

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents research findings, discussions and limitation of the study on thematic structure and progression in students' expository essays of IELTS academic writing. There are three sections in this chapter. The first section deliberates the findings which cover the common types of Theme and thematic progression patterns found in students' expository essays and the differences of thematic choices and progressions of the low and high achiever's essays. The second section is discussion which discusses the findings of this study. It presents the comprehensive discussions related to the findings. The third section is limitation of the study.

#### **A. Descriptive Findings**

This section presents the findings on the study of thematic structure and progression in students' expository essays of IELTS academic writing which are divided into three sub sections. The first section presents the common types of Theme found in students' expository essays of IELTS academic writing. The second section presents the common types of thematic progression patterns applied by these students in their essays. The last one is the differences of thematic choices and progressions in the low and high scoring essays.

##### **1. Common Types of Theme Realized in Students' Expository Essays of IELTS Academic Writing**

There are a total of 40 expository essays analyzed in this study. These essays comprise 878 clauses. In term of analyzing the Theme, each text was

divided into clauses which were grouped per paragraph. Each clause was identified and analyzed according to its type: Textual Theme, Interpersonal Theme and Topical Theme (Unmarked and Marked topical). This was done based on the model proposed by Martin et al. (1997). Findings revealed that all of the Theme types were found in the students' essays. A summary of occurrences of those Theme types is presented in Table 6 below:

**Table 6. Total Occurrences of Theme Types in Students' Expository Essays**

Total of Clause	Theme Types			
	Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	
			Marked	Unmarked
878 (100%)	502 (34%)	88 (6%)	113 (8%)	765 (52%)

Table 6 above illustrates that Unmarked topical Theme was the most common Theme types found in the students' essays. This Theme has the highest number of occurrence with 765 occurrences or 52% of the total Themes applied by these students. The next is Textual Theme with 502 (34%) occurrences followed by Marked topical Theme with 113 (8%) occurrences. The last Theme becoming the lowest occurrence of Theme types found in the essays is Interpersonal Theme with only 88 occurrences or 8% of the total Themes applied. The following are detail descriptions of the number of occurrence of units realizing topical, interpersonal and textual Themes in students' essays.

**a. Unmarked Topical Theme**

Students' IELTS expository essays are mainly composed by declarative clause and a very slight number of imperative clause. Due to

these clause types, possible units that can comprise unmarked topical Theme are Pronouns, Noun phrase, Grammatical item *it*, Existential *there*, Nominal group which extends beyond the main noun, Group or phrase complexes, Embedded –WH clause, Embedded non-finite clause or Embedded *that* clause which function as subject in declarative clause, and verb which functions as predicator in imperative clause.

Findings show that the total number of occurrence of marked topical Theme are 765 occurrences. However, not all of the abovementioned units was found in the student’s texts. There are two units which did not appear. They are Embedded –WH clause and Embedded *that*. A summary of the number of occurrence of each unit is displayed in Table 7 below:

**Table 7. Occurrences of Units Realising Unmarked Topical Theme in Students’ Expository Essays**

<b>Type of Clause</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
Declarative	Pronoun	166 (21.70%)
	Noun Phrase	486 (63.53%)
	Existential “it”	4 (0.52%)
	Existential “There”	24 (3.14%)
	Extending NP	29 (3.79%)
	Group or Phrase Complex	34 (4.44%)
	Embedded WH	0 (0%)
	Embedded Non-Finite	13 (1.70%)
	Embedded That	0 (0%)
	Relatives	7 (0.91%)
Imperative	Predicator	2 (0.27%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>765</b>

This table illustrates that the highest number of occurrence of units realizing the unmarked topical Theme in declarative clause in students’ essays is Noun phrase with 486 occurrences. It is about 63.53% or more

than a half of the total units of Unmarked topical Theme found. Examples of this unit in the students' essays are shown in table 8 below:

**Table 8. Examples of Noun Phrase in Students' Expository Essays**

Noun phrase	<u>The technology</u> opens the window to the world. (Text 9)
	<u>People around the world</u> will know and understand the certain countries culture by the tremendous of sophisticated technology. (Text 17)

Table 8 above shows that the Noun phrases applied by students in their essays are included both Common and Proper noun which are either singular or plural and sometimes are preceded by a determiner or a numeral. The typical Noun phrases found in the students' essays are related to globalisation and its effects to the total loss of cultural identity (i.e. *The technology* and *People around the world*) which is the topic that should be developed by students in their expository essays in the IELTS academic writing test.

