

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE TOPICAL STRUCTURE
OF PARAGRAPHS WRITTEN BY FILIPINO
STUDENTS**

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This study investigates the topical progression in paragraphs written by Filipino ESL students. Data consists of 60 paragraphs lifted from the definition essays that were part of the students' portfolios. The paragraphs were analyzed using Lautamatti's topical structure analysis (TSA), which examines the internal topical structure by looking at the repetition of key words and phrases and provides insights into the internal coherence in paragraphs. It was found that parallel progression was most frequently used in the paragraphs, followed by extended and sequential progressions. The extended sequential progression was least used.

Writing is a highly complex process for novice and non-novice writers alike since it involves a host of advanced skills that include critical thinking, logical development, and coherence of ideas. Realizing coherence in written discourse is one major challenge confronting writers, since it is not just a desirable character of a text but a crucial aspect that establishes the oneness of a collection of abstract thoughts. Both novice and non-novice writers can only claim a written text is successful if it is able to found a relation between the writer and reader, and between clauses, sentences, and paragraphs.

Coherence is defined by Moore (1971) as "the rhetorical quality by which all of the parts are clearly and smoothly joined to each other" (p. 115). Good writing requires logically consistent ideas in order for the writer to compose a coherent piece of discourse that is readable and understandable to whoever the intended audience may be or whatever the writer's purpose may be. According to

Johns (1986), coherence is “a feature internal to text, either in terms of the linking of sentences (cohesion) or as the relationships among propositions in the text (sticking to the point)” (p. 250). And while cohesion can be noted as being more concerned with linguistic interrelatedness of the features utilized by the writer with the end view of producing a coherent text, it does not always follow that cohesion results in coherence. For a text to be coherent it should also make sense, and there should be a consistent development of ideas, concepts, or arguments.

It is a common observation that students focus more on the lexical and sentence levels rather than on the discourse level. Usually, teachers find students using transitional links in their writing without really creating a coherent piece, and that more often than not, students turn out cohesive pieces of writing when they work more on the underlying coherence (thought progression) in the relationship of ideas. This relationship is what may have allowed Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) to claim that “continuity of sense is the foundation of coherence, being the mutual access and relevance within the configuration of concepts and relations” (p. 85). Without such continuity, any piece of writing is just plain writing, without making much sense to the reader about the points it makes. Thus, it can be said that coherence in writing is achieved when writers are able to successfully establish a relationship among the underlying semantic features of a text and its concepts. An information is a coherent discourse if the reader is able to move through a series of interwoven sentences and can see this as an integrated whole (McCrimmon, 1984).

Writing puts the burden of achieving coherence on both native and non-native writers of the target language, since both have the responsibility to produce coherent discourse to indicate unobtrusively logical interrelationships of parts to their readers, as indicated by Moore (1971). The problem is even more compounded for second language learners writing in a second or foreign language such as English. The challenge of producing coherent texts is even more intense for these second language learners who come from a

different cultural background, inasmuch as it has been established that learners' differences in writing and in achieving coherence are dictated by culture (Kaplan, 1987) and that writing is seen as "the site of struggle and change" (Candlin & Hyland, 1999, p. 11). Since organizing words and sentences into a unified coherent discourse bears cultural significance (Tannen, 1984), learners may feel compelled to transcend the boundaries of writing conventions learned within their native culture and adapt the established norms of written discourse of the second language. However, coherence in writing specifically in the English language can be more readily achieved through certain strategies (introductory activities, explicit teaching, awareness-raising tasks, and writing practice), as discussed by Lee (2002).

Aside from Lee's suggestions, one method writers have adopted to achieve coherence in writing in English is the topical structure analysis (TSA) proposed by Lautamatti (1987). The study of TSA has gained interest among researchers in their desire to determine thematic development in paragraphs and styles of writing of individuals. The use of TSA as device in investigating the progressions in writing has been validated by several researchers as a clear demonstration of style and strategy in linking ideas within paragraphs and reflection of thought progression.

Lautamatti used topical structure analysis in determining the thematic development of simplified discourse as compared to the topical development in authentic discourse. TSA was similarly employed by Simpson (2000) in a comparative study of academic paragraphs in English and in Spanish within the context of cultural differences in writing, and by Nunan (1995) in investigating how graduate students undertaking an English for Academic Purposes course at the National Center for English Language Teaching and Research at Macquarie University drew on resources to turn "content" or "information" into coherent discourse.

