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From Narrative to Analytical: Using Theme/Rheme to Scaffold Students' Revisions Between Genres of Writing

For many ESL students, the linguistic resources needed for explicit development of abstract ideas, a central tenet of academic writing, are difficult to control (Schleppegrell, 2004). Using the linguistic notion of Theme and Rheme (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004), this piece is intended to share a way for teachers to explain differences between these two genres (analytical and personal) and raise students' awareness of the new expectations of academic writing. The notions of Theme and Rheme focus instructors and students on specific language resources and at the same time reference broader discourse features that allow teachers the flexibility of both a micro and macro approach to writing instruction. Such an approach also provides ESL students a toolkit with which they can evaluate their own linguistic choices and incorporate their strengths with the personal genre of writing into a more academic, analytic genre of writing.

As an instructor of writing to nonnative English speakers, I struggle with the task of communicating to my students that their writing needs to be "explicit," that I, as their reader, "should not have to guess about what they mean." To each class I have recited this welcome-to-the-writing-game statement: "I know that you know that I know what you're talking about, *but*, pretend that I don't and be explicit." Often, in response to essay questions that ask students to "explain how X affects/creates/depends on Y," my students provide a narrative about themselves or a friend and a troublesome event they have overcome. In most cases I understand why students would choose the narratives they have and even enjoy reading their stories; however, I still have to tell them that, while their stories are interesting and valuable, they also need to include analysis of these narratives and explicitly relate such analysis to the question asked. In the transition from high school to university, students often need to make the shift from narrative writing and move to the more explicit genre of analytical writing. They need to learn rhetorical and lexicogrammatical strategies to explicitly label the abstract ideas implicit in their narratives. In this fashion, students can keep their narratives as examples and support of a

larger (explicit) idea. Their explicit idea can then be analyzed in a manner more appropriate to university-level writing courses.[1] To add such analysis to subsequent writing drafts, it can be very helpful for students to develop an awareness of some key differences between the narrative and analytical writing genres. Awareness of these key differences will help students to shift their writing from a narrative-type draft to a more analytical piece of writing.

For many first-year undergraduates, the conventions of the analytical genre, the explicit development of abstract ideas, are difficult to control (Schleppegrell, 2001, 2004). Thus, novice academic writers often rely more heavily on the narrative genre, employing character development and plotlines. This piece uses a pedagogical method that can help teachers explain differences between these two genres (narrative and analytical) and raise students' awareness of the expectations of academic writing at the university level. Drawing on student writing samples from freshman intermediate ESL writing composition courses, I hope to achieve the following:

1. Explain the method of Theme/Rheme analysis and why I think it is a valuable revision tool for beginning academic writers;
2. Briefly compare the different linguistic resources common to narrative and analytical genres of writing;
3. Divide a model paragraph into Theme/Rheme to explore how the paragraph successfully uses linguistic resources of the analytical genre;
4. Use Theme/Rheme analysis to show how a different model paragraph transitions from narrative to analytical in subsequent drafts by employing more genre-appropriate linguistic resources; and,
5. Briefly, use this (Theme/Rheme) approach to demonstrate how a model paragraph (from #3 above) is also an integral part of a coherent, whole essay.

The aim of this approach is to help ESL writing instructors focus students on specific language chunks as resources. Students can then use these resources in their own writing and meaningfully revise their writing from primarily narrative to more explicitly analytical.

Step 1: Theme/Rheme Analysis

The first step in this process is to become familiar with a Theme/Rheme framework for analyzing the language resources that skilled writers use to make their analysis *explicit*. In other words, much of what I want students to focus on is *the language*—the specific linguistic resources employed by successful writers that make a piece of writing "analytical" or "narrative." An important part of writing development comes from close readings of paragraphs/essays, which can in turn lead to fruitful (and often detailed) discussions of "what the author meant by X." However, it is hard to develop reading lessons that allow students to articulate "how the author used *language* to make us know what she meant by X." A Theme/Rheme division of a text makes it easier for writers to focus on these linguistic resources.

