An Analysis of the Textual Features of Legal Discourse From the Perspective of Thematic Progression: Based on *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China**

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Abstract—This study is devoted to analyze the textual features of *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* from the perspective of Thematic Progression. From the data analysis, we can see that, the mode of "TP with a Constant Theme" occupies a large proportion, followed by the mode of "Simple Linear TP" and "TP with Derived T'S". The use of "TP with a Constant Theme" can make the legislative discourse full of strong legal logic, clarity, consistency and mandatory. Through TP with a Constant Theme, the whole discourse has a continuous flow of information and the clauses are connected closely and tightly. The structure of "Simple Linear TP" has highlighted the information focus of the rheme in each clause. It also reflects the "People-oriented" spirit in the Law. The mode of "TP with Derived T'S" is a type of hierarchical progression that the themes of the latter clauses are derived from the themes or rhemes of the former clauses. The application of this mode to the legislative text for the further constant explanation for certain problem reflects the accuracy and inclusiveness of the legal language. And the choice of thematic structure makes the law enforcement officers have clear defined principles to adopt and obey. It also reflects the elites, formality, compulsion and rigidness of the Law.

Index Terms—theme–rheme, thematic progression, legislative discourse, textual features

I. INTRODUCTION

The law is the essential superstructure of a country. Its formulation, interpretation and implementation must rely on the language as its basic means. The legislators reflect the country's will of the power through the legal discourse. The power refers to the specific management of the main organization over the management of the objects in the process of achieving certain organizational goals. The power embodied in the law is the so-called "legal authoritativeness", which is the basic nature of the legal discourse. Therefore, whether the law can be carried out correctly and whether the language can be appropriately applied have become the current issues to be solved. Starting from the perspective of thematic progression, the paper tries to summarize the features of constructing the legal discourse and reveal its involving legal authoritativeness through making analysis on *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The following significances of the present study will present. On the one hand, it helps people to get a brief understanding of the features of the Chinese legislative expressions, to make the attempt to identify and analyze the authoritativeness of the Law from a linguistic view in the present study. Through this study, we get to know that *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*, as a legislative text, relies greatly on the devices of language. The appropriate choices of thematic structure, are the essential factors in constructing the legislative texts. The reasonable use of thematic structure to build up the legislative texts can enable it to fully reflect the solemn, regulation rigidness and the mandatoriness of the Law. Meanwhile, it can make people read and understand the legislative text effectively, seizing the authority of the Law, and thus correct their behavior within the scope of the Law.

On the other hand, the present research is helpful to promote the effective of the China's legislative expression. The legislative language as the social vehicle with serious purpose has the typical influence on the other legal written texts because the authoritativeness of the law exists in all the types of legal documents as the internal function, no

matter what legislative texts, judicial discourses and courtroom utterances. Therefore, how to make the legislative language much slanderer and rigorous has become one of the important issues in the field of law. From the angle, the present study may be useful for the research of the legislative text.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section includes three parts. The first two parts review the development of Theme-Rheme theory and classification of Theme. The third part reviews the development of Thematic Progression.

A. The Development of Theme-rheme Theory

The system of Theme and Rheme is the important part of discourse analysis in Functional Grammar. The two terms are put forward by the Prague School of the linguist, K. Boost. V. Mathesius. He (1939) proposes that the perspective of the functional sentence consists of two communicative units: a Theme, or that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation, and from which the speaker precedes and a Rheme representing that which the speaker states about. He uses the terms like Theme and Rheme to describe the word order phenomena in Czech and other Slavic languages.

The concept of Theme-Rheme is supplemented in Firbas' Communicative Dynamism (CD). In his point of view, Theme is interpreted along relational-semantic lines, i.e. what the message is about, but it is also addressed as the foundation-laying element of the interpretative arrangement carrying the lowest degree of communication (Firbas, J. 1966).

Later, the representatives of Systemic Functional Linguistics, M.A.K. Halliday (1994, 2004) and Thompson Geoffrey (2004) make a detailed description and discussion based on this view. They propose that theme should be defined from the view of the function, that is, to divide the clauses according to the semantics. Halliday and Thompson hold the view that any sentence and utterance can be divided into theme and rheme from the perspective of communicative function. Theme is the starting point of the departure of the message. Halliday (2004) points that theme is always in front of rheme, which is determined by its function of starting point.