The second highest occurrence of Unmarked topical Theme in the students' essays is Pronouns with 166 (21.70%) occurrences. The common Pronouns found are personal pronouns (i.e. *I*, *we*, and *it*), possessive pronouns (i.e. *their*, *its*) and demonstrative pronoun (i.e. *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*) and there is no indefinite pronoun (i.e. *many* and *both*) found in the students' essays. Examples of those pronouns are shown in the following table:

**Table 9. Examples of Pronouns in Students' Expository Essays**

Personal pronouns	In conclusion, it is true that the globalisation phenomenon makes some societies similar to each other. However, <u>it</u> will not make people lose their identity. <u>It</u> will reignite their feelings and make ways to prevent their loss of cultural values. (Text 5)
Possessive pronouns	Youngsters tend to take interest with something unique and they never do before. <u>Their curiosities</u> are mostly affecting their lifestyle. (Text 34)
Demonstrative pronouns	From the reasons mentioned above, I conclude that the development of communication and transportation does not bring loss to culture because <u>this</u> makes the culture create money and more appreciated. (Text 7)

The examples featured in Table 9 above reveal that Pronouns were used in the essays to refer to an element that has been mention earlier in the preceding clause. This element to which the pronoun refers is called referent. For example, the referent of personal pronoun *it* is the *globalization phenomenon*, whereas the referent of possessive pronoun *their curiosities* is *youngsters*. Meanwhile, the referent of demonstrative pronoun *this* is *the development of communication and transportation*.

The third one is Group or Phrase complexes with 34 occurrences (4.44%). Similar to Noun or Noun phrase, Group or Phrase complexes are comprised of at least two nouns or noun phrases commonly connected by conjunctions. In this study, it is found that this unit has the third highest occurrence in students' expository essays with 34 (4.44%) occurrences. The following are examples extracted from students' essays:

**Table 10. Examples of Group and Phrase Complexes in Students' Expository Essays**

Group and Phrase Complexes	<p><u>Technology information and communication</u> is important to humans. As the result with products of technology, many people can improve knowledge, for example smartphone. (Text 3)</p>
	<p><u>Parents and teachers who have responsibilities to nurture their children or students</u> must make them proud of national culture and encourage them to keep positive habits that exist in our national culture. (Text 16)</p>

Table 4 above show that a Group or Phrase complexes contain two nominal group that are connected by correlative conjunction. In the example extracted from Text 3, *technology information and communication* refer to the same element which constitute a group complex connected by *and*. Meanwhile, *Parents and teachers who have responsibilities to nurture their children or students* also comprise a group complex which are also connected by conjunction *and*. The selection of this unit as unmarked topical Theme allow the writer to pack more information in their essay.

The next unit is Extending Noun Phrase. It is comprised of noun or noun phrase which is modified extensively by dependent clauses or relative clause. In students' expository essays, it is found that there are 29 (3.79%) occurrences of this unit. This is the fourth highest occurrence of Unmarked topical Theme unit in students' essays. Examples of this units are shown in the table below:

**Table 11. Examples of Nominal Group which Extends beyond the Main Noun in Students' Expository Essays**

Nominal group which extends beyond the main noun	People who regularly use the international language, for instance, will leave their own tongue, especially their off springs. (Text 25)
	First of all, the reason that globalisation will reduce cultural identity is caused from many communication and transport that people have. Recently too many visitors from other country will come to my country. (Text 21)

Table 11 above illustrates that *people* and *the reason* have been expanded with embedded clauses which allow the writer to pack more information to the Theme unit. For instance, the relative clause *who regularly use the international language* as extracted from Text 25 modifies *people* as the subject of the clause, while *that globalisation will reduce cultural identity* modifies *the reason* in the example extracted from Text 21.

The next unit is Existential *there* that was found with only 24(3.14%) occurrences. It is the fifth highest occurrence of the Unmarked topical Theme unit in the students' essays. The following are examples of the occurrences of this unit:

**Table 12. Examples of Existential *There* in Students' Expository Essays**

Existential <i>there</i>	However, <u>there</u> are many negative things that come from globalisation. <u>There</u> are some consequences of course. (Text 14)
	To conclude, believing it or not, <u>there</u> will always be two sides effects of the modern era which can be very useful and positive for the individual's life, but <u>there</u> is also another detrimental side which can degrade the cultural value of how people interacts with other. (Text 32)

In the students' essays, it was found that *there* is used to introduce points of evidence or examples to support the thesis proposed. For example, in the example extracted from text 14, *there* is used to introduce *many negative things that come from globalisation and some consequences of course*. Meanwhile, *there* as extracted from Text 32 is used to introduce *two sides effects of the modern era which can be very useful and positive for the individual's life and another detrimental side which can degrade the cultural value of how people interacts with other*. Hence, the purpose of *there* to introduce some significantly highlighted points in these students' expository essays truly support the characteristics of exposition text in which points of strong arguments are really required to support the thesis proposed.

