



An Investigation on Thematic Patterns and Progression in Two Short Stories

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In the current paper, the principles of the Theme-Rheme theory will be employed to conduct a comparative study of the stylistic and communicative purposes of two short stories written by Olga Masters, in an attempt to uncover the values encoded in representing the two male protagonists of these two stories. The paper starts by introducing the stories as research texts, and then provides a brief overview of the Theme-Rheme theory with focus on Thematic patterns and progression. Following this, the texts are broken into clauses and a detailed analysis of the clauses is carried out to reflect the images of two main characters of the stories. Finally, the main results of this analysis are reviewed to highlight the similarities and differences in style and structure employed in these two stories by the author Olga Masters and how she portrays reality.

Key words: *Systemic Functional Grammar; Textual meaning; Theme; Thematic patterns and progression*

INTRODUCTION

When text reading and interpretation is considered, communication between the reader/interpreter and the writer, it would be clear that the writer tries to how the reader/interpreter can potentially react to what he/she has to say and use accordingly all the language resources available to help the reader interpret the text successfully. This raises a question of whether the writer's aim is to amuse readers with their narration or to convince them of the stances in his/her argument in expository texts.

The writer's attempt to help readers understand and interpret the message effectively, however, could be inspired by his/her not so entirely conscientious scheme to win them over to his/her particular view of an issue. Indeed, this could manifest itself in the form of

language manipulation. Newspapers, for example, can report one and the same incident quite differently in accordance with a particular viewpoint they adopt.

Many studies have been done related to the topic of Thematic progression patterns that analysed several Thematic structure problems (Chen & Zheng, 2019; Cummings, 2003; Daneš, 1974; Dong, Shao, & Jia, 2016; Kuswoyo, 2016; Wang, 2007). It is assumed that Thematic patterns and progression are correlated with genres including narration, exposition, description and argumentation. However, no research has been done on comparing the realisation of Thematic patterns and progression in two literary texts. Therefore, the current paper investigates the clausal Thematic features employed by Olga Masters for spreading her messages in her short stories: “A Young Man’s Fancy” and “The White Woman”. The study tries to answer the questions: (1) What are the Thematic patterns and progression preferably realised in these two stories? (2) How are these clausal Thematic features used by Masters to portray reality?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of the research materials

Research materials for the present study are composed of two literary texts that have much in common. First of all, both short stories belong to an Australian female writer, Olga Masters. Secondly, they share the same main topic, ‘the sadness and loneliness of a man’, and are told from the third person point of view. In each story, the protagonist is a man coping with daily life situations and looking forwards to a change for a better life. As for the dissimilarities between the two texts, they were written about 50 years apart and were introduced to the public through different channels: “A Young Man’s Fancy” (hereafter YMF) was published in Masters’ collection of short stories *The Home Girls* (1982) while “The White Woman” (henceforth WW) first appeared as a serial story in a local newspaper *The Cobargo Chronicle* of 1935 (1935).

The plot of the YMF begins with the morning routines of the protagonist: from his waking-up moment to his readiness for work. To the readers’ surprise, the protagonist of the story is not given a name. How old he is, what he looks like, and what dress he is in were shrouded in mystery to the readers, which distances himself from the readers in the physical world. This may suggest that by concealing the physical identity of the main character Olga Masters establishes his feeling identity and true thinking as well.

The text of WW introduces the main character called Macadam. Aside from the name of the protagonist, no further information is given about him such as his job, his family, or even the reason why he is at the beach at night time. However, through Masters’ description of his actions and thoughts and the surroundings, an assumption can be made that Macadam is

lonely and unhappy with his life or the actual world so he finds a hiding place at a sandy beach.

Theme system and textual function

Halliday (1985; 1994) claims the ‘textual’ component in language is the set of grammatical and lexical resources with which a speaker or writer produces texts. One important option in the textual configuration of discourse is that of what will take Theme position; indeed, for Halliday (1985, p. 53), “the textual function of the clause is that of constructing a message” and the Theme/Rheme structure is the “basic form of the organization of the clause as message”. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004; 2014) and Cummings (2003) state that Theme refers to the item which distributes as the departure point of the utterance. The Theme of the clause, the initial experiential element of the clause, functionally combines the expression of the speaker’s perception of reality and the speaker’s concerns to convey that perception of reality to the listener. This means that the way a clause starts helps to integrate the meaning into the general context of the discourse while at the same time to determine the way in which the new information given by the clause will then reveal.

In Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2004; 2014) theory, Theme provides the background for the remainder of the message, the Rheme. It is worth mentioning that everything else in a clause that is not the Theme is called the Rheme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Eggins (2004) reiterates this when he clarifies that the Theme initiates “the semantic journey” of the clause, and he adds that if a different departure point is chosen for the journey, a different journey result is obvious. Thus, through analysis of the text itself and its Theme/Rheme structure “...we can gain an insight into its texture and understand how the writer made clear to us the nature of his underlying concerns” (Halliday M. A., 1994). The Theme system contributes to the realisation of how the text clauses stick together and how the text relates to its context by offering us choices about what meanings to prioritise in a text. Obviously, the skilful use of Thematic patterns leads to the internal cohesion of the text which seems to “hang together and make sense” (Eggins, 2004, p. 320). In the further explanation, the involvement of Thematic choice to the cohesion and the coherence of the text will be revealed by investigating the Theme types and Thematic progression of the discourse.

Relating to Thematic realisation, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, pp. 79-87) and Bloor and Bloor (2004, pp. 88-92) claim that Thematic structure operates at the clausal level and all full clauses possess Thematic structure. In line with the three metafunctions of language, the experiential, the interpersonal, and the textual, they then identify three basic kinds of Theme – topical, interpersonal, and textual. This Theme categorisation is supported by Ghaleasadi (2012). The topical Themes can be recognised as the first item in the clause which conveys representational meaning. Apart from the topical Theme, there exist other elements which can be Thematic, yet which do not contain all of the Thematic potential of the clause. They are textual and interpersonal Themes. The textual Themes are those elements in clause-initial

point and are contributory in the creation of the logical connections in the texts, such as linkers, binders, and other textual markers. In a simple word, textual Themes provide links between ideas. The interpersonal Themes, also in clause-initial position immediately preceding the topical Theme, express the writers' stance and assessment with respect to his/her message, including those expressing modality and polarity. The three types of Themes are exemplified in Table 1, (the topical Themes are italicised; the textual and interpersonal Themes are also italicised, then underlined and put in bold respectively):

Table 1. Types of Themes

Type	Token
Topical	<i>Macadam</i> lay back on the sands... (WW2)
Textual	<u><i>Then</i></u> <i>the moon</i> arose from out of the valley of the sea. (WW15)
Interpersonal	<u><i>Hardly</i></u> <i>anyone</i> called him Mister. (YMF18)

As we can see in Table 1, the textual and interpersonal Themes always forego the topical Theme. However, it is noteworthy that the Theme is not only recognised by the clause-initial position. Rather the recognition is functional in the fact that the Theme is the element offering a local context within which the remainder of the clause can be interpreted (Daneš, 1974). It is the writer-oriented in representing his/her selection of the starting point for the clause as message. When there is only a topical Theme as in the example of WW2, the clausal Theme is considered to be simple; when there is also a textual and/or an interpersonal element, the Theme is said to be multiple as represented in WW15 and YMF18. Multiple Themes are especially interesting in the aspect of cohesion given that they may possess several cohesive devices together as can be seen in the instance (1) below:

(1) *And through all this* *Macadam* had not stirred to take up his palette. (WW9)

The multiple Themes express three types of cohesion: additive conjunction 'and', adversative conjunction 'through all this', and personal acknowledgment 'Macadam'.

When the Theme coincides with the Subject, it is called an unmarked Theme. However, when a clause starts with a circumstance or even a process instead of a participant because the writer wants to emphasise something other than the subject of the clause, or the Theme does not correspond with the Subject, it is called marked Themes.

Thematic progression

Bloor and Bloor (2004, p. 84) demonstrate that the flow of language that is coherent and sensible is believed to possess a texture i.e. the text has cohesion, thematic structure, and information structure. Thus, to obtain that goal, the clauses must sit tight with each other as what can be termed a text's harmony of texture. The cohesiveness of a text can be realised in

the progression of Themes from clause to clause (Hawes & Thomas, 2012; Cummings, 2003). This means that the notions of Theme and Rheme are also used in the organisation of a text or Thematic progression refers to the way in which the Theme of a clause may pick up, or repeat, a meaning from a preceding Theme or Rheme (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; 2014).