In systemic functional linguistics, Theme/Rheme (Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004) is a clause-level analysis of language: "The Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context. The remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed, is called in the Prague school terminology, the Rheme" (p. 64). However, for novice writers, dividing *sentences*, rather than each individual clause, is an easier way to analyze a text's lexicogrammatical resources. As will be shown, a Theme/Rheme analysis at the sentence level allows students to easily discuss macro and micro functions of different types of clauses within sentences; clauses are to be discussed primarily as linguistic resources of academic genres rather than as isolated grammatical phenomena.[2] [3] Thus, in my work with students, I redefine Theme as "everything up to the core verb" and the Rheme as "the core verb and everything else."[4] [5] The discussion a teacher and students inevitably have concerning which verb is the "core verb" is normally a fruitful one as it provides examples of main and subordinate clauses as well as how multiple clauses are often used in a single sentence for different stylistic and argumentative effects.

While this Theme/Rheme division of a text is a blurring of traditional (subject/predicate sentential division) and functional grammars, I believe it is both an analytically and pedagogically sound tool for two main reasons:

1. Such "Themes" queue students to the fact that academic writing is often marked at the beginning of sentences (Adverb clauses, Noun clauses, Transitions, Reporting language, Nominalizations, Pronouns);
2. Such "Rhemes" queue students to the verb of the main clause in a sentence. This is a convenient pedagogical and revision tool because many beginning academic writers struggle with verbs (tense, form, choice, and predication).

Table 1 gives examples of a Theme/Rheme division. Examining this division focuses students on how the linguistic choices combine to make up the meaning of each sentence. The ideas the writer develops are underlined. Whether the instructor or a student divides these sentences, close analysis should bring up the question of "what is different between Themes A and B versus Themes C and D?" Simple Themes (A and B) are consistent with the traditional notion of a "subject" in the sentence. The more complex Themes (C and D) demonstrate some of the many lexicogrammatical resources that are most often employed at the beginning of sentences in academic writing, including (but not limited to): transitions ("But," sentence C, "Thus," sentence D), reporting language ("I feel that," sentence C), and adverbial clauses (sentence D).

In terms of genre, what is not the basic Theme is as important as what is the basic Theme; it is not a "character," or student's name, or friend's name. Instead, *ideas* are the basic Themes. When characters rather than ideas are the most salient Themes of an essay or paragraph, it can be a signal to the instructor and student that a shift of genre needs to be made from "too-narrative" to "mostly

Table 1
A Theme/Rheme Division

		Theme	*Rheme*
Simple Themes	A	Analyzing writing →	*is* fun, but complex.
	B	The idea of Theme/Rheme →	*stems* from Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1985) but is more concisely worded by Locke (1996), where "Theme" is "the jumping off point of the clause" and the Rheme is "everything else" (p. 222).
Complex Themes	C	But, I feel dividing up *sentences*, rather than each individual clause, →	*is* a more accessible way into a text and so I redefine Theme/Rheme where Theme is everything up to the "core verb" and the Rheme is "core verb and everything else."
	D	Thus, if you read in CATESOL Exchanges that a Theme/Rheme approach is great, then it	*must be* great, mustn't it?

expository." Most likely, as in the case with my students' narratives, they have an example narrative without the idea it represents. And, without the basic idea made explicit, explicit analysis of their narrative examples is often left out.[6]

The verbs that start the Rheme position are italicized to direct students to both the choice of verbs used and the verbs' tenses and forms. Also, this Theme/Rheme division demonstrates how a Theme can "pick up" an idea from the previous Rheme position to further develop it (see diagonal arrow from "Theme/Rheme" in Rheme C to "Theme/Rheme" in Theme D). This idea of "picking up" an idea from a Rheme into a Theme to show development will be discussed in later examples.[7] While it may appear that the Rheme is less important to be analyzed, this is not the case. Close analysis of students' Rheme positions will often illuminate individual students' thoughtful contributions to a topic.

Finally, discussing all these aspects of a Theme/Rheme division illuminates how sentences build upon each other to create cohesive paragraphs, which in turn build upon each other to create cohesive essays. Such a discussion is focused on the linguistic resources (such as transitions, reporting language, adverbial clauses, appropriately chosen and conjugated verbs) used to create a coherent essay, resources students can then apply to their own writing.

Step 2: Developing Genre Awareness

After students are familiar with the notion of Theme and Rheme, the next

step is to help students develop an awareness of the differences between the narrative and analytical genres. As stated, one of the most important differences in the theme positions found in narrative texts as opposed to analytical texts is that a narrative text (which includes nonfiction historical narratives as well) is normally about a *character* or characters. Thus, development in narrative writing comes through character development—experiences/hardships/trials the character goes through and learns from (or that the audience can learn from). However, the analytical genre fronts *ideas* at the beginning and development comes through "unpacking" or defining and explaining the details that make up the general idea being discussed. Table 2, an abridged version of that presented in Schleppegrell's *The Language of Schooling* (2004, p. 94), highlights several obvious differences (bolded) between genres. Students can then look for these differences in strong model narrative and analytical paragraphs.