The next unit is Embedded non-finite with 13 (1.70%) occurrences. Examples of this unit found in the students' essays are shown in Table 13 below:

**Table 13. Examples of Embedded Non-finite Clause in Students' Expository Essays**

Embedded Non-finite Clause	In my point of view, <u>losing the cultural identity</u> will occur only if the citizens and governments do not do some important things to protect their heritage. (Text 12)
	In conclusion, the citizens cannot avoid or resist from the technology advancement because it makes our life better. However, <u>keeping our cultural identity</u> is as important as the use of the technology itself. (Text 19)



From Table 13 above, it is seen that the term non-finite clause is similar to gerund in traditional grammar in term of their grammatical category as a noun in a clause. Hence, it constitutes unmarked topical Theme as subject of the clause.

The next unit is WH-Relatives. They are commonly categorised as textual Theme which structurally relates one clause to another by hypotaxis and embedding. However, they may also function as Unmarked topical Theme of a relative clause which combine topical and non-topical function. Preposition put before those WH-Relatives makes it function specifically as both textual and topical Theme. Findings reveal that there are only 7 (0.91%) occurrences of relatives in students' expository essays. Examples of those findings are shown in the table below:

**Table 14. Examples of Relative as Unmarked Topical Theme in Students' Expository Essays**

Relative	This condition rises potentials for the individuals to experience intercultural communication, <u>in which</u> everyone will gather in a blended communication involving vibrant and diverse background of culture. (Text 29)
	Nowadays, people live in modern era which is also called globalisation <u>in which</u> communication and transport develop significantly. As regards, some people think that the phenomenon will result in the total loss of cultural identity. (Text 38)

The last unit is Existential *it* with only 4 occurrences (0.52%). In this study, it was found that there are only 4 occurrences of this unit or 0.52% of the total of occurrence of the units of Unmarked topical Theme in

students' essays, making it the least applied Unmarked topical Theme unit.

Examples of this unit found are presented in the following table:

**Table 15. Examples of Grammatical Item *It* in Students' Expository Essays**

Grammatical item "it"	<u>It</u> would be dangerous if young people absorb all of the new information directly. (Text 16)
	By way of conclusion, the rapid change of technology will bring some effects of human lives. Then, <u>it</u> is a must for people nowadays to not only enjoy the advancement but also filter themselves for the negative sides. (Text 31)

Table 15 above illustrates the use of anticipatory *it* by students in their expository essays. From the examples above it can be seen that anticipatory *it* is used to anticipate an embedded clause occurring later in the structure. Thus, it leads to the emphasis of the embedded clause. In the example extracted from Text 16, *it* provides the information on *if young people absorb all of the new information directly would be dangerous*, while *it* in the example extracted from Text 31 is used to emphasize the information on *to not only enjoy the advancement but also filter themselves for the negative sides a must for people nowadays*.

Moreover, there is another unit of Unmarked topical Theme which does not belong to declarative clause. It is Predicator which exists only in imperative clause. In this study, it was found that there are merely 2 (0.27%) occurrences making it the least applied Unmarked topical Theme unit in

students' expository essays of IELTS academic writing. Examples of this finding are shown in the table below:

**Table 16. Examples of Predicator in Students' Expository Essays**

Predicator	<u>Let's begin</u> by looking at the drawbacks of mass communication in modern life. A lot of people rise their eye brows since open access overseas the world make some people tend to go abroad and learn much more about other nations. (Text 27)
	However, we can see them now. <u>Thanks</u> to the internet and technology which have casted light on their existence of culture. (Text 33)

Table 16 above shows the two imperative clauses found in the students' essays. These clauses are constituted by predicator *Let's begin* and *Thanks*.

**b. Marked Topical Theme**

Table 6 above have shown that there are a total of 113 Marked topical Themes found in students' expository essays. These Themes are realized in declarative clauses which are recognized through non-subjects Theme. They are comprised of Adverbial group, Prepositional phrase and Subordinate clause. Findings reveal that all of these units were found in students' expository essays. Table 17 below presents the number of occurrence of each units realizing Marked topical Theme.

