naturally from the students' speech when they were presenting their topic. The speech is recorded and then transcribed into an orthographic form. There are 24 students in a class and the researcher chooses 5 speeches randomly to be analyzed on their coherence, regardless their score and their speaking ability. Those speeches become the sample of the research.

The data analysis are carried out by first reading the orthographic form of students' speeches, dividing them into clauses and then identifying the Theme and Rheme for each clause of students' speech transcription. Next, the researcher determines the coherence of the speech based on Theme and Rheme relation and finally draws conclusion on the thematic progression pattern of the students' speech.

D. RESULT

There are 5 students' speeches used as the data of this research. The speeches are transcribed into orthographic forms to make them easier to analyze. Those speeches have similar topics and each consists of two sets of ideas, and they are developed using one of text types namely recount. The topic given in this study is: *my unforgettable experience*. In this part the researcher presents the Theme and Rheme of students' speech transcriptions and also their thematic progression based on Butt *et al.* analysis (2000:142) to know the coherence of the students' speech. The errors concerning with grammar or spelling are ignored. There is an example from one of the texts:

Text 1:

Unforgettable Experience

I had unforgettable experience when I was eighteen years years old. I was in the third grade of senior high school. When I went to school, it was raining and I rode my own motorcycle with my little brother. He studied in a playgroup. He sat in front of me and we were wearing large raincoat. Suddenly when I kept watching the road, my brother open the raincoat and it covered my face. So, I couldn't see at all. I directly put the raincoat and focused on the street again. I almost hit a car, because I was busy with my raincoat. Everyone saw me. Some of people laughed me. This is my embarrassing experience.

If I remember that experience I laugh alone. Since that event I always wear body raincoat and do not share the raincoat with my brother anymore. He is wearing his own. But now, I mustn't do it because I have studied here. I don't pick up my little brother anymore because I stay in other town and it happened when I was on senior high school. So I didn't worry anymore.

The Themes and Rhemes of text 1 are as follows:

Paragraph 1

THEME

RHEME

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1. I | had unforgettable experience |
| 2. when I | was eighteen years years old. |
| 3. I | was in the third grade of senior high school. |
| 4. When I | went to school, |
| 5. it | was raining |
| 6. and I | rode my own motorcycle with my little brother. |

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 7. He | studied in a playgroup. |
| 8. He | sat in front of me |
| 9. and we | were wearing large raincoat. |
| 10. Suddenly when I | kept watching the road, |
| 11. my brother | open the raincoat |
| 12. and it | covered my face. |
| 13. So, I | couldn't see at all. |
| 14. I | directly put the raincoat and focused on the street again. |
| 15. I | almost hit a car, |
| 16. because I | was busy with my raincoat. |
| 17. Everyone | saw me. |
| 18. Some of people | laughed me. |
| 19. This | is my embarrassing experience. |

In text 1 idea 1, the utterances are interrelated. The student develops the idea by employing reiteration pattern. It can be seen that Theme reiteration pattern is employed by repeating theme 1 (I) in theme 1-4, theme 6, theme 10, theme 13, theme 14, theme 15 and theme 16. There is also reiteration of repeating theme 2 (he) in theme 7,8 and 11. So, there are reiterations or constant theme in the first set of idea. As a result the first set of idea is coherent.

In 2nd idea of text 1, the utterance are also interrelated. The student also develops the second idea by employing reiteration pattern. The paragraph is understandable and clear. It can be seen that Theme reiteration pattern is employed by repeating theme. In the second idea the theme "I" is repeated in the whole clauses. So the second set is coherent.

After those sets of ideas are analyzed based on theme and rheme for each clause, it can be concluded that speech 1 is coherent. It consists of interrelated utterances and the supporting ideas are related to each other. Besides, the content of the speech is also relevant to the topic "unforgettable experience".