Table 2
Analytical and Narrative Genre Expectations

Linguistic resources	***Analytical (explanation, exposition)***	***Narrative***
Focal nouns	Abstract nominal groups, **Ideas**, that "move" argument forward Expanded (dense) nominal groups, **Ideas,** that are later defined (distilled)**, packed and unpacked**	**Characters** that move story forward **Character development** that moves story forward
Verbs	Declarative mood/3rd person **Relational-type verbs (to be, to have)** **Modality (may, might, perhaps)**	Declarative 1st or 3rd person "**Doing" or "action-type" verbs**
Coherence	Thematic (beginning of sentence) placement that **highlights key noun groups** **Logical connections** (however, therefore, because) between paragraphs and ideas	Thematic (beginning of sentence) placement that **highlights character development** **Temporal connections** (then, after that, on Sunday) between paragraphs and stages

To help them see these differences in writing that is mostly narrative versus writing that is mostly analytical, I ask students to analyze both types of paragraphs. First, we focus on what appears in the Theme positions. Focusing on the Theme positions of a paragraph or essay is important as the Theme starts each sentence and allows the reader to focus on what is being discussed. Also, transitions appear in the Theme position. In the narrative genre these transitions are mostly temporal or chronological, highlighting the sequence of events or actions the character goes through. In the analytical genre, though, transitions are mostly logical, based on the logical development and/or connection of one idea to the next.

While examination of the Theme positions of model writings can be fruitful in demonstrating important genre features discussed in the previous para-

graph, examining the Rheme positions can also be illustrative for developing writers. Examining the Rheme highlights the types of verbs used as well their tense and form used in the two genres. The narrative genre mainly uses action-type verbs, where the character is "doing," "feeling," and "experiencing" something. The analytical genre, with its focus on defining and explaining abstract notions, mainly uses relational-type or stative verbs, how an idea "is" and how it "relates" to other noun group(s) being discussed.[8] Also, as we will later see, successful writers in the analytical genre often use modal verbs (may, might, must, have to ...) and other types of interpersonal modality (such as adverbs) to strengthen, hedge, or nuance their argument.

Focusing students on the differences between these two genres can make them aware of the types of linguistic choices that are appropriate for the papers they will have to turn in. Once students have discussed the differences between genres, and the appropriate types of linguistic choices that are expected to be found in each, the next step is to engage the students with a peer model text.

Step 3: Analyzing a Model Student Text

The next step is to apply the Theme/Rheme analysis discussed above to a model student essay that, to a great extent, successfully employs the expected linguistic resources found in analytical texts. Table 3 is a sample text produced by a student at the same level of writing proficiency as students in the class to which it was presented. The prompt to which this essay was responding was: *Write an essay in which you discuss factors in homes and/or school which are, in your opinion, most important for promoting effective learning.*[9] One hopes that all would agree a response should focus on "*factors* that are most important for promoting effective learning. …" For ease of reading, the model response is in prose form below, and then each sentence is split into Theme/Rheme in Table 3:

> 1. Besides audible factors, appearance of studying area, including cleanliness and great illumination, is also a factor that affects students to develop efficient learning skills. 2. In general, a good appearance of area gives people an idea of broadness and comfort, and that makes people stay calm and easily stay focused. 3. First, cleanliness affects students' learning mood. 4. If the desk is dirty, covered with dust, [then] students do not want to sit down and put their books on it. 5. Second, illumination of studying area creates atmosphere for studying. 6. Good illumination lets students read without exhaustion; therefore, they are able to concentrate for a long period of time. 7. On the other hand, if the place is dark, students will feel hard to study after a while, and that might make them stop studying. 8. Hence, appearance of studying area indirectly affects their learning efficiency but still can make a great difference on students' learning mood, so students should not ignore it.