**Table 17. Occurrences of Units Realising Marked Topical Theme in Students' Expository Essays**

<b>Units</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>
Subordinate Clause	35(31%)
Prepositional Phrase	43(38%)
Adverbial Group	35(31%)
<b>Total</b>	113

Table 17 above illustrates that the highest number of occurrence of Marked topical Theme is Prepositional phrase with 43 (38%) occurrences. Meanwhile, the number of occurrence of Subordinate clause and Adverbial group are the same with 35 occurrences or 31% of the total number of occurrence for each unit. Examples of these units found in students' essays are shown in Table 18 below.

Table 18 shows the selection of Subordinate clause in students' essays. Examples extracted from Text 12 and 13 illustrate that Subordinate clause *Even though there are several culture accumulation and blend in a place in one time* was applied to set the environment that the writer use to develop and emphasize information of *Bali apparently keeps their culture closely*. Meanwhile, *when I knew the best fashion in the world that I got from internet* gives strong emphasis sets up the environment of information on *I did not use traditional dress again*.

**Table 18. Examples of Marked Topical Theme Units in the Students' Expository Essays**

Dependent Clause	<u>Even though there are several culture accumulation and blend in a place in one time</u> , Bali apparently keeps their culture closely. (Text 12)
	For example, <u>when I knew the best fashion in the world that I got from internet</u> , I did not use traditional dress again. (Text 13)
Prepositional Phrase	<u>In this essay</u> I will explain some advantages of globalisation for culture. (Text 17)
	However, <u>instead of taking more energy to avoid this issue</u> , the regulations made by governments in terms of protecting local culture could be the effective way to minimize the impacts. (Text 40)
Adverb Group	<u>Nowadays</u> , the world situation has changed and it is caused by the people habits, globalisation, free trade area and the development of technologies. (Text 18)
	The last influence also can be seen in traditional games. <u>Currently</u> , there is no more traditional games children play. (Text 39)

Furthermore, the examples extracted from Text 17 and 40 show that *In this essay* was used to emphasize what the writer wanted to do, that is I *will explain some advantages of globalisation for culture*, and *instead of taking more energy to avoid this issue* was used to emphasize the information that *the regulations made by governments in terms of protecting local culture could be the effective way to minimize the impacts*. Besides, Adverbial group is used to emphasize the information that are commonly used to support the students' thesis statement. It is commonly used by

students as a method of providing the valid arguments. For instance, the example extracted from Text 18 and 39 show that *Nowadays* gives strong emphasis on the information on *the world situation has changed and it is caused by the people habits, globalisation, free trade area and the development of technologies*. Meanwhile, *currently* is used to emphasised *there is no more traditional games children play*.

### c. Interpersonal Theme

As presented in Table 6 above, there are a number of 88 occurrences of interpersonal Theme or 6% of the total occurrences of all Theme types found in students' essays. It is the least applied Theme type in the texts. However, there are only two units of this unit found: Modal adjuncts and Mental clause, while Vocative and finite were not found. A summary of these findings is shown in the following table:

**Table 19. Occurrences of Interpersonal Theme in Students' Expository Essays**

	<b>Modal Adjuncts</b>	<b>Mental Clauses</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Occurrences</b>	15 (17%)	73 (83%)	88

Table 19 above shows that the number of occurrence of Mental Clauses is higher with 73 (83%) occurrences than Modal adjuncts with only 15 occurrences or 17% of the total occurrences of Interpersonal Theme units. The following are examples of this unit found it the students' essays:

**Table 20. Examples of Modal Adjuncts in Students' Expository Essays**

Modal Adjuncts	<u>Admittedly</u> , people who want to order the thicket of flight, they can use a ticketing application through internet connection in their phone, without going to the travel agent. (Text 10)
	<u>In my point of view</u> , losing the cultural identity will occur only if the citizens and governments do not do some important things to protect their heritage. (Text 12)

In Table 20 above, the application of *admittedly* aims to express the probability and *in my point of view* expresses the writer's opinion towards the issue being commented.

The second unit is Mental clause which is used to express the writer's opinion. Examples of this unit are shown in Table 21 below:

**Table 21. Examples of Mental Clauses in Students' Expository Essays**

Mental Clause	<u>It is clear that</u> the globalisation makes a positive effect. (Text 10)
	<u>I do believe that</u> some other advantageous like promoting our local wisdom through these media and fast transportation would probably give more positive aspects to the identity of local culture. (Text 20)

From this table, it is seen that the writers wants to emphasize what they believe in the response to the issue of the topic given in the test. The writers tries to provide strong arguments to support the thesis statement that they proposed. By selecting this interpersonal Theme unit, such as *it is clear that* and *I do believe that* the arguments provided seems to be more valid.