Earlier to this, Halliday (1994, p. 55) claims that the Thematic principle lies behind the development of paragraphs in any written discourse. He then emphasises how Themes and Rhemes could be bound into Thematic progression to create coherent texts (p. 388). More specifically, Daneš (1974) considers Thematic progression as the picking-up and ordering of clauses with Themes, together with their connection to the hyper Themes of the superior text units to the whole text and to the situation. In that case, Thematic progression might be considered the skeleton of the whole story (p. 114). To put it simply, Thematic progression denotes to the way the Theme of a clause is developed or to the way Themes relate to each other and to Rhemes so as to create continuity in discourse and to shape the text.

Regarding the Thematic progression, Bloor and Bloor (2004) and Paltridge (2006) propose three types of the patterns in English texts, namely constant Theme pattern, linear Theme pattern, and derived Theme pattern. According to them, constant Theme pattern demonstrates the first Theme which is carried on and appears in the opening of the next clause. Thus, the Theme appears in a range of utterances as the main topic. The Linear Theme pattern is employed when the main message in Rheme continues in the next clause as a Theme, which means there is a connected relation between the first Rheme and the following subsequent Theme. A derived Theme pattern emerges when the topics of each individual sentence seem independent but are linked or derived from the same principal Theme or overall Theme of a paragraph or text. The following examples will illustrate the presentation of Thematic progression:

Constant Theme

- (2) **He** forward and gazed intently into the depths of the rock-pools moved below him. (WW18)
- (3) **He** had looked at them before, but he had felt no emotion,... (WW19)
- (4) **He** saw how dark these rock-pools were,... (WW20)

Linear Theme

- (5) **He** jumped and so did **Mrs Lake** next door who had pulled aside a branch of a cassia bush ... (YMF12)
- (6) **She** dropped the branch pretending to look into the shrub. (YMF13)

Derived Theme

- (7) **The night sky** beheld one star, gleaming like a lone clematis flower,... (WW1)
- (8) **Night with all her mysteries, her rapture, her harmony**... spangled with stars... (WW12)

(9) *Then the moon* arose from out of the blackness of the night. (WW14)

In short, Thematic patterns and progression are the significant way to organise the discourse, signifying the topic, and making the passage cohesive and smooth.

METHOD

In this paper, the principles of Systemic Functional Grammar theory with a focus on Thematic patterns and progression were applied to a comparative study of two texts from YMF and WW. Only the first section from each short story has been selected for a detailed textual analysis because it is in the opening part the author gives extensive details about the individual and typical traits of their characters and thoughts. It is interesting here that Olga Masters is often well known as a woman writer of women topics so the researcher would take a challenge to see how Masters dealt with male stories with male protagonists (Hanh, 2018; Jones, 1990). In that regard, the present research aims to systematically investigate observable linguistic features, typically Thematic patterns and progression, and analyse them quantitatively and qualitatively. Then, it is to explore how Thematic features are used by Olga Masters to portray reality.

To begin with, the texts were broken into clauses. Each individual clause was labelled by upper case letters indicating the story, Arabic numbers representing the number of its clause complex in each story. Here is the example: *He had been down in the glen for hours* (WW7) – this is the seven clause complex in “The White Woman”. Then an in-depth analysis was undertaken to categorise the Thematic patterns and progression in each story, from which the similarities and differences in style, structure, approach and tone were highlighted. The analysis would testify the supposition of Bloor and Bloor (2004) and Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) that there are some inner relations between Thematic patterns, Thematic progression and genres.

RESULTS

Realisation of thematic patterns in YMF and WW

Table 2 presents the percentages (based on the total number of main clauses) of the texts relating to the frequency of topical, textual and interpersonal Themes. The following subsections will report the frequency of each Theme type and provide examples from YMF and WW to illustrate how Themes are used.

Table 2. The distribution of Theme Types in YMF and WW

Theme types	YMF		WW	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Topical	36	87.80%	35	76.08%
Textual	01	2.43%	07	15.21%
Interpersonal	04	9.75%	04	8.69%
Total	41		46	

There are similarities and differences between YMF and WW in reference to Theme choice. In this study, both extracts employ the nearly same percentage of interpersonal Themes, around 9% of the total Themes. The highest distribution of Theme type lies in the topical Theme counting for 87.80% in YMF and 76.08% in WW. The striking difference can be seen in the combination of topical and textual Themes. In WW we find that topical Themes are frequently preceded by textual Themes, particularly conjunctions linking a paratactic clause (*and, then*) with over 15% recognised as textual Themes while in YMF there is only one occurrence with hypotactic element (*but*) equivalent of 2.43% of the total Themes calculated.