By examining the Theme positions, with the "factors" underlined, we can easily see how the student's response is appropriately focused. Notice how the first abstraction, "good appearance of study area," is a "packed" (dense) nominal group (that also relates explicitly back to the prompt) that is then "unpacked"

Table 3
Sample Model Text Analysis

	Theme	*Rheme*
1	Besides audible factors, appearance of studying area, including cleanliness and great illumination,	*is* also a factor that affects students to develop efficient learning skills.
2	In general, a good appearance of area	*gives* people an idea of broadness and comfort, and that makes people stay calm and easily stay focused.
3	First, cleanliness	*affects* students' learning mood.
4	If the desk is dirty, covered with dust, [then] students	do not want to sit down and put their books on it.
5	Second, illumination of studying area	*creates* atmosphere for studying.
6	Good illumination	*lets* students read without exhaustion;
7	therefore, they	are able to concentrate for a long period of time.
8	On the other hand, if the place is dark, students	*will feel hard to study* after a while, and that might make them stop studying.
9	Hence, appearance of studying area indirectly	*affects* their learning efficiency but still can make a great difference on students' learning mood, so students should not ignore it.

(refined) by the following abstractions (cleanliness, good illumination). Notice also how the student repeats the original packed abstraction "good appearance" in his final sentence. As noted, the author stays focused on these "factors" in this paragraph. Also, instead of a single character for his specific example, a generic noun "students" (sentences 4, 6, 7) is used to develop the abstract idea the author is discussing.[10] These sentences are a good example of borrowing from the narrative genre and using it in analytical writing.

The Theme position also highlights the appropriate use of *logical connectors* (transitions). Theme 1 starts with the adverbial phrase "Besides audible factors," situating this paragraph in relation to other paragraphs in this essay; it is clearly following a paragraph on audible factors and is not a stand-alone paragraph. Theme 1 also contains the *ideas* that will be developed (sentences 2, 3, 5, 6, 9). Although too many logical connectors are used, they are all grammatically correct and, combined with the transitional adverbial phrase starting the paragraph, provide a *logical* sequence to the author's explanation, not a temporal one.[11]

The linguistic resources of this author's Rheme position are also appropriate for the expository genre. First, some of the nouns in the Rheme position are "picked up" in the subsequent Theme, creating a varied flow between ideas within the paragraph. For example, *vertical* arrows connect "cleanliness" and "illumination" of Theme 1 with the same nouns in Themes 2, 3, 5, and 6 respectively, but *diagonal* arrows connect "students" from Rheme 3 and 6 connecting to "students" and "they"/"students" in Themes 4, 7/8 respectively. Second, most of the verbs used are *relational* ("is, gives, affects, creates"), constructing a relation between the Theme and the Rheme. Notice also the *modality* used in the final sentence; the weak modality of "indirectly affects students" becomes a slightly stronger modality with "still can make."[12] This buildup of weak to strong modality not only takes into account the potential pitfalls of his argument, but more important, allows the student to end this paragraph with strong modality, that of obligation, "so students should not ignore it."

The creativity with which the author uses linguistic resources to create a coherent, well-constructed, analytical paragraph is *very* genre appropriate. By "modeling and deconstructing" this paragraph and discussing its strengths and weaknesses, students develop an awareness of the linguistic expectations for the expository genre. The goal is for students to then use these linguistic resources in their own subsequent drafts.

Step 4: Tracing the Revision Process—From Narrative to Analytical

At this stage, once students have developed an applied familiarity with the analytical genre's expectations, it is also helpful for students to discuss a model text in which a peer-author is struggling to make an explicit analytical point tied to his examples. In this exercise, students can try to apply their newly gained genre awareness and analytical skills to evaluate the effectiveness of such a sample piece. Table 4 is such a piece, answering the following prompt: "*Based on your experiences and observations, write an essay in which you discuss several environmental factors, which, in your opinion, have a significant effect on new immigrants to the US.*" The expected response would include two or more environmental factors.