#### **d. Textual Theme**

As presented in Table 6 in previous section, there are a total of 502 (34%) occurrences of Textual Theme in students' expository essays. It is the second highest Theme applied by the students. This Theme comprises Structural conjunction, Conjunctive adjunct, and Relatives. A summary of the number of occurrence of these units are displayed in Table 22 below:

**Table 22. Occurrences of Textual Themes in Students' Expository Essays**

	<b>Structural Conjunction</b>	<b>Conjunctive Adjunct</b>	<b>Relatives</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Occurrences</b>	202 (40%)	213 (43%)	87 (17%)	502

This table illustrates that the highest occurrence of Textual Theme unit is Conjunctive adjunct with 213 (43%) occurrences. It is almost a half of the total number of occurrence of Textual Theme in students' expository essays. It is followed by Conjunction with 202 (40%) occurrences that is almost the same number with Conjunctive adjunct. The least applied Textual Theme unit in students' expository essays is Relatives with only 87 (17%) occurrences. Table 23 below shows the examples of each of these units found in the students' essays.



**Table 23. Examples of Textual Theme Units in Students' Expository Essays**

Structural Conjunction	As a result, the young people in Indonesia may think that this new culture is acceptable <u>and</u> it will reduce their morality. (Text 11)
	I strongly disagree with this argument <u>since</u> there are many benefits that can be obtained for the cultural identity from this change. (Text 17)
	I strongly agree <u>that</u> it is acceptable to face the reality of globalisation <u>and</u> therefore worrying about the losing local cultural identity is unnecessary. (Text 30)

As extracted from Text 11, Structural conjunction *and* is used to connect *the young people in Indonesia may think that this new culture is acceptable* with *it will reduce their morality*. Besides, it can also be used to introduce the dependant clause. For example, as extracted from Text 17 and 30, *since* is applied to join the dependent clause *there are many benefits that can be obtained for the cultural identity from this change* with the independent clause *I strongly disagree with this argument*. Meanwhile *that* connects *it is acceptable to face the reality of globalisation* with the dependent clause *I strongly agree*.

The second unit of Textual Theme is Conjunctive adjuncts. It functions as a cohesive link back to previous discourse. The findings show that this Textual Theme unit were found to be the highest occurrence of all the Textual Themes units in the students' essays. Examples of this unit are shown in Table 23 below:

**Table 24. Examples of Conjunctive Adjuncts in Students' Expository Essays**

Conjunctive Adjunct	<u>Firstly</u> , nowadays, modern technology have many more benefits for human life which consists of communication and transportation. (Text 4)
	<u>Furthermore</u> , clothes with western casual style has become the woman's daily lifestyle. Step by step, kebaya as a part of the heritage is left and was not worn anymore. (Text 12)
	<u>In conclusion</u> , although globalisation era have a risk like cultural problem. (Text 27)

The exposition text features thesis statement, arguments containing supporting evidences and restatement or conclusion. Mostly, Conjunctive adjuncts were found in student's arguments and conclusion. This is as demonstrated in Table 4 that *firstly* as the enhancement temporal following conjunctive adjuncts is used to highlight the main point that will be introduced in the text.

As extracted from Text 4, *firstly* is used to highlight the point of *nowadays, modern technology have many more benefits for human life which consists of communication and transportation*. It is one several points which support writer's thesis statement in his/her essays. Besides, *in addition* is applied to link the current clause to the previous one by adding additional information. In addition, *in conclusion* is employed to give a restatement towards the thesis proposed in the first paragraph. It was found that almost all of the students applied this summative conjunctive adjuncts in their essays.

The third unit is Relative. It is used to relate a dependent clause with an independent one and thus provide the enhancement to the element containing in the preceding clause. In traditional grammar, it is known as Nominal clause, a clause which provides extensive modification to the noun of the preceding clause. Examples of this unit found in the students' essays are shown below:

**Table 25. Examples of Relative in Students' Expository Essays**

Relative	The globalisation and its effect might lead to a frightening condition to certain people <u>which</u> leads to the major loss of cultural identity. (Text 5)
	We cannot resist this kind of advancement <u>that</u> brings about a better life for societies. (Text 19)

As demonstrated in Table 25 above, the example extracted from Text 5 and 19 shows that *which leads to the major loss of cultural identity* is employed to enhance *certain people*, while *that brings about a better life for societies* enhances *this kind of advancement*.