Halliday holds that "as a general guide, Theme can be identified as that element which comes in first position in clause…this is not how the category of Theme is defined.   The definition is functional…"(Halliday, 1994, p.38).

There are some Chinese scholars concerned about the research on Theme-Rheme as well. Jiang (2008, p.137-146) reviews the notion of Theme in Systemic Functional Grammar through the detailed examination of the definitions given by Halliday in the past decades, and argues that: a) Theme and given information are two different notions, although they are often realized by the same element in unmarked situations; b) Theme has been kept apart from what the message is about, i.e. the notion of correlation; and c) it's not appropriate to simply equate Theme with the initial position of a clause. Cheng (2005) pointed out "The significance of thematic structure[1] in construing the textual meaning is not confined to the clause structure. Thematic structure also plays a significant role in text construction above the clause level".

In summary, theme reflects the function of information because it is the starting point of information transmission. The structure of theme and rheme constructs the way of transmitting the information of the discourse. Therefore, we can get an understanding of the distribution of the center information in the discourse by the structure of theme and rheme.

B. Classification of Theme

Halliday (2004, p.79) divides theme from the different angles. We can summarize it into the following form.

TABLE 1
CLASSIFICATION OF THEME

	classification			
Metafunction	Topical Theme		Interpersonal Theme	Textual Theme
Structure	Simple Theme		Multiple Theme	Clause Theme
Speaker's will	Unmarked Theme		Marked Theme	

Halliday (2004) cut theme into "simple theme", "multiple theme" and "clause theme". All these themes are the starting point of the information and the beginning of the clauses. The single theme refers to the theme that reflects the only metafunction (such as the ideational function, the interpersonal function or the textual function) no matter whether the theme is composed by one word or more. According to Halliday's point of view, the main forms of the single theme are noun phrases, adverb phrases and prepositional phrases. The single theme is often composed by the experiential elements of the ideational function in the transitive system such the participant, the circumstance and the process, which are often called the experiential theme.

The multiple theme (Halliday 2004, p.81) refers to the theme composed by a variety of functional elements, including two or more phrases that reflect different semantic function of the theme: the ideational function, the interpersonal function and the textual function. Since the multiple theme includes many elements, there is a problem related to the functional structure of arranging them. Halliday (1994, 2004) has proposed a sequence of "textual theme –

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[1] Thematic structure has different connotations in the field of functional linguistics. However, it involves theme-rheme and thematic progression in this study.

interpersonal theme – ideational theme" and pointed out that the significance of the theme can be expressed until the first ideational element of the clause appears while the following is the rheme. The multiple theme is usually composed by the following structure: (1) textual theme + ideational theme; (2) interpersonal theme + ideational theme; (3) textual theme + interpersonal theme + ideational theme. Textual theme includes continuative elements such as *yes, no, oh, well, now* and structural elements such as *therefore, in other words and so far*. Interpersonal theme includes modal elements such as *certainly, surely, unfortunately and generally speaking*, finite elements in the interrogative sentence, and vocative. Besides, each clause should have only one ideational theme, such as the participant or the circumstance. However, in the actual speech act, a number of multiple themes lack of certain elements while one is essential, that is the ideational theme which constitutes the core of theme.

When a clause includes two or more clauses, the first clause appears in the whole clause is called the clause theme. Halliday (1994) points that the called "clause theme" usually contains only the ideational theme. As a result, it is the single theme in nature.

Halliday (1994, 2004) also makes a distinction between the "marked theme" and the "unmarked theme". If it is in the position of the subject of a clause, the theme is called "unmarked theme", while if it is not the subject of a clause, the theme is called "marked theme". Generally speaking, in the declarative sentence, if the theme and the subject are the same, the theme is unmarked, if not, the theme is marked. In yes-no interrogative sentence, the theme constructed by the operator and the theme is unmarked, while it is marked if the theme contains only the subject. In the imperative sentence, the unmarked theme is formed by any of the verb or the emphatic component, the negative component together with the verb, or the single "let's". Otherwise, the theme is marked. As the selection of the theme is based on the speaker, the choice of the "unmarked theme" and the "marked theme" reflects the speaker's purpose and intention in using the language.