The analysis goes to the rest of the speeches. It is found out that most of the spoken texts analyzed are coherent. Below is the thematic pattern of the 2nd speech:

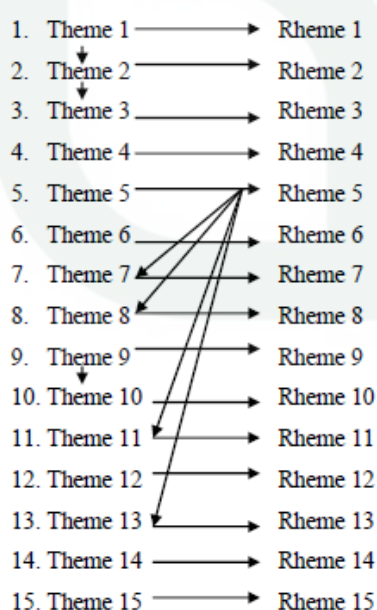


Figure 1. Thematic Progression Pattern of speech 2

The above figure shows thematic progression of text 2 which is very clear to understand. The utterances are related to one another. It is found that the theme "I" is repeated in the second and the third clauses. Beside it is also repeated in the ninth and the tenth clauses. It is also found that there are multiple patterns in the paragraph above. Multiple patterns is employed 4 times, those are done by taking up Rheme 5 (had a friend) in theme 7 (he), theme 8 (his name), theme 11 (he), and theme 13 (he). As a result the paragraph above is coherent. Anyhow, there is a weakness of this speech. The student does not talk about an experience, the content is about friendship.

The 3rd text is about an embarrassing moment. The student tells about his being slept in Math class. It consists of interrelated utterances. It can be seen from the theme "I" in the first clause which is repeated in the second clause. Then it also occurs in theme 8 (I), theme 9 (I), and theme 10 (I). This pattern belongs to reiteration pattern. Besides that the student also employs zig-zag pattern in his talk. Zig-zag pattern is employed by taking up Rheme in the second clause "had an embarrassing experience" becomes the theme in the third clause "This". It also occurs in rheme 4 (taught a boring lesson for me) in theme 5 (That), rheme 6 (hate this lesson) in theme 7 (It), and rheme 10 (don't care about it) in theme 11 (It). So the paragraph is coherent.

Another coherent text is also found in speech 4. The talk is very understandable and clear. It is found that the theme "we" is repeated in almost whole clauses. It can be seen in theme 5, theme 6, theme 7, theme 8, theme 9, theme 10, theme 11 and theme 12. Then the rheme in the third clause (happened three years ago) becomes the theme in the sixth clause (In that time we). Next is the rheme 4 (went with my friends in the beach) is picking up in theme 5 (We). As a result, the spoken text is coherent.

There are two pattern of thematic progression in speech 5. The student employs zig-zag and multiple pattern. It is clear that the utterances in talk 5 are interrelated to one another. It can be seen that the rheme of clause 1 (have an unforgettable experience) is taking up in theme 2 (this experience). Besides, It also occurs in rheme of clause 3 (was in Elementary school) becomes theme in clause 4 (In elementary school I), rheme of clause 4 (have a friend named Franky) becomes theme in clauses 5 and 9 (Franky), rheme 5 (is my best friend) in theme 6 (Franky), rheme 6 (is a good friend for me) in theme 7 (and he), and rheme 7 (always played with me in the empty classroom) in theme 8 (when the school). So, it can be concluded that the text is coherent.

E. CONCLUSION

The ability to make a coherent talk in speaking class is very important for the student. Moreover, Daily Conversation is the basic skill of speaking in university level. This skill is very helpful for the students as they are going to be teachers of English, which means they are required to perform good speaking competence.

Based on the data analysis outcome, all of the texts are coherent. In every speech, the utterances are related to each other and the content of almost every talk is relevant to the topic "my unforgettable experience" except for text 2.

In performing their texts, the students tend to use unmarked topical Theme in this case in the form of pronouns, whether singular or plural. Most of the students employed the thematic progression of theme reiteration or constant theme. The second preferred in zig-zag pattern. Multiple patterns are rarely employed in their speaking.

In line with the finding above, teachers and curriculum developers should pay attention to this, and it is suggested they can explain the important of thematic progression in performing a talk in order to be coherent and relevant to the context of speaking.

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