The first nuclear experiential element within the clause is defined as the topical Theme. It is central to uncovering of the text by allowing the tracking of the discourse participants (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 68). For Halliday (1985; 1994), the topical Theme of the declarative clause comprises one structural element operating as a participant, process or circumstance in the clause. It can be recognised as the first element in the clause that articulates some kind of representational meaning. The following examples clarify this:

Table 3. Types and tokens of topical Theme

Type	Token
Participant	<i>Macadam</i> sprang to his feet... (WW17)
Circumstance	<i>In the kitchen</i> he saw the toaster showing a line of scarlet... (YMF6)
Process	<i>Pass</i> me the salt (Eggins, 2004, p. 311) ¹

In these instances, the Theme in WW17, *Macadam*, is an agentive participant, in YMF6 *In the kitchen* is a Circumstance and in (Eggins, 2004, p. 311) *Pass* is a Process.

In English declaratives, the topical Theme usually corresponds with the Subject or, more markedly, the Complement in preverbal position of the main clause as in the following examples:

¹ There is not any case of Process as the topical Theme in both YMF and WW. The example is taken from "An introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics" by Suzanne Eggins

(10) *He* had been down in the glen for hours (WW7)

(11) *In the kitchen* he saw the toaster showing a line of scarlet... (YMF6)

As Eggins (2004, p. 318) argues that when the speaker/ writer prefers a marked choice then they are signaling that all things are not equal, that something in the text requires an atypical meaning to be made. In other words, the marked topical Themes can contribute to the coherence of a text by allowing certain ideas to become prominent without being the subject or an actor of the clause. Looking back into YMF and WW, there is a low incidence of marked Themes for both texts. It can be explained that the writer seems to keep a focus on the main character when ‘*he*’ takes a majority proposition of unmarked topical Themes in the text.

In these two texts, it is found out that the overwhelming majority of topical Themes tend to be pronouns (*he, she, it*) and two or three cases of name (*Macadam* in WW). When they are not pronouns, the topical Theme tends to be a brief nominal group such as *The moon, The little baby...* or includes a simple circumstantial expression such as *Nearby, In the kitchen* in YMF and *In their depths* in WW. The two texts tend to build up new information in the clause Rheme. There is a fact that the repeated use of the same unmarked topical Theme will constitute the continuous Thematic pattern in the texts, which will be more discussed below in the subsection ‘Thematic progression’.

In the event of a nominal group as Theme, this may conflate with the Subject of the clause, as in the Participant example WW17, this is taken as the unmarked option for the Theme choice. Marked options comprise starting off with a Circumstance, as can be seen in the example YMF6, as these can be positioned elsewhere in the clause. The Themes designated as ‘other’ include the introduction of new characters or some new element of ideational meaning. For example, the use of the existential subject ‘There’ allows the writer the opportunity to clarify more setting information as in “There were toys on the floor, (YMF5)”. Table 4 illustrates the representation of topical Themes in YMF and WW.

Table 4. Representation of topical Themes in YMF and WW

Types of topical Themes	YMF		WW	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Participant	30	87.71%	30	85.29%
Circumstance	03	9.37%	03	11.77%
Process	0	0%	0	0%
Others (<i>There</i>)	02	5.72%	02	2.94%
Total	35		34	

Looking at the table 4, we can find that the great majority of topical Themes in both YMF and WW are realized by Participants counting for 87.71% and 85.29% respectively of the total topical Themes. In a more detailed examination, both of the texts use nearly the same number of their Theme slots as Actor of Material processes. For example:

- (12) *He* turned over away from the sight... (YMF2)
- (13) *He* jumped... (YMF12)
- (14) *She* dropped the branch... (YMF13)
- (15) *Macadam* lay back on the sands ... (WW2)
- (16) *He* stirred, glanced swiftly at his easel... (WW6)
- (17) *The light of the day* had gone,... (WW9)

With those topical Themes as Participants, particularly as Actors, it suggests that the writer focuses on the main character of the story and his deeds. However, with Halliday's Transitivity theory (1985; 1994), the activities of the protagonist do not actually involve in or require physical forces but the movements of body only. It confirms the internal conflicts within the protagonists. They really want to do something but do not know what to do. Thus, they feel so restless.