In the above, we have discussed the identity characteristics of theme. We know that theme is a unit based on the speaker's will and the choice of theme represents the speaker's intention on discourse. Thompson Geoffrey (2004) considers that there are mainly four functions of choosing theme in discourse: (1) to continue or expand the passage by using unmarked theme (the former is reflected by using the theme of the first clause as the theme of the following clause and the latter is reflected by using the rheme of the first clause as the theme of the following clause); (2) to identify the change of the topics by using the marked theme; (3) to reflect the integrity of the content by changing the form of theme; (4) to show the importance of the starting point of clauses by using a certain element as the theme repeatedly.

From the above we can see that the choice of theme in discourse is inseparably to the structure and content of the whole discourse. Sometimes a theme can be repeatedly used while sometimes the rheme in the previous clause can be used as the theme of the following clause. This kind of phenomena showing the internal relation of themes is called "Thematic Progression" (Danes F., 1974). We will discuss it in the following section.

C. Thematic Progression

In most discourses there is more than one clause and there is some relation or change among Theme and Rheme in successive clauses. And the process of selecting and changing utterance themes by the speaker/writer of the discourse is defined by Danes F. (1974) as Thematic Progression: "The choice and ordering of utterance themes, their mutual concatenation and hierarchy, as well as their relationship to hyper-themes of the superior text unit, to the whole text and to the situation" (1974).

And Danes, F. (1974) has ever pointed that rhyme plays an important role from the aspect of narrative value as it conveys new information. But from the view of discourse structure, the important element is theme. It makes theme to become the important structural means of discourse that theme loads less information. Therefore, the whole discourse can be regarded as a sequence of themes. Thematic structure of discourse actually refers to the connection and the convergence of themes, their relationships, possessive levels and relations between the whole discourse and the context. Danes, F. (1974) called these complex relationships as "Pattern of Thematic Progression". He proposes five types of Thematic Progression: Simple Linear TP[2], TP with a Constant Theme, TP with Derived T'S, Exposition of a Split Rheme and TP with Crossing-mode.

In the following part, we will mainly take about the five patterns of Thematic Progression of Danes, F. (1974).

(1) In the discourse, most of the themes are unmarked. So it makes most of clauses maintain a high degree of information consistency at the starting point. Compared with other elements, the theme in front of the clause is more likely the known information, which makes the center information be of the higher transparency among the clauses and thus highlights the direction of textual message. Danes, F. (1974) calls it "Simple Linear TP", expressed by "$T1+R1 \rightarrow T2(=T1)+R2 \rightarrow T3(=T1)+R3$"[3]. The pattern has the same theme but the different rheme. Textual message lying on the centered theme makes the rheme radical.

(2) Opposite to the above pattern, the known information is put in the position of rheme and the new information is put in the position of theme in order to achieve a particular effect of the expression. This is a kind of pattern with the theme centralized, the so called "Exposition of a Split Rheme". It is contrary to the conventional rule of putting the

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[2] Thematic Progression is abbreviated as TP in this study.
[3] Theme is abbreviated as T and Rheme is abbreviated as R in this study.

focus of new information at the end of the clauses so that the value of information is highlighted. Despite the flow of information is relatively fixed, it achieves the pragmatic function and a strong sense of the textual rhythm. This kind of Thematic Progression is performed as "T1+R1→T2+R2(=R1)→T3+R3(=R1)".

(3) Sometimes we see that the rheme (or a part of the rheme) of the previous clause is the same as the theme of the following clause. As a result, the whole discourse has a continuous flow of information. The information of the rheme in the first clause becomes the known information in the second clause and the new information in the second clause becomes the known information in the third clause. Usually this kind of Thematic Progression is called "TP with a Constant Theme", of which the logic is strong. Therefore, the pattern is often seen in the reasoning discourse, in which the chain of information has a coherent sense. Thematic Progression can be expressed as: "T1+R1→T2(=R1)+R2→T3(=R2)+R3".

(4) TP with Derived T'S is a type of hierarchical progression. In other words, the themes of the following clauses are derived from the previous theme or rheme, as is the further expansion and extension of the former. Such progression appears mostly in the explanatory text and the political essays so as to make a further explanation of a problem. The intensity of the information's flowing lies between the type of "Exposition of a Split Rheme" and the type of "TP with a Constant Theme". The extension of the information is restrained by the theme and rheme of the previous clause. Thematic Progression can be expressed as: "T1+R1 (R2+R3…) →T2+R2→T3+R3".