**e. Simple and Multiple Theme**

There are a total of 878 clauses consisted in students' expository essays. These clauses are comprised by not only simple Theme which contains only topical Theme, but also multiple Theme which are reflected through the existence of textual and interpersonal Theme. Findings of this study reveal that both simple and multiple Theme are found in students'

expository essays. A summary of the number of occurrence of both of these Theme patterns is shown in the following table:

**Table 26. Occurrences of Simple and Multiple Themes in Students' Expository Essays**

	Simple Theme	Multiple Theme			Total of Clause
		Textual Topical	Interpersonal Topical	Textual Interpersonal Topical	
Occurrence	320 (36%)	470 (54%)	56 (6%)	32 (4%)	878
		558 (64%)			

This table shows that the total of occurrence of simple Theme is only 320 occurrences (36%), while the occurrence of multiple Theme is higher with 558 occurrences. It is 64% of the total number of Theme pattern occurred in students' expository essays. It is more than a half of the total number of occurrences.

From the table, it is shown that multiple Theme comprised three patterns. They are Textual-Topical Theme as the highest occurrence of multiple Theme pattern with 470 (54%) occurrences, Interpersonal-Topical Theme pattern with 56 (6%) occurrences and Textual-Interpersonal-Topical Theme pattern with 32 (4%) occurrences. It is shown that the Textual-Interpersonal-Topical Theme pattern becomes the least applied Theme pattern in students' expository essays of IELTS academic writing test. Examples of each of all thematic patterns found in the students' essays are presented in the table below:

**Table 27. Examples of Simple and Multiple Theme in Students' Expository Essays**

Simple Theme	I strongly agree with this case. <u>The paragraph below</u> will support with some reasons. (Text 1)
Textual-Topical Theme	<i>Secondly, <u>facilities like smartphone and airplane</u> give many positive impacts for societies and <u>they</u> will inevitably cultural identity.</i> (Text 4)
Interpersonal-Topical Theme	<b>I personally believe that</b> <u>there</u> are many benefits that internet has for human. (Text 22)
	<b>Positively, <u>we</u></b> could build more understanding each other. (Text 29)
Textual-Interpersonal-Topical Theme	<i>To conclude, as previously mentioned, <b>I believe that</b> <u>the negative effect of globalisation</u>, in terms of losing the cultural identity could be reduced by the control by people and government.</i> (Text 12)

Both simple and multiple Theme are realized in two different clause structure. Simple Theme is always found in simple clause, while multiple Theme is mainly found in clause complexes. The structure of simple Theme which is comprised by *Topical Theme + Rheme* is only possible to construct simple clause structure. For instance, as extracted from Text 1, *I strongly agree with this case* and *The paragraph below will support with some reasons* only have one topical Theme exactly marked topical Theme of pronoun *I* and noun phrase *The paragraph below* as the subject of the clauses.

On the other hand, multiple Themes are mainly found in clause complexes as they have characteristics that constitute clause complexes such as structural conjunction unit in textual Theme and mental clause unit

in interpersonal Theme. For instance, the structural conjunction *and* in *and they will inevitably cultural identity* links two clauses which comprise a clause complex. However, the textual Theme *Secondly* in *Secondly, facilities like smartphone and airplane give many positive impacts for societies* does not link two clauses. Hence, it does not comprise a clause complex as it only links the clause to the preceding clause.

Furthermore, the Interpersonal-Topical Theme is also mainly realised in clause complexes. The Interpersonal Theme unit which allow this possibility is only mental clause unit as it is comprised by clause category. For instance, the clause of *I personally believe that there are many benefits that internet has for human* as extracted from Text 22 contains one interpersonal Theme which is constituted by mental clause *I personally believe that* and one topical Theme *there*. Both of these Themes constitutes a clause complex. On the other hand, the clause *Positively, we could build more understanding each other* does not make up a clause complex as its interpersonal Theme does not contain mental clause. The same case is also applied to textual-interpersonal-topical Theme pattern.

Of all of these patterns found in students' expository essays, the Textual-Topical Theme is the most common thematic pattern applied by the students with 470 occurrences or 50% of the total occurrence of all thematic patterns, followed by simple Theme and Interpersonal-Topical Theme and Textual-Interpersonal-Topical Theme.

## 2. Thematic Progression Patterns in Students' Expository Essays of IELTS Academic Writing

There are four patterns of thematic progression which are used to analyze the Theme and Rheme development in the students' expository essays of IELTS academic writing. They are the Constant Theme pattern, the Linear Theme pattern, Split Rheme pattern and Derived Themes. Findings reveal that these four patterns are found in students' essays. The number of occurrence of each type of thematic progression is summarized in the table below:

**Table 28. Total Occurrences of Thematic Progression Patterns in Students' Expository Essays**

	Thematic Progression Pattern				Total of TP Pattern
	Constant	Linear	Split	Derived	
<b>Occurrences</b>	202 (46.65%)	222 (52.27%)	7 (1.39%)	3 (0.69%)	434

Table 28 above shows that there are a total of 433 occurrences of thematic progression pattern in students' expository essays. The highest number of occurrences is the Linear Theme pattern with 222 (52.27%) occurrences. It is more than a half of total occurrences of all thematic progression pattern in students' expository essays. The second highest occurrence is the Constant Theme pattern with 202 (46.65%) occurrences. Its occurrence almost reaches a half of the total occurrences of thematic progression pattern.

Both Split Rheme pattern and Derived Themes pattern were found in a very small number of occurrence in students' essays with each only had 6 (1.39%) and 3 (0.69%) occurrences making Derived Themes pattern the least

applied thematic progression pattern in students' expository essays of IELTS academic writing test.

The followings are examples of each pattern found in the students' expository essays:

Cl. 1	<u>The phenomenon</u>	is a result of ...
	↓	
Cl. 2	<u>This phenomenon</u>	will cause the ...
	↓	
Cl. 3	<u>This phenomenon</u>	is jeopardising ...
	↓	
Cl. 4	<u>it</u>	can be prevented ...
(Text 40)		

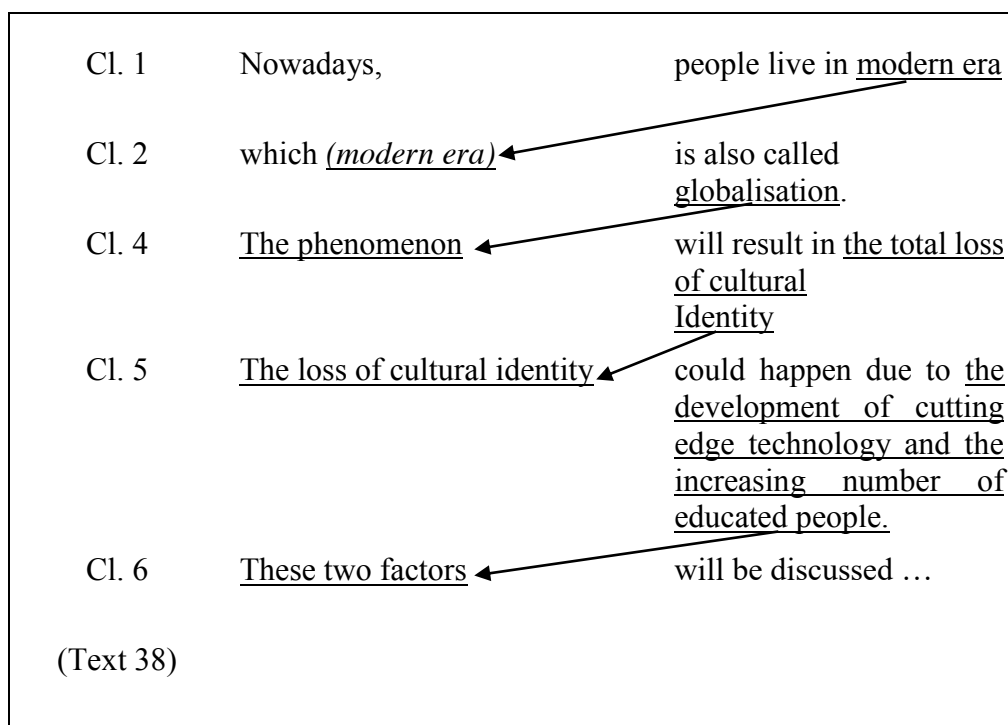
**Figure 7: Examples of the Constant Theme Pattern**

Figure 7 illustrates the example of the Constant Theme pattern found in students' expository essays. In this figure, as extracted from Text 40, the paragraph begins with the Theme *The phenomenon* (clause 1). This Theme is reiterated in the succeeding clauses (clause 2 and clause 3). In clause 4, the selected Theme is pronoun *it* which is reiterated from Theme in clause 3.

Figure 8 illustrates the example of the Linear Theme pattern found in the students' expository essay as extracted from Text 38. According to this figure, clause 1 introduces *modern era* as Rheme. This element is then promoted to the Theme position in clause 2 through the use of the same element linked by relative *which*. The Rheme *globalization* in this clause is promoted as Theme in clause 4 through the use of noun phrase *The phenomenon* which means *globalization*. In clause 5, the use of noun phrase *the loss of cultural identity* is



selected from Rheme in clause 4. Then, the Theme *these two factors* in clause 6 is selected from Rheme *the development of cutting edge technology and the increasing number of educated people* in clause 5.



**Figure 8: Example of the Linear Theme Pattern**

Figure 9 illustrates the example of the Split Rheme pattern found in students' expository essays. In this example, Rheme of Clause 11 contains two information: *family* and *school*. The writer of this text selected both of these information as Theme in Clause 12 and Clause 15. In clause 12, *family* is realised in subordinate clause *when the family environment...*, while in Clause 15 *school* is realised as subject.

Cl. 11	The main factors of unrealized mind of culture identity	come from the <u>family</u> and <u>school</u> .
Cl. 12	<u>When the family environment</u> ...	the growing children ...
Cl. 15	Furthermore, <u>the school</u>	also plays an important role ...
(Text 8)		

**Figure 9: Examples of the Split Rheme Pattern**

Cl. 2	<u>Mankind</u>	can enjoy the ...
Cl. 3	<u>Their life</u>	are more fascinating ...
Cl. 5	<u>People</u>	call it 'globalisation' ...
(Text 36)		

**Figure 10: Example of Derived Theme Pattern**

Figure 10 above shows Derived Theme pattern in which the Themes of particular clauses are derived from the Theme of the first clause. As can be seen, clause 3 begins with *mankind* as Theme. Then, the Theme *their life* in clause 3 and *people* in clause 5 are selected as Theme which is derived from the Theme *mankind* in clause 2.

### 3. Theme Types and Thematic Progression Patterns in the Low and High Scoring Expository Essays

This section presents detail comparative descriptions of the use of various Theme types and thematic progression patterns in the low and high scoring essays. There are two sub sections of this section. The first section presents types of Theme in the low and high scoring essays. The second sub section presents the thematic progression patterns found in the low and high scoring essays.

#### a. Theme Types in the Low and High Scoring Expository Essays

There are two groups of essays compared in this study. They are the low and high scoring essays. Each group consists of 12 essays. Findings show that there are a different number of occurrence of various Theme types in both the low and high scoring essays. A summary of those differences is presented in Table 7 below:

**Table 29. Occurrences of Theme Types in the Low and High Scoring Essays**

Students Text' Category	Total of Clause	Theme Types				Total of Themes
		Textual	Interpersonal	Topical		
				Marked	Unmarked	
Low Scoring	264	148 (34%)	21 (5%)	32 (7%)	232 (54%)	433
High Scoring	274	170 (36%)	34 (7%)	28 (6%)	246 (51%)	478

Table 29 above shows that there are a total of 264 clauses contained in the low scoring essays and 274 clauses in the high ones which means that

the high scoring essays contain of 10 more clauses. It is shown that both the low and high scoring essays contained all of Theme types with a different number of occurrence. The low scoring essays contain lower number of Themes with only 433 Themes, while the high scoring essays contain 478 Themes, 45 Themes more.

In term of Topical Theme, the high scoring essays contain higher number Unmarked topical Theme with 246 (51%) occurrences than the low scoring essays with only 232 (54%) occurrences. On the other hand, the low scoring essays contain higher number of marked topical Theme with 32 (7%) occurrences, while the high scoring essays contain only 28 (6%) occurrences.

Besides, the number of occurrence of Interpersonal Theme found in the high scoring essays is higher that the low scoring essays with 34 (7%) occurrences, while there are only 21 (5%) occurrences of Interpersonal Theme found in the lower scoring essays. In term of textual Theme, the high scoring essays contain higher number of occurrence with 170 occurrences (36%), while the low scoring essays only contain 148 (34%) occurrences. It can be concluded that the higher scoring essays contain higher number of Unmarked topical Theme, Interpersonal Theme, and Textual Theme, but not for Marked topical Theme which the lower scoring essays contain higher number.

Furthermore, findings also show that there are some differences of the use of Unmarked and Marked topical Theme found in the low and high

scoring essays. Description of those differences are summarized in Table 30 below:

**Table 30. Occurrences of Units Realising Unmarked and Marked Topical Theme in the Low and High Scoring Essays**

Units	Students' Text Category	
	Lower Scoring	Higher Scoring
<b>Unmarked Topical</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>246</b>
Pronoun	