If we stay at the broad level of "what needs to be talked about," or the expected way in which we hope this response will develop, we can see that the author has an awkward mixture of narrative and analytical genres. *Implicitly*, this is a rich response to the question asked and a reader can infer how the author is relating this narrative to the prompt. In the Rheme of his topic sentence he provides abstractions that he could have discussed further ("a psychological feeling" and "the by product of a new environment"). However, instead of "picking up" these ideas in his subsequent Themes, he sticks with his original Theme of "the immigrant." Then, while "the immigrant" is a generic reference noun, a type of abstraction expected in analytical Themes, he chooses to use this noun in a mostly "narrative" fashion. For example, several of the verbs are "action-type" with the character "doing" things (sentences 3, 5, 7, 8); *character development/actions* moves the narrative along ("the immigrant" comes to a new country, tries to fit in, conceals his or her identity, and thus loses a valu-

Table 4
Evaluating a Student's Analytical Point

	Theme	*Rheme*
1	The immigrant	would want to fit into the society;
2	it	is a psychological feeling that is the by product of the new environment ...
3	[I] imagine immigrant that	*move to* a different country that speaks a different language and is a minority.
4	They	would try to fit in as much as possible to the melting pot in America.
5	The most common change in the immigrant	*is change* name, like change I-lung to John ...
6	[R]egardless of their real name the new name, as we call it the "English name"	will be the one other people will know.
7	The immigrant	*concealed* their true identity from other people and when it comes to the second generation, the English name will become the real name in the birth certificate,
8	[H]ence [they]	lose many valuable tradition or culture aspect this way.

able part of him- or herself); these narrative stages are connected *temporally* (the loss of valuable cultural traditions coming after immigration and even with the second generation). By focusing on "the immigrant," any attempt on the author's part to make a generalization of how an environmental factor affects the immigrant becomes difficult, if not impossible. In fact, because "the immigrant" is "doing" in all the previous sentences ("move to," "would try to fit in," "change name"), in the writer's final analytical sentence (signaled by "hence"), "the immigrant" is the *cause* of what happened rather than the *affected*. The key to analyzing a first-draft paragraph such as this one is to discuss how to make this implicit response *explicit* and to use ideas/abstractions instead of characters to move his argument forward.

After analyzing the text, the class could clearly see that this author drew more from the narrative genre in constructing his response than the analytical genre. Students were quick to see this, especially with the Theme/Rheme division, and to note that an "environmental factor," rather than "the immigrant," should be in the Theme positions of this paragraph. Table 5 is the student's revision of the previous paragraph.

Table 5
Student Text Revision After Analysis

	Theme	*Rheme*
1	The <u>environment</u>	*oblige* the immigrant to conform,
2	[W]hen the immigrant move to new place, they	might not want to change at all,
3	[H]owever, they	will have to change because the new environment ...
4	Now imagine in a bigger scale, a family move to a different country, the modification	would be more extensive and conceal more things.
5	The most common concealing	is changing the name,
6	[T]he <u>environment</u>	*force* people change their name to be more commonly accepted, for example I-lung to John ...
7	There	is no more association between I-lung to John than piano to cow.
8	When it comes to the second generation the baby	would be name Bob or Alex, something American, and
9	hence [the immigrant]	lose an important aspect of the name the kids in the tradition way and the subject would lose the part of heritage about name.
10	The <u>environment</u>	*makes* people conceal their identity and eventually their identity would be buried so deep that it is impossible to find it.

As can be seen, there is a huge shift in the paragraph's flow and development once the student focuses on an idea/factor. The "idea" in this paragraph is not quite perfect, but now the problem is one of word choice rather than a much larger genre shift issue.[13] Once this issue was discussed, and an appropriate abstract notion to move the text forward was chosen, the paragraph became a much more genre-appropriate and explicit response to the prompt. Also, because more abstract ideas started sentences, relational verbs follow much more naturally as well.

The *verbs* in sentences 1, 6, and 10 all, appropriately, show a clearly unbalanced relationship between immigrants (or even people—notice this generalization in the 10th Rheme) and "the environment." In sentences 3 to 6 we have

the "picking up" of an idea in a Rheme to be developed in the next Theme position. Here we see a genre-appropriate nominalizing of the verbs ("change" to "modification" in sentences 3 to 4, and "conceal" to "concealing" in lines 4 to 5, as shown by the diagonal arrows). Through this newly focused paragraph, the author demonstrates how the "environmental factor" is the cause of the change in "the immigrant," therein meaningfully adding weight to the analysis of sentence 6. "The environment" used in the Theme position of the final sentence is a very response-specific "environment," appropriately developed with specific examples. The generic referent noun "immigrant" is used only in the first and second sentences and (perhaps) implied in Theme 9. And the author was able to keep much of the work he put into the first draft, using "the immigrant" as specific examples of his idea, rather than as the main idea itself. I believe that *because* of the way this author revised this paragraph he was able to add the final, poignant, analysis at the end—precisely how we would want an analytical paragraph to end.