(5) TP with Crossing-pattern is a type of progression that the theme of the previous clause becomes the rheme of the following clause. It is described as "T2+R2(=T1)→T1+R1". This kind of pattern is not seen usually because it requires that the starting points of discourse can not be so many. Otherwise, the starting point of information in the previous clause can not be the focus of the rheme in the following clause. In other words, it is not easy to make the theme in the previous clause and the rheme in the following clause intertwined.

To sum up, Theme functions achieve the coherence such as "the maintenance or progression of what the text is about 'at that point' and specifying or changing the framework for the interpretation of the following clause" (Danes, F. 1974). Therefore, Thematic Progression ensures the fluent flow of a text, it plays a significant role in forming the unified whole of the meaning.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to show how the authority of China's legislative discourses is achieved from the perspective of functional linguistics. More specifically, it uses the theory of systemic functional linguistics to construct the analytical framework. It is a quantitative and qualitative study.

Here we select thematic structure, one of the theories of discourse analysis in systemic functional linguistics as the theory direction, in addition, use the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to make analysis on *the Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*. Firstly, thematic structure constitutes the main part of syntactic and semantic structure. It reflects how the information passed by the legislators is transmitted by the distribution of information in the discourse. If we can make a correct division of the theme and rheme in the legislative discourse, we can identify what the legislators starting point are and what information the legislators intend to pass. With the model, we can roughly understand what the legislative discourses want to express. Secondly, the information is the message passed from the speakers to the recipients. Usually the theme carries the given information while the rheme carries the new information (certainly there are other situations such as the theme carries the new information while the rheme carries the given information.) From the above we can see that the information of legislative discourse with thematic structure as its carrier is reflected by certain flow of information. With the above theory, the present study uses the methods of qualitative and quantitative to make a statistics of the distribution of Thematic Progression in *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*. The study of Forensic Linguistics should be based on the quantitative method. The pure qualitative method is usually used in the theoretical elaboration of forensic linguistics. The qualitative method is the summary or the premium of the quantitative method. The law should base on the fact and so does the qualitative analysis. Therefore, the qualitative analysis is always combined with the quantitative analysis in the field of forensic linguistics. The researches in forensic linguistics such as the one of relation between law and language and the methods, belong to the qualitative analysis because these researches are built up on the basis of the quantitative analysis, but not the direct quantitative analysis. Therefore, the paper adopts the method of the combination of the quantitative analysis and the qualitative analysis. According to the statistical data, we make an empirical analysis in order to sum up the effective textual features of legislative discourse, hoping make some contributions to the legislative work.

V. DATA

The data for analysis in the paper is *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China.* Since it is promulgated, the Law[4] has been revised several times, added by some additional new regulations, so it is dynamic.

The Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China was adopted and promulgated at the second meeting of the Fifth National People's Congress on July 1, 1979, and came into effect on January 1, 1980. The criminal

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[4] The Law refers to *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* in this study.

procedure law is a procedural law, which guarantees the correct execution of the criminal law from the judicial aspect. *The Criminal Procedure Law* was revised for the first time in March 1996, and the second overhaul was carried out in 2011. The new law will be officially implemented on January 1, 2013. (According to the third revision of the Decision on Amending the Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China at the sixth meeting of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress on October 26, 2018).