Moreover, Cheng and Steffensen (1996) did a comparative study of the writing progress of two groups of university-level

students in writing, wherein they compared the significant improvement in compositions between the group that was taught both the process method in writing and metadiscourse elements including topical structure analysis and the group that was taught only the process method. In this study, coherence was improved through the use of the knowledge of TSA. Veluz (1992) also investigated whether the knowledge of TSA would improve coherence in the written texts of students at the Southern Luzon Polytechnic College (SLPC) in Quezon province, Philippines.

Essentially, TSA involves an analysis of the coherence derived by an examination of the internal topical structure of paragraphs by repetition of key words and ideas. Topical structure analysis makes use of a plot that renders an objective representation of thematic progression or sequence. In writing it is expected that sentences are arranged according to a sequence that would make all the ideas in a paragraph related to one another.

Lautamatti describes the three basic sentence elements that play a role in TSA: The first is the ISE or initial sentence element, which refers to the initially placed discourse material in sentences, whatever its type or form. It is what comes first in a sentence. The second element is the mood subject, which is the grammatical subject of the sentence. The third, the topical subject, refers to the idea being discussed in the sentence and may or may not be the mood subject. It may come in another lexical form but if it relates directly to the discourse topic, then it is still called the topical subject.

In this study, Lautamatti conducted an analysis based on three kinds of progression: parallel, extended parallel, and sequential. The first is parallel progression, wherein two consecutive clauses have the same topical subject. The second is the extended parallel progression, wherein a topical subject occurs in two clauses that are non-consecutive. The third is the sequential progression, wherein the rheme element of a clause becomes the theme element of the consecutive clause.

The following quoted excerpt from Simpson shows how thematic progression is achieved. *Italics* are used to identify ISE, underlining is used to signal mood subject or grammatical subject and **bold face** is for the topical subject.

(1) *For example, **one project*** I set involved the class devising a board game on a nursery rhyme or folk tale for younger children. (2) *The class* were reasonably enthusiastic about this until they realized that the younger children were fictional, (3) i.e., *they* would be playing these games with real children apart from each other. (4) *I* felt a certain amount of shame here, for I realized that the reason there would be no audience was because I had already decided that **those games** would not be ‘good enough’ for public consumption. (5) *I* have frequently arranged **real audiences** for other classes, but only when I have been confident that the finished product would show the class, the school, and most shamefully of all, myself, in a good light. (6) *My other error* was not to impose a structure to the work of a deadline by which to finish. (7) *Because these were **low-ability students***, my reasoning ran, *they* would need more time to complete the activity, (8) *and in the way of these things, **the children*** simply filled the available time with low-level busy work-colouring in the board, and making the dice and counters, rather than the more challenging activities such as negotiating group responsibilities, discussing the game or devising the rules. (Holden, 1995)

In the excerpt provided, Simpson identified the occurrences of progressions based on Lautamatti’s proposed TSA as follows:

Parallel progression: In Clause 2, the noun phrase “the class” serves as the ISE, the mood subject, and the topical subject. In the following Clause 3, the pronoun “they” similarly functions as the three sentence elements. “They” refers to the noun phrase “the class” in the preceding clause; thus, it is an example of parallel progression.

Extended parallel progression: In Clauses 7 and 8, the topical subjects “low-ability students” and “the children” both pertain back to the topical subject “the class” in Clause 2. This is an example of extended parallel progression because there are intervening clauses with different topical subjects between Clauses 2 and 7. And in Clauses 7 and 8, the relationship is parallel progression since these are consecutive clauses with the same topical subjects.

Sequential progression: This progression is displayed from Clause 3 to Clause 4 and from Clause 4 to Clause 5. The noun “games” is mentioned in Clause 3, but it is not the topical subject. “Games” is part of the rheme element of Clause 3 and is taken as the theme or topical subject of Clause 4 as noun phrase “those games”. And in Clause 4, the author mentions “audience”, which is then used in Clause 5 using “real audiences” as the topical subject.

Although Lautamatti suggested only three types of progression, this investigation and that of Simpson’s revealed a fourth type of progression that can be identified as extended sequential progression. Extended sequential progression occurs when the rheme element of a clause is taken up as the theme of a non-consecutive clause. In the previous example given by Simpson (2000), he claims that “the topic of the “game” is brought up for the first time in the first clause, but not as the topical subject. This is then repeated as the topical subject of clause (4) and a number of clauses intervene between the first mention of the game and the second use as a topical subject, making this an extended sequential progression” (p. 302).