Of course, this paragraph is still far from perfect writing. However, now that the paragraph is more coherent and its analytical points more explicitly stated, it is now at a great stage for discussion of the grammatical weaknesses of this paragraph, the syntax, the verb agreement, form, and tense issues.[14] Many of these issues might naturally emerge from a closer examination of the Rheme position. These thoughtful ideas came about *after* an examination of Theme/Rheme elements that focused this author and his peers on differences of narrative and analytical genres. Demonstrating this shift between drafts explicitly shows students how substantial changes can be made during the revision process.

Step 5: Situating the Paragraph in the Essay

The final step in this process is to show how a well-constructed paragraph is an integral part of a well-constructed essay. In the initial stages of the Theme/Rheme approach, I have students focus on one paragraph since it is more manageable for students to start using this technique on the development of one idea. This section demonstrates how it is equally important to maintain "flow" between ideas (paragraphs) and to culminate in a conclusion. Table 6 shows how the main idea in a thesis statement is then expanded and developed in the body paragraphs, creating a cohesive "flow" through the entire essay.

The thesis statement's focal nominal group (important factors) both explicitly points back to the prompt *and* is picked up and expanded by each of the following topic sentences. Explicitly showing students how this creates the hard-to-define "flow" of an essay can be visually illuminating. Finally, I show students how this "flow" culminates in a conclusion, an often challenging part of essay writing for developing academic writers.

Table 7 shows how the author has "repackaged" the ideas in the essay in a successful conclusion. First, Table 6 is rewritten in the left column to remind the reader of what is being repackaged in the right. The right-hand column shows how the author took the unpacked nominal groups from the topic sentences and *repacked* them for the conclusion. First (labeled 1 in Table 7), the

Table 6
Sample Model Text Cohesion From Thesis to Support Sentences

"Un-packing": Nominal group cohesion from thesis through topic sentences

1 *Thesis Statement*
I have discovered that there are some **important factors** [that affect learning] in homes or places where students live that play important roles for promoting effective learning.

2 *Topic Sentence 1*
In order to promote effective learning, **a quiet area** is recommended.

3 *Topic Sentence 2*
Besides audible factors, **appearance of studying area** including cleanliness and great illumination is also a factor that affects students to develop efficient learning skills.

4 *Topic Sentence 3*
Thirdly, **parents' education levels** also play a role of affecting efficiency of learning.

5 *Topic Sentence 4*
Parents who have positive attitude towards education usually will encourage their kids to study, and **that** helps students' learning.

Table 7
Sample Model Text Conclusion

Nominal group "unpacking"	***Nominal group "repacking" and final comment***
Factors that affect Quiet area (1) Appearance of area (1) Parents' education levels (2) Parents' encouragement (2)	In conclusion, **the study environment (1) and parents; influence on kids (2)** are foundations of efficiency in pursuit of education. **These factors (3)** not only help students advance their learning and studying in academic field at school, but **they (4)** also help them become motivated and efficient for their career in the **future (5)**. **Furthermore (6),** throughout their lives, they are able to grow from these experiences to absorb complete and useful knowledge during their learning process. **If (7)** students set up the habit to keep their places to study or to work in good condition, **[then] (7)** they not only advances their efficiency at work but also creates a good image to supervisor at work.

author reduced the four ideas from the topic sentences to two ideas (quiet area and appearance of area becomes "the study environment" and "parents' education levels and encouragement" becomes "parents' influence on kids"). Second (labeled 2), the author condenses these two ideas back into the thesis statement's noun "factors" (labeled 3) and then further condenses "factors" by

pronominalizing it as "they" (labeled 4). In this way the author is able to revisit the entire essay in two sentences before adding final analysis to the essay as a whole.

To comment on the whole essay the author uses "the future" (see 5), and adds to his future comment through the logical connector "furthermore" (see 6) and an "if, then" factual conditional (see 7) allows him a strong ending. The point here is for students to discuss the correct use of linguistic resources employed (such as the logical connectors and conditional here) to develop an answer that fits the conventions of the analytical genre, the genre of writing most expected at the college level.