In the paper, we select the publication, the third revision of the Decision on Amending the Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China. The reasons for such a choice are as follows: (1). This Law is enacted according to the *Constitution* and for ensuring accurate enforcement of the *Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China*, in addition, for protecting the people, safeguarding State and public security, punishing crimes and maintaining socialist public order. It is believed to the accurate enforcement of the *Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China*. (2). The Law belongs to the procedure law which regulates the detailed rules in the course of enforcement. It is the one to ensure correct and timely ascertainment of facts about punishment of criminals, the crimes, and the protection of the innocent against being investigated for criminal responsibility as well. So it carries the mission of ensuring the authority of the Criminal Law to be reflected accurately. (3). The discourse of the Law can promote the people's counsiousness of law, fight vigorously against criminal acts in order to protect the socialist legal system and the citizens' rights, and importantly to ensure smooth progress of the socialist development cause. Consequently, the discourse of the *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* can facilitate the analysis of the authoritativeness of law, reflect the legislative power and highlight its compulsion. In the paper we adopt the English version of the Law published by the China Legal Publishing House in 2019. The editors offer the professional deep-processing for the book, adopting the accurate terminologies according to the contemporary authoritative dictionary and making the accurate translation. It has the authoritative validation. Therefore we have decided to use the publication as the data of the present study.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the above theory, the use of thematic structure and its functional knowledge, combined with the mode of thinking, can arrange the information from the perspective of maintaining the coherence and consistency of the discourse, through which the discourse can be made fluently, highlighting the main idea. Using thematic structure of connecting or separating certain information can prominent or cover certain message in order to achieve the satisfying effects. Therefore, we can get a clear understanding of the macro-structure and the information distribution of the discourse through the analysis of Thematic Progression. Since the discourse is varied, of different subjects, topics, length and genres, it seems a wide space for people to choose the composition to act as the theme. However, the choice is constrained by this or that. In the following we will take about the legislative discourse from the perspective of Thematic Progression.

第七十九条　期间以时、日、月计算。

期间开始的时和日不算在期间以内。

法定期间不包括路途上的时间。上诉状或者其

他文件在期满前已经交邮的，不算过期。

(《中华人民共和国刑事诉讼法》第一编第六章第七十九条)

English version:

"Article 79 : Time periods shall be calculated by the hour, the day and the month.

The hour and day from which a time period begins shall not be counted as within the time period.

A legally prescribed time period shall not include travelling time. "

(Article 79, Chapter 6, part I of *the Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*)

Article 79 is selected from "*Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*". Now we will make an analysis on it. Firstly we line up the themes and rhemes of each clause.

T1 time period

T2 the hour and day (calculated)

T3 a legally prescribed time period (counted)

We can see that, through the three themes, the discourse focuses on the time provision in the criminal procedure. From T1 to T3 it gives a clearly time division from the general to the specific. And the last two themes are introduced through the former rhemes. It belongs to the "TP with a Constant Theme", expressed as: "T1+R1→T2(=R1)+R2→T3(=R2)+R3". Through the mode the whole discourse has a continuous flow of information and the clauses are connected closely and tightly. Now let us see another Article.

第五十一条　人民法院、人民检察院和公安机关

对于有下列情形之一的犯罪嫌疑人、被告人，可

以取保候审或者监视居住：

（一）可能判处管制、拘役或者独立适用附加刑的；

（二）可能判处有期徒刑以上刑罚，采取取保候审、

监视居住不致发生社会危险性的。

取保候审、监视居住由公安机关执行。

(《中华人民共和国刑事诉讼法》第一编第五章第五十一条)

English version:

"Article 51：The People's Courts, the People's Procuratorates and the public security organs may allow criminal suspects or defendants under any of the following conditions to obtain a guarantor pending trial or subject them to residential surveillance: (1) They may be sentenced to public surveillance, criminal detention or simply imposed with supplementary punishments; or (2) They may be imposed with a punishment of fixed-term imprisonment at least and would not endanger society if they are allowed to obtain a guarantor pending trial or are placed under residential surveillance."

(Article 51, Chapter 5, part I of *the Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*)

In Article 51, the theme is "The People's Courts, the People's Procuratorates and the public security organs" which is unmarked, followed by two clauses served as its rhemes. The mode makes most of clauses maintain a high degree of information consistency at the starting point. Compared with other elements, the theme in front of the clause is more likely the known information, (that is, the units of exercising the following rights) which makes the center information be of the higher transparency among the clauses and thus highlights the direction of the textual message. This belongs to the mode of "Simple Linear TP", expressed by "T1+ R1→T2(=T1)+R2→T3(=T1)+R3". The radical rhemes shows the specific objective details in the criminal procedure and thus gives the legal personnel a clear instruction. We have made statistics on the distribution of Thematic Progression of 170 Articles which have more than one clause as the following.