The present study

The present study aims to analyze the topical structure analysis of paragraphs written by Filipino students. There is a need to find out which progressions are used by Filipino students in order to observe their natural thought progression and their writing patterns at the very early stage of writing. This could give teachers of English ideas on what teaching strategies would be appropriate to help

students enhance their writing skills and address writing difficulties and problems at the discourse level.

Using Lautamatti's model, this study investigated which types of progressions were employed by selected first-year college students and how these progressions were carried out in writing their compositions. Its research questions were:

1. Which types of progressions were predominant in the paragraphs?
2. How were these progressions carried out in the paragraphs?

Method

The study was conducted in De La Salle University - Manila from May to August 2005. It made use of 60 paragraphs written by students taking up English One, the mandatory introductory course in English. The paragraphs were lifted from the definition essays which were part of the students' portfolios submitted at the end of the term. Definition essays are supposed to clarify a single term that will serve as the topic subject and thus the novice writers have at their disposal a restraining factor to keep them from swaying away from the focus. These essays were chosen at random and were provided by four different teachers of English One. All the essays were written by Filipino students inside the classroom and had undergone peer editing; they are therefore revised or second drafts. The essays did not undergo teacher editing. The texts analyzed were the second paragraphs in each essay. The second paragraphs constitute the body, which fully develops the topics of the compositions. Also, the body normally contains more clauses, which would render a clearer representation of the progressions employed by the paragraphs.

The independent clauses in each paragraph were first numbered, after which the topical subject in each clause was underlined. After finding the topical subjects, these elements were plotted onto a table. The clause number was indicated on the

leftmost part of the table. The topical subject in the corresponding clause was written across each clause number and was numbered according to the frequency of occurrence. Each topical subject was indicated as topical depth. All words that had equivalent meaning fell under one topical depth. The more topical subjects there are, the higher the number of topical depth. All new topics were indented to the right.

Two coders worked with the researcher in determining the topical subjects and the types of progression used in the paragraphs. The coders coded 30 paragraphs, half of the corpus. These coders have background knowledge in discourse analysis and were also briefed on how to do topical structure analysis prior to the coding. They were first given sample paragraphs and asked to underline the topic subject in each independent clause. They were told that the mood subject is not necessarily the topic subject. Instead, they should focus on what is being talked about in the clause. After identifying the topic subject, they were asked to plot the table and determine the progressions employed in the paragraphs, after which they indicated the number of occurrences of each type of progression.

One problem encountered in coding was the proper alignment of the topic subjects according to topical depth. It was made clear to the coders that similar topic subjects should fall under one and the same line for a clear representation of a topical depth. The topic subject may not have exactly similar lexical form, but if it relates directly the discourse topic then it falls under the same topical depth. The coders were asked to plot the topic subjects until they were able to do it appropriately.

The following paragraph taken from the corpus is provided as an example of how the procedure was done:

Sample Paragraph

- (1) All human beings, despite being unique compared to everyone around them, have addictions.
- (2) The Merriam-

Webster Dictionary defines ‘addiction’ as “the quality of state of being addicted, the compulsive need for and use of habit-forming substance characterized by well-defined psychological symptoms upon withdrawal and the persistent compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful”. (3) However, in the Random House Roget’s Thesaurus, its synonyms are “obsession, fixation, enthrallment, quirk, fetish, compulsion, mania, preoccupation” and such. (4) In this essay, addiction will be closely related to the words found in the thesaurus rather than the meanings given in the dictionary because three kinds of addiction will be present. (5) Those who are older and more exposed to the world and its inhabitants may have encountered one or two individuals whose cravings aren’t what they may call normal. (6) These cravings or addictions may be a result of the genetic structure of the person or even the environment.

After finding the topical subjects of each sentence, these elements were later plotted onto a graph for a visual representation of the types of progression employed in the paragraph. Figure 1 is an illustration of the plotting of the progression of ideas in the paragraph. The clause number appears to the left and the topic number appears to the right. The topical depth refers to the different topics introduced in every sentence. The arrow indicates sequential progression.