In terms of Circumstance as the topical Theme, the most frequent circumstantial element as Theme is location, especially spatial location. Only one Thematic Circumstance refers to time as in "*For a moment*, he stood still, his head thrown back" (WW34). This point suggests that the writer tends to build the relation and connection between the main character with his surrounding environment. The writer also creates the setting for the events. In the instance of "*In the kitchen* he saw the toaster showing a line of scarlet... (YMF6)", readers may assume that the protagonist "*he*" appears as a man of family and the setting where his feelings and activities are observed and depicted is inside his house. The similar message can be drawn from the other example of Thematic Circumstance in WW: "*Far out at sea*, he heard it scream lustily (WW13)". Now readers know that the main character of WW "*Macadam*" is somewhere near the sea. Readers can also feel the darkness, tranquillity and emptiness cover Macadam when he appears as a tiny entity in a massive open air.

Regarding the topical Theme as Process, there is not any case in the two texts. It is understandable because both YMF and WW are written in narrative style from the third person point of view. The stories also reflect the loneliness of the main characters with their internal thoughts and feelings. They seem not to develop any kind of face-to-face communication with the society so there should be no cross messages, requests, commands or any form of dialogue.

Apart from the topical/ ideational Themes of the clauses, Halliday claims that textual Themes also help the reader to follow the text flow more easily because textual Themes are links which stipulate the relationship of the clause to the nearby text and context. Textual Themes,

as reported by Halliday, include continuatives, structural Themes, and conjunctive Adjuncts. For example, in these two clauses, the textual Theme marked as underlined, italics serves to join two sentences as a time sequence.

(18) *Far out at sea* he heard it scream lustily,... (WW13)

(19) *Then the moon* arose from out of the blackness of the night. (WW15)

Looking back at Table 2 we can see that the total distribution of textual Themes is considerably different counting for only 2.43% in YMF and 15.21% in WW. In addition to frequency, it can be observed that WW uses greater variety of textual Themes than YMF. It suggests that the sentences in YMF are less textually related to each other than those in WW. This seems to me that in YMF each activity follows orderly the other in the sense that the writer is depicting the tedious life of the protagonist, reflecting his being trite with repetitive daily routine: he gets up, searching the whole house, thinking about his wife and his children. His doings are fixed as in a timetable. In WW, we can see the links between the main character's activities, reflecting the continuity of his feelings and thoughts. We also see the sequence of time with the three uses of 'Then'. Thus, the events in WW are better hung together.

As Halliday and Matthiessen (2004; 2014) claim, the textual Themes normally refer to a kind of conjunction, containing the kinds that link (paratactic), such as *and*, *but*, *so*, *then* etc. and/or those that bind (hypotactic), such as *when*, *since* (ibid). With that view, textual adjuncts are considered linking or binding clauses together, which perhaps does not justice to their semantic role of also supplying interpersonal comment. For example, if we take the following example into consideration "*But she* was curled in a bottom corner with a large rag doll across her rump... (YMF28)", '*But*' is employed as a textual Theme and adjunct, as it connects to the previous clause, in which the father's worries about 'the empty cot' have been clear. The use of '*But*' indicates that the writer believes the reader to assume that the girl is there in the cot. Thompson (2004, p. 9) suggests that conjuncts such as *and* and *but* and subordinators such as *because* and *although* expect a common ground between reader and writer in terms of what is expected or unexpected at any particular point in the discourse". They argue that "conjuncts reflect a more dominant role for the writer in that they guide the reader towards the type of conjunction which the writer has already decided on" (Thompson, 2004, p. 141). The function of conjuncts such as *and* and *but* is to provide a link between propositions based on how the writer views the expectedness of the upcoming proposition in light of the previous proposition.