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF THEMATIC PROGRESSION IN THE LAW

	Number	Classification	Number	Ratio
Clause	170	Simple Linear TP	49	28.8%
		Exposition of a Split Rheme	20	11.8%
		TP with a Constant Theme	5	31.2%
		TP with Crossing-pattern	8	4.7%
		TP with Derived T'S	40	23.5%

From the table 2, we can see that, the mode of "TP with a Constant Theme" occupies a large proportion, followed by the mode of "Simple Linear TP" and "TP with Derived T'S". The use of the mode of "TP with a Constant Theme" can make the discourse full of the strong logic, as we know. The former rheme taking the new information has become the latter theme which is usually taking the known information. And the latter theme is followed by its rheme loading the new information. As the flow of structure continues, the new information and the known information are connected tightly, that is, taking a chain of coherent sense of information. In the Law, this kind of mode makes it effective that the causal relationship has been reflected. The structure shows the strong legal logic, clarity, consistency and mandatory of the legislative discourse. The use of "Simple Linear TP" has highlighted the information focus of the rheme in each clause. In the legislative discourse, one theme takes the same known information, followed by the different rhemes taking more than one piece of new information, that is, the different specific objective conditions met in the carry-out of the criminal procedure. The structure of "Simple Linear TP" elaborates the details of the objective conditions in the procedure, making the theme and the rheme much more closely in the logic. What is more, it reflects the "People-oriented" spirit in *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*. The mode of "TP with Derived T'S" is a type of hierarchical progression that the themes of the latter clauses are derived from the themes or rhemes of the former clauses. It is an extension of the former theme and rheme. The intensity of the flow of information in the mode lies between the type of "Exposition of a Split Rheme" and the type of "TP with a Constant Theme". The expansion of information is restricted by the former theme or rheme, so it is a finite extension. What the Law deals with is the complex human relationships in the society. It is bound to involve a variety of the objective conditions in the community. Therefore, the Law has the characteristics of diversity and complexity. The application of "TP with Derived T'S" to the legislative text for the further constant explanation for certain problem reflects the accuracy and inclusiveness of the legal language. In other words, the structure used in *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* makes it more clear, explicit and concentrative.

All in all, thematic structure, as the method of analyzing the textual features of the legislative text, is full of complexity and diversity. It is also a strong operability and practicability. In the *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*, we can see, after the statistical analysis, that thematic structure reflects the detailed consideration on the objective condition in the actual circumstances and these objective details have been listed specifically in the Law. The choice of theme and rheme makes the law enforcement officers have clear defined principles to adopt and obey. It also reflects the elites, formality, compulsion and rigidness of the Law. However, the organization of the discourse is not the only type that we mentioned above. What the theme and the rheme load are the new information and the known information. But how does the information connect and alternate with each other? In the future study we will take about the information structure in *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China* by the information theory.

VII. CONCLUSION

In summary, we have taken examples to analyze the textual features of *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*, by using the discourse analysis theory in systemic functional grammar – Theme-Rheme and Thematic Progression.

To study thematic structure is not only to get an understanding of what component composing the semantic structure, but also to know and master the distribution of the information passed by the legislators using the tool of language. If we can divide the theme and rheme of each clause correctly in the legislative text, we can understand what the starting point for the legislators to pass.

In *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*, the appropriate use of theme structure has fully reflected the elites, authority and accuracy of the legislative discourse. Thus, it ensures the correct implementation of the *Criminal Law of People's Republic of China*, punishing crimes, protecting the people, ensuring the national security and the public safety, and maintaining the socialist social order.

Criminal Procedure Law of People's Republic of China, as one type of the China's legislative discourse and the procedural law, is institutionally endowed with the summit authoritativeness. The present paper tries to identify and make an analysis on the textual features of the legal discourse from the perspective of Thematic Progression.

VIII. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

There are mainly three aspects of the limitations lying in this research. Firstly, the author tries to make a comprehensive analysis, but the research and analysis have not been carried out profoundly and thoroughly owing to the author's limited specialized knowledge about the law. Secondly, the linguistic devices used in the present research are only the author's observation. The study is restricted to *Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China*, the only data of the analysis. There are more necessary analysis data requiring being studied for a more comprehensive study of the legislative discourses such as *Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, Constitution of the People's Republic of China* and *Treaty*, which are expected to be taken into account to explore more linguistic characteristics for a deeper understanding of the authoritativeness of law. So the present study is not so detailed and comprehensive. Thirdly, we do not go further to integrate all the discrete findings of the analysis to have a discussion thoroughly the complex level—the culture background and the genre, even the most abstract level, that is, legal ideology. So the study needs further exploring.

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