Discussion

The five stages above are pedagogical stages that I suggest teachers follow as a part of the revision process. Because the notion of Theme/Rheme will be new to most students, this will most likely be a series of lessons spread out over the essay-writing process. The greatest strength of this approach is that it keeps teachers and students focused on successfully used linguistic resources expected in the analytical genre. Focusing on specific language resources, and at the same time referencing broader, more implicit, features such as "flow," "focus," and "coherence" allows teachers the flexibility of both a macro and micro approach to writing instruction. This approach heightens students' awareness of the necessary relationships between the macro (thoughtful development) and micro elements (specific lexical and grammatical elements) of academic writing. Most important, this approach provides explicit examples of how stronger students use linguistic resources to explicitly state insightful arguments.

Theme/Rheme analysis is a multilevel mode of textual analysis. Asking students to break apart paragraphs, sentence by sentence, helps them look at their own writing in a new manner. Giving them specific linguistic resources to look for focuses their analysis and can aid them through a more critical revision between drafts. Making them create "flow" from their introduction to their conclusion forces students to create coherent essays, to systematically develop ideas from beginning to end, and explicitly relate their sometimes narrative-style examples to these main ideas; these are fundamental skills to analytical writing. Also, this approach forces students to closely *read* a text and understand how linguistic choices shape a text as it moves along. One hopes this approach can encourage students to move from reading-as-readers and toward reading-as-writers, where they are not reading just for what an author says but how she says it differently depending on the genre. This gives ESL students, whose major struggle is with language, the toolkit with which they can critique published writers and evaluate their own linguistic choices to further develop their writing repertoire. Finally, this approach demonstrates how each of these skills, like each sentence in a well-constructed essay, is integral to a polished final draft. It is this "micro-macro" view of writing that encouraged me to introduce students to a Theme/Rheme approach to revision; I hope this short article encourages other teachers to try it.

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A new father to a third boy, Duane Leonard is finishing a dissertation that explores how an undergraduate ESL program's curriculum and practices are contingent upon institutional and social language policies and attitudes. His interests include discourse analysis, critical ethnography, and ESL pedagogy and curriculum development.

Notes

[1]Or to the university writing preparatory courses that many ESL students take, which often focus on the expository/analytical genres.

[2]*Not* exclusively. Further discussion of clauses is encouraged, but this approach addresses them initially as writing features of the expository genre before exploring other explanations and uses.

[3]Thus such an approach will most likely come after students have received (probably isolated) instruction on the different types of noun, relative, and adverbial clauses; this approach builds on such instruction and demonstrates how the grammatical resources are interwoven into the textual product.

[4]The "core verb" is the verb of the main clause.

[5]This is very similar to a "subject/predicate" distinction, terms that other instructors might choose. ("Complex or Marked Subject" might also be a way to label the "Theme," highlighting that, linguistically, more language is probably in this first position than just one noun or noun phrase). However, the functional linguistics behind the notion of "Theme" and "Rheme" are based in *discourse* and *text* analysis. Using the term "Theme" suggests that all sentences are cohesively related ideas and using "Rheme" focuses on the development of the ideas. The terms "subject" and "predicate" simply do not imply this "whole-text" sense.

[6]This is explicitly seen and discussed later when I compare the final analytical sentences in Tables 4 and 5.

[7]But this is a more complex way of discussing the Theme/Rheme relationship in a paragraph and thus minimized in this discussion.

[8]Relational verbs are verbs that show a relation between the argument (traditionally subject) and its counterpart (traditionally object), or how A "is" or "relates to" B. Here is a nonexhaustive list: be, belong to, concern, consist of, contain, cost, depend on, deserve, equal, fit, have, include, involve, lack, matter, need, owe, own, possess, require, resemble, seem, sound.

[9]If possible, teachers should reflect on the above question to pinpoint what specific part of the question they would want their students to explain in an essay.

[10]A single character could have been used appropriately as well. However, students often get sidetracked once they start using a single character as an example. Simply turning the single character into a generic noun is one possible way to avoid adding unfocused details and to stay focused on developing the core ideas of the paragraph (as this student did).

[11]And here is a chance for students to discuss the overuse of linguistic resources, however genre appropriate.

[12]I am including a functional notion of modality that can include adverbs (as

mood adjunct) and adjectives (as comment adjunct; see *An Introduction to Functional Grammar,* pp. 126 and 129 respectively).

[13]If "social pressures" is substituted for "environment" one has a much better idea moving the argument forward, for example.

[14]I think any discussion of grammatical/syntactical choices before this point would not be relevant to a subsequent draft, since the student first needed to broadly reframe his response in a more analytical way.

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