Clause No.	Topical Depth			Topic No.
	1	2	3	
1	human beings			1
2		addiction		2
3		its synonyms		2
4		addiction		2
5		those who are older		3
6		cravings or addictions		2

Fig. 1. Plot of progression of sample paragraph

Figure 1 shows that Clause 1 has the word “human beings” as the idea being talked about. “Human beings” is then labeled as Topical Depth 1 and also Topic 1. Throughout the paragraph there is no other instance in which “human beings” or its equivalent idea is mentioned, so there is no other word that falls under Topical Depth 1. Clause 2 has “addiction” as its topic, so it is labeled as Topical Depth 2 and indented to the right of Topical Depth 1. It also serves as Topic 2 since it is a different topic from “human beings”. However, “addiction” is derived from the rheme of the clause immediately preceding it, of which “human beings” is the theme or topic. When the rheme of a preceding clause is taken as the theme of the next clause, then sequential progression occurs and is indicated with an arrow drawn from the previous topical depth to the next.

In Clauses 3 and 4, the topics are “its synonyms” and “addiction,” which refer to the same topic “addiction” in Clause 2. They therefore fall under Topical Depth 2 and Topic 2 as well. Even though “its synonyms” has a different lexical form, it still refers directly to the topic “addiction” and therefore belongs to the same topical depth and falls under the same line. Clauses 2, 3, and 4 all have one and the same theme or topic in three consecutive clauses, and utilize parallel progression in thematic development. Clause 5 has “those who are older” as its theme or topic, which falls under Topical Depth 3 and Topic 3. It is indented to the right of Topical Depth 2. Part of the rheme of Clause 5 is the word “cravings or addictions,” which becomes the theme of Clause 6. This is another incident of sequential progression. “Cravings or addictions” falls under Topical Depth 2 and is labeled as Topic 2. Clauses 4 and 6 have the same topical depth but Topical Depth 3 comes in between them. This is coded as extended parallel progression.

Following Lautamatti’s TSA, there is one instance of parallel progression (Clauses 2, 3, and 4), one extended parallel (Clauses 4 and 6) and two sequential progressions (Clauses 1 and 2 ; Clauses 5 and 6) in the given paragraph. There is no incidence of an extended sequential progression. There are three new topics introduced in the paragraph: “human beings”, “addiction”, and “those older people”.

After the plotting, the number of occurrences of the types of progression in each paragraph was added. The sum for each progression was later tabulated in order to see which type of progression was predominantly used in the paragraph. The progression that has the largest frequency of occurrence is identified as the predominant progression. After the 60 paragraphs were analyzed and plotted onto graphs, the summary of topical development is tabulated for a better view of the number of sentences in each paragraph, the number of new topics introduced and the number of parallel progressions, extended parallel progressions, sequential progressions and extended sequential progressions in each paragraph.

Results

Table 1 summarizes the topical development in the 60 paragraphs written in English by the Filipino students. It could be seen from the table that there is a topical recurrence in all the paragraphs. All the types of progression - parallel (PP), extended parallel (EPP), sequential (SP) and extended sequential (ESP) - were employed in the paragraphs as reflected in the table. Except for three paragraphs, all the others were found to have observed topical progression in their development

Table 1.
Summary of topical development in the student paragraphs

	<i>f</i>	%
Clauses	459	—
Topics	231	—
Parallel progression	89	51.8
Extended parallel progression	49	28.5
Sequential progression	30	17.4
Extended sequential progression	4	2.3
Total progressions	172	100

Table 1 shows that 231 new topics were introduced in 459 clauses. There were also two (2) paragraphs that did not make use

of any type of progression, which shows that a different topic was introduced in every independent clause.

Parallel progression was most frequently used in the paragraphs. In the parallel progression, the paragraphs used repetition of key words and phrases and employed pronouns in developing the topic. It was observed that the topical subjects were mostly positioned at the start of the independent clauses. Topics were also developed by introducing them as the rheme of a clause and later taking them as the theme of a subsequent clause. Ideas were also further developed by repeating them across the paragraphs.

Table 1 also shows that the occurrence of parallel progression is much more frequent than the sequential, extended parallel and extended sequential progressions. This indicates that much of the thematic development was done more through repetition of key words and phrases in consecutive sentences than through reiterating them in non - consecutive sentences or across paragraphs and taking the rheme as the theme of the topic of the next sentences.

The frequency of the different types of progressions is exemplified in the following paragraph with underlined topical subjects:

Paragraph No. 10

- (1) The Christians by Faith are the Christians who puts *(sic)* God in the center of their lives.
- (2) These persons believe in heaven and in hell.
- (3) They also believe in complete absolution which is also known as “Purgatory”.
- (4) This Group of people frequently goes to the Church and attends its practices.
- (5) They also follow the rules and regulations of the Church regarding how to live their lives.
- (6) The Ten Commandments is one of those rules.
- (7) It is the most popular and most respected rule of

this group of people. (8) The “Christians by Faith” frequently go to confession. (9) They believe that through confession, God’s forgiveness is achieved giving them a clearer conscience. (10) Through this, they believe that they are also capable of entering the kingdom of heaven when they die.

The elements of the above paragraph are plotted in Figure 2 for a representation of the types of progressions used. The figure shows that there are two parallel progressions, one extended parallel and sequential progression each, and no instance of extended sequential progression.

Clause No.	Topical Depth			Topic No.
	1	2	3	
1	Christians by Faith			1
2	These persons			1
3	They			1
4	This group of people			1
5	They			1
6		Ten Commandments		2
7		It		2
8	Christians by Faith			1
9			God's forgiveness	3
10	They			1

Fig. 2. Plot of progression of Paragraph 10

Paragraph No. 10 has two parallel progressions, as demonstrated in Clauses 1 to 5, which have one topical subject all referring to “Christians”, and from Clauses 6 to 7 which talk about the “Ten Commandments”. The paragraph also has one extended parallel progression that appears in Clauses 5 and 8 and mentions the topical subject “Christians”. It displays one occurrence of sequential progression and no extended sequential progression is found. It could be noted that the topic subjects are situated at the initial positions of the clauses.

Also, the subject paragraphs displayed a variety of progressions used in connecting ideas and thoughts within the composition. Most of the paragraphs employed two or more types of progression in their topic development. A typical paragraph is shown below:

Paragraph No. 52

(1) Though as simple as the word relaxation may seem, there are still misconceptions about the word today. (2) Oftentimes, people would think of the word relaxation as when a person is sleeping in his beds. (3) It is not entirely true based on the fact that not all people who sleep are relaxed. (4) People can sleep but not really feel relaxed or comfortable while lying on their beds. (5) Some, even while asleep, still have chaotic and distorted dreams hindering them to experience a stress-free slumber. (6) Some would even think that relaxation can be obtained by isolating one-self in a certain space wherein he could mediate and clear his mind. (7) It is true that person can mediate in absolute silence, but how can a person actually achieve mental nothingness? (8) It only goes to show that this kind of relaxation is impossible to obtain. (9) Other people consider themselves relaxed when they are basically doing nothing at all - which is also not entirely true. (10) It is because doing nothing at all is generally extremely boring for others. (11) Activities such as watching television, listening to the radio, or staring at the clouds are considered boring by others individuals.

In the above paragraph, Clauses 2 and 3 have the same topical subject “relaxation” and are therefore considered parallel. The word “relaxation” was again used as topical subject in Clause 6, which illustrates sequential progression since there are topic

subjects between the two clauses. In Clause 3, “people” functions as the rheme and is taken as the theme of the succeeding clause—it therefore uses sequential progression. This was repeated in Clauses 9 and 10, wherein “doing nothing at all” was first used as the rheme in the preceding clause. Paragraph No. 52 has 11 independent clauses with five topics introduced within the composition. It has two cases of parallel, two extended parallel, and two sequential progressions.

It was noted that there were several paragraphs that deviated from the typical use of two or more types of progression. One is shown in Paragraph 21 below:

Paragraph No. 21

(1) Another short story is a myth. (2) The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines myth as “stories handed down from earlier times often by word of mouth.” (3) It is also a narrative that represents parts of the beliefs of the people. (4) It is also associated with legends. (5) A good example of this is Greek mythology. (6) It is mostly about heavenly people with extraordinary or unique abilities. (7) These are also composed of stories about people who have great powers and represent virtues such as strength, wisdom, love and others.

An analysis of Paragraph No. 21 reveals that it used only one type of progression (parallel) in its thematic development. Clause 1 has the topic subject “myth”. Clause 2 gives the definition of myth and is therefore still talking about the idea of “myth”. Clauses 3 and 4 have the topical subject “it”, which similarly refers to myth. The topic subject in Clause 5 is “Greek mythology” which still falls under the word “myth”, as do the pronouns “it” and “these” in Clause 7. Paragraph No. 21 has only one topic introduced in each independent clause and has only one incident of parallel progression.

Two other paragraphs also deviated from the common pattern of having two or more kinds of progression since they did not make use of any progression. This is illustrated in Paragraph No. 42:

Paragraph No. 42

(1) Thrill seekers or scientists who want to learn more about the world not just on printed materials, try to experience things first-hand to simply satisfy their surmounting curiosity. (2) Sky is not the limit because it reaches farther than that. (3) Basically, not everyone gets a chance to explore what is outside our planet but we can explore its insides. (4) Since we know a lot of our land environment, the water environment is quite interesting depending on one's purpose or perception about it.