We just looked into the topical and textual Themes in YMF and WW, now we move to the interpersonal Theme. The interpersonal Theme is related to social relationships, particularly in the interaction between the writer and the reader. In using the interpersonal Theme, the writer wants to put a kind of interference or involvement in this interaction. Similarly, with the realisation of topical Theme, the interpersonal Theme counts for the same percentage of

the total Themes in YMF and WW. There appear only several cases of interpersonal Themes as can be seen in following occurrences:

(20) *After a while he* could bear it no longer and got up ... (YMF3)

(21) *Hardly anyone* called him Mister. (YMF18)

(22) *Suddenly he* was lured by the faintest music beating in his ears, ... (WW24)

(23) *Perhaps she* was beating her hands together to the rhythm of the tune, ... (WW30)

(24) *Perhaps her lithe young body* was swinging amid a whirl of gossamer,... (WW31)

The interesting thing observed in WW is that the interpersonal Thematic structure of WW contains three uses of Mood adjuncts '*Perhaps*'. It is the realisation of the interpersonal Theme since they can be moved to the Rheme if the writer wants. It also gives the prominence to the expression of tentativity which runs through the text (Eggs, 2004, p. 322). Generally speaking, because the two stories are written in the third person point of view, not many interpersonal evaluations and judgments have been made. The author just provides the readers with a description of the events and people, then leaves them for the readers to feel and interpret.

In short, regarding the aspect of Theme choices, the two texts YMF and WW share the similarities in realisation of topical and interpersonal Themes of which the topical Theme is the most frequently represented. In these two texts, the most popular point of departure is recognised as a Participant in a Material process. There is not any Process as the Theme in the data, which has been explained as being due to the narrative nature of the monologue texts. The focus of the content is laid on the main characters being illustrated as the highest element of unmarked topical Theme '*he*' in both YMF and WW. Apart from these common things, the difference can be found in the use of textual Themes. The greater frequency and variety of textual Themes in WW reflects the point that WW has better cohesion and coherence when the clauses in WW are more textually hooked together than those in YMF. The range of Themes types in YMF and WW can be explained that the dissimilarity in shared knowledge between the writer and reader may limit the range of choices from which the writer can pick up a departure point for a sentence or a clause.

Realisation of thematic progression patterns in YMF and WW

It is a common sense that the writer and the reader of a text need to be certain that they are following the progression of that text. Many texts are signposted by employing elements from the Rheme of one clause into the Theme of the subsequent clause, or by reiterating meanings from the Theme of one clause in the Theme of following clauses. This kind of text expansion is called Thematic development or Thematic progression.

With that idea, YMF and WW are analysed for Thematic progression so as to find out whether the writer does actually provide an ease of reading and assimilation of material by

of WW29 'The White Woman' which becomes the Theme of WW30 'She'. The following examples clarify this observation:

Constant Theme

(28) *Macadam* lay back on the sands... (WW2)

↓

He stirred, glanced swiftly at his easel... (WW6)

↓

He had been in the glen for hours. (WW7)

↓

He had seen the sun sink,... (WW8)

Derived Theme from hyper Theme 'The night sky'

(29) 'The night sky' Then *night* stole in at last (WW11)

↑

Then *the moon* arose from out of the blackness of the night. (WW14)

↑

Then *the moon* arose from out of the valley of the sea. (WW15)

↑

Linear Theme

(30) It might have been the voice of *the White Woman*,... (WW29)

Perhaps she ← was beating her hands together to the rhythm of the tune,... (WW30)

In the context of a provided text, the protagonist as an entity would be thematised quite regularly, being repeated quite often as the Theme of clauses. Due to the repetitions, it became difficult to determine whether one of these kinds of Themes progressed from a preceding Theme or from a Rheme. This is because these Themes have been stated several times throughout the previous discourse, thus allowing the writer to place them at any given moment, without necessarily providing a specific association with an immediately preceding clause. These types of Themes are labelled key Themes. An example of this can be seen in both YMF and WW. "He" becomes a key Theme in these texts, as it is regularly repeated as the Theme throughout both extracts. In this case, the fact that the same topical Theme 'he' is reiterated regularly contributes to text cohesion and coherence because a clear focus is maintained throughout the text. However, sometimes it is difficult for the reader to comprehend the text. When the Theme never changes, the point of departure of a message

remains constant. Consequently, the new information introduced in Rheme is never developed and followed up, which may make a text appear to lack development. Also, the recurrence of the key Theme ‘*he*’ as point of departure makes the text like a list rather than the flow of narration.