A breakdown of the above paragraph reveals that each clause employs a new topic. Clause 1 has “thrill seekers or scientists”, Clause 2 has “it”, Clause 3 has “a chance to explore what is outside our planet” and Clause 4 has “the water environment” as the topical subjects. Clause 2 uses “it” as the theme without a clear antecedent anywhere in the paragraph. The paragraph displays a loose connection of ideas in its development.

The data imply that although the students wrote essays of only one rhetorical pattern, the students displayed individual styles in writing, particularly in connecting ideas between sentences and within paragraphs.

To further determine how each progression was carried out in the paragraphs, the topical subjects were classified according to lexical and phrasal category in order to determine the preferences of the student writers in linking ideas and are indicated in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Table 2.
Summary of elements used in parallel progression

Category	f	%
Nouns	102	37.4
Noun phrases	91	33.3
Pronouns	20	29.3

Table 2 indicates that the students preferred to join ideas in parallel direction through the repetition of single words or terms rather than phrases, although there is not much difference between the percentage use of nouns and noun phrases. The noun phrases mostly proceeded from the nouns mentioned earlier in the paragraphs as modeled by Paragraph No. 45. The pronouns used in parallel progression were the definite pronouns *it*, *he*, *they*, *you*, and *them* and the demonstrative pronoun *this*.

Paragraph No. 45

(1)People usually regard noise as an unwanted or a nonsense sound. (2)We often use this term when we get irritated when we're concentrating for a test. (3)We often make a list of noisy people in the classroom when our teacher is not around. (4)We also receive punishments because of making unnecessary sounds. (5)In other words, noise is a clash, a clamor, an outcry, or an uproar. (6) However, not all of these can actually complete the definition of this simple yet deep term.

Paragraph No. 45 shows the underlined topics that follow parallel progression in development. Clause 1 has the noun "noise" as topic, which is reiterated in Clause 2 as noun phrase "this term". Clause 4 has the noun phrase "unnecessary sounds" as its topic, which is repeated in Clause 5 as the noun "noise" and again in Clause 5 as another noun phrase "this simple yet deep term". The analysis indicates that the writer chose to repeat the topic through

the alternate use of nouns and noun phrases in gradually acquiring connectedness between clauses.

The elements used in developing ideas through extended parallel progression were similarly derived and indicated in Table 3.

Table 3.
Summary of elements used in extended parallel progression

Category	<i>f</i>	%
Nouns	44	50.6
Noun phrases	37	42.5
Pronouns	6	6.9

The paragraphs mainly employed key terms and phrases in connecting ideas between clauses with different topical subjects between them. There was a very minimal number of pronouns used in the extended parallel progression, with only 6 occurrences. The student writers seemed to think it better to just repeat the terms and phrases rather than use pronouns for clearer reference to the topical subject. The pronouns utilized consisted of only two definite pronouns: *they* and *it*.

Paragraph No. 47 exemplifies the use of repetitive key terms and phrases and pronouns in extended parallel progression

Paragraph No. 47

(1) Friendship is of having friends. (2) They are there in good times and bad times. (3) They are the ones who can be leaned on in times of problems. (4) They are there in times of sadness. (5) Sometimes, a person who has a big problem feels like his or her world is ruined and he or she feels like being a loser. (6). The presence

of hatred and anger will be calmed once a person said it all to his or her friend. (7) They are the ones who appreciate and consider one's happiness also his happiness. (8) They are the one who correct the mistakes for the benefit of both, someone whom a person can tell his or her secrets and one who supports and cheers up in times of tension and pressure. (9) Having a boyfriend and girlfriend relationship can be also considered in friendship. (10) These values will be also visible in this kind of relationship. (11) Moreover, both of these relationships contain give-and-take process which means that both parties must do their part. (12) It also requires understanding for it to last.

An analysis of the above paragraph shows that the topic "friendship" in Clause 1 was repeated but this time as the noun phrase "these values" in Clause 10. The broader class of "friendship", which is "values", was used together with the demonstrative pronoun "these". The topic "they" in Clause 4 was again mentioned in exactly the same form in Clause 7. Clause 9 has "a boyfriend and girlfriend relationship" as the idea being discussed, which was reiterated in Clause 11 but in a shorter form, "these relationships". The same lexical form "relationships" was repeated with the demonstrative pronoun "these".

The use of nouns, noun phrases and pronouns is indicative of the student writers' preference to use substitute forms of the topic subject in achieving relatedness of ideas in clauses with intervening topics between them.

The third type of progression, sequential, similarly involves various elements in extending ideas within the paragraphs. These are exhibited in Table 4.

Table 4.
Summary of elements used in sequential progression

Category	f	%
Nouns	34	50.7
Noun phrases	25	37.3
Pronouns	8	11.9

The elements derived from the sequential progressions had quite a similar pattern of occurrence with the items used in extended parallel progression. The progressions had 34 nouns, 25 noun phrases and 8 pronouns. This implies that the student writers similarly preferred to employ a repetition of keywords and key phrases in linking ideas across the paragraphs. The very minimal count of pronouns found in the progressions consist of the definite pronouns *he, it* and *they* and the demonstrative pronoun *this*.

Paragraph No. 24 displays occurrences of sequential progression.

Paragraph No. 24

(1)It is a well known fact that a large number of people have *acrophobia or the great fear of heights*. (2)This state of mind could be considered one of the most shared fears in the entire world. (3) Acrophobia should not be taken lightly because *people* tend to take this matter very seriously. (4) They feel very “harmed” when they are faced with the fear. (5) Basing from experience, one should not try to meddle with someone who is acrophobia because not only will the person tend to develop the fear but also the person might develop a grudge against you for doping such act.

In Paragraph No. 24 there is a mention of the term “acrophobia or the great fear of heights” in the rheme part of Clause

1, which was taken as the theme or topic in Clause 2 but in a different form—"this state of mind". In Clause 3 there is similarly a brief reference to "people" in the rheme, which later became the theme "They" in succeeding Clause 4.

The elements involved in sequential progression in the paragraph all have forms that differ, from being part of the rheme to being the theme in the next clause. This has probably been done to avoid sounding redundant in connecting ideas between clauses.

The last type of progression, extended sequential, also used different elements in linking topics across paragraphs, which are shown in Table 5.

Table 5.
Summary of elements used in extended sequential progression

Category	f	%
Nouns	3	37.5
Noun phrases	3	37.5
Pronouns	2	25.0

The elements used in the extended sequential progression had almost the same number of occurrences in the progression. There were 3 nouns, 3 noun phrases and 2 pronouns composed of *they* and *this* that appeared in the paragraphs.

Paragraph No. 40 presents an incident of extended parallel progression.

Paragraph No. 40

(1) Christmas, as the coming and birth of Christ, brings joy and laughter to *people*. (2) Everyone who I know wait for this day each and every year. (3) They prepare

their beautiful and colorful decorations. (4) They get excited in choosing the gifts their going to give to others and also the gifts they are going to receive from other people. (5) A lot of people also go back to their old homes where their relatives and love ones are. (6) They simply go back to spend time, share laughs and stories to them. (7) During Christmas, people end up sharing unending stories, beverages, delicious food and some jokes just to get their happy feelings out of their internal body. (8) For children, they wait the coming of Santa Claus and the candies or gifts Santa will place in their Christmas socks.

In the above paragraph, Clause 1 has the word “people” in the rheme, which was taken as the theme in Clause 5 but appeared instead as the noun phrase “a lot of people” in order to build a wider association across the paragraph. The noun previously mentioned was reiterated by putting a quantifier before it.

It could be gleaned from the tables that the student writers established a relationship of ideas in their paragraphs through the use of nouns, noun phrases and pronouns. These elements mostly appeared in the initial positions of the clauses and surfaced in succeeding or alternate turns. This indicates the writers’ awareness of controlling the flow of the topic for clearer understanding of the paragraphs and for sustenance of the attention of the intended audience.

Discussion

The main objective of this study is to determine the types of progression that Filipino students use in their attempt to create coherent writing using the topical structure analysis proposed by Lautamatti. Results showed that parallel progression was the most preferred progression in the paragraphs, extended parallel progression was the second most preferred progression, sequential

progression was the third most preferred, and extended sequential progression was used least in the paragraphs.

The Filipino students made more use of the parallel progression than the sequential and extended forms of progression. This indicates that the writers choose to string ideas close together rather than link them across paragraphs. The findings reflect the previous research done by Simpson, wherein both native English and Spanish professional writers made more use of parallel progressions in writing journal articles. However, the percentage use of parallel progressions exhibited by the Filipino students was similar to that of the native English but was much greater than the Spanish. And, when it comes to the percentage use of sequential progression, the results show a very close resemblance to the Spanish paragraphs and were much lower than the native English. The paragraphs analyzed in this study therefore use progressions common in both the English and Spanish paragraphs.

Though the findings of this study are not conclusive or encompassing of the types of progressions that the whole population of Filipino students utilize in writing, the results similarly reflect Lautamatti's topical structure analysis of simplified texts, wherein the paragraphs made more use of parallel progression than sequential progression, there were few cases of extended progression, and the topical subjects were most often the initial elements in the clauses. There were few sentences wherein the initial elements are non-topical subjects. The topical subjects are also most often the subjects in the clauses.

This study similarly exhibits results parallel to the one conducted by Nunan, which reports that second language writers topicalised entities within the discourse and employed cohesive devices in English. Although Nunan did not identify the progressions present in the topical structure analysis of the texts, the same observations are present in the paragraphs analyzed in this study.

However, the findings deviate slightly from the results of the study by Veluz, which found that the paragraphs made predominant use of both parallel progression and extended parallel progression. In Veluz's dissertation, the SLPC students had the tendency to increase the number of different topics and to connect ideas across the compositions. The finding indicates that Filipino students, though belonging to one culture, do not have one definite, clear preference of the type of progressions to use in their attempts to produce a coherent piece of writing. The forms of predominant progression present in their compositions vary in frequency, which indicates that second language learners of one culture do not limit themselves to only one topical structure but employ different combinations of patterns of progression made available for them in their desire to impart meaning. Malcolm (1999) has noted that "within a culture, different sub-cultures may develop different writing practices" (p. 122).

The data similarly display the progressions commonly found in English paragraphs as proposed by Lautamatti. It has to be reiterated that these paragraphs were unedited by the teachers and were written inside the classroom. Foster (1983, cited in Pajares & Johnson, 1994) stresses that although in-class writing samples may reflect imperfections, these may well be "the most reliable measure available" (p. 319). The compositions in this study possess the characteristic necessary to produce coherent discourses, as made evident by the predominant usage of parallel progressions that are marks of high quality writing from the English point of view.

It is remarkable that these students are second language learners who are bilinguals and who could write in the same pattern as do natives who are monolinguals. One possible reason for this is consistency in the use of English as a second language and as medium of instruction, thus turning these students into proficient and competent bilinguals both in spoken and written discourse. Even if Filipino is still the prevalent language used in spoken discourse, it is a common observation that English is more preferred in writing

activities, from simple notes to formal compositions. Constant use of English in writing has definitely honed their skills in achieving coherence in their compositions.

As for pedagogical implications, the knowledge of the type of progressions used in the topical structure analysis can help Filipino teachers of English determine whether student compositions meet the standards of high quality English paragraphs or essays. Teachers can easily and quickly scan through a composition and simply look for repetitions of key words and phrases in order to determine whether it is a piece of coherent or incoherent writing. They can then guide students on the technique of achieving coherence through repetition of key words and phrases, and through limitation of the number of topics introduced in their paragraphs. They can also better facilitate peer revision if the students are taught how to detect the kinds of progression employed in the papers being evaluated.

Students should be taught to revise not only in terms of mechanics and grammar but also in terms of discourse features. It can be emphasized here that TSA is one strategy to make their compositions easier for the audience to understand. By using this strategy, students would also be aware of how to judge for themselves whether the articles they have at hand are good pieces of writing. Consequently, students would have critical eyes for coherent articles and information far beyond the classroom setting, and they would eventually become a critical audience that could distinguish coherent compositions from those that have loosely tied ideas. In such a way, students could become good independent readers and writers.

It would also be most proper for all teachers to establish the cultural background of student writers in order to better understand why they encounter certain problems in composing paragraphs. It does not necessarily mean that if a student is a foreigner then s/he comes from another culture. There are also students who come from within one culture and yet they go through different writing styles and procedures. This indicates that students may come from

sub-cultures that affect their patterns of thinking and writing. The teacher should be aware of all the facets of composition writing and all information related to the background of students so s/he could better plan for the development of skills that will help the students grow progressively in their writing activities. In this case, the English teacher could make use of the knowledge of parallel progressions in order to help the students make the proper adjustments necessary to obtain high quality writing.

The study reveals that topical structure analysis is a valuable approach in determining the continuous and connected series of thoughts in written texts, and its pedagogical bearing makes it a viable tool at the disposal of the classroom teacher.

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