The constant Theme is used when the writer believes in a significant amount of common knowledge on the part of the reader. Consequently, it is not necessary to the writer to focus on the information introduced in the previous Rheme. It is true in the case of these two texts YMF and WW when ‘*he*’ becomes a constant Theme, even a key Theme. The writer considers the main focus of the texts as on the protagonist ‘*her*’ so she takes it for granted that the readers share with her the knowledge on that ‘*he*’. She keeps introducing ‘*he*’ in the Theme position and considers it as a cohesive device which links clauses together and relates them to the text as a whole.

It is indicated that the difference in common understanding between the writer and the reader limits the writer’s options for picking up a departure point of a clause; therefore, the foundation for a subsequent expression can only be established by selecting from the range of information contained in the Rheme of the preceding context to which the reader and writer can hold as shared knowledge. With the use of the simple linear pattern, then, the writer can confirm that the reader is always “with them” in terms of points of departure, thus elaborating on concepts in a way which lets the reader create the conceptual framework. Here in YMF and WW, we can see the overriding use of subject pronouns and proper names.

The first result of interest witnesses the similarity between continuous Thematic progression across YMF and WW. It can be seen that some of these constant Theme progression chains are quite “narrative” in character; that is, they recount the deeds of an individual, and that individual is a principal character in those passages of the text:

Table 5. Examples on the representation of constant Themes in YMF and WW

YMF	WW
<i>He</i> woke and saw the empty place... (YMF1)	<i>Macadam</i> lay back on the sands... (WW2)
<i>He</i> turned over away from the sight... (YMF2)	<i>He</i> stirred, glanced swiftly... (WW6)
<i>He</i> could bear it no longer... (YMF3)	<i>He</i> had been in the glen for hours. (WW7)
<i>He</i> dodged past chairs ... (YMF4)	<i>He</i> had seen the sun sink,... (WW8)

CONCLUSIONS

Recapitulation

A number of findings emerged from the analysis of Thematic patterns and progression from Olga Masters' "A Young Man Fancy" and "The White Woman". In terms of Theme types, both YMF and WW contain a big use of unmarked topical Themes, being realised as an Actor of Material process. There are several cases of interpersonal Themes, which is due to the fact that YMF and WW belong to a narrative style from third person point of view. The writer seems not to give any comments or evaluation on the events; it is the task of the readers to explore and interpret the text. The difference between the two texts lies in the realisation of textual Themes where YMF contains the smaller proportion of textual Themes than WW. In the sense that textual Themes either link or bind the text as a whole, the clauses in YMF are not textually stuck together as much as in WW. Maybe the writer tries to depict the humdrum life of the main character while in WW, the main character is described in relation with his activities and surroundings.

In terms of Thematic progression, the investigation shows that both texts tend to use constant Themes at the highest rate, followed by derived Themes and linear Theme pattern. There is only a slight difference in the amount of derived Themes and linear Theme pattern. The great use of a constant Theme in both YMF and WW reflects the writer keeps the focus on the main character, his thoughts and feelings. Being the key Theme in the texts '*he*' confirms that the whole story spins around the main character. In some extent, it gives the readers the clear track of the story. However, sometimes it may create boredom for the readers because the new information in Rheme of the clause is left undeveloped or unsolved.

In short, investigating the two extracts from Olga Masters' "A Young Man's Fancy" and "The White Woman", we can see that Masters develops the similar style in Theme choices. To keep the clear content of her narration, she prefers unmarked topical Themes. To provide a flow for her texts, she favours constant Themes most. The investigation shows several differences in the realisation of textual Themes or in Thematic progression but they are not really big enough to be mentioned.

Pedagogical implication

Obviously, Systemic Functional Grammar is a rather complex and challenging grammatical system with its numerous pioneering notions and technical terms. This will certainly create a severe setback for English teachers, native or non-native, who possess only knowledge of traditional structural linguistics. It is also clear, however, that SFG can offer powerful analytical tools in evaluating and analysing texts as has hopefully been demonstrated in this paper. Implementing some of SFG insights, especially the Thematic patterns and progression, into the classroom discussion of texts could be quite rewarding. For example, in writing

lessons, the teacher can then analyse and evaluate the learner's work at the discourse level, well beyond the prescriptive instruction on orthography and syntax at the sentence level. In reading lessons as well, the teacher can have learners trace the Themes and discover the focuses and organisation of the text. Difficult as it seems, with greater awareness on the teacher' side, the application of Systemic Functional Grammar can prove to be satisfactory in many important ways for the improvement of ELF teaching and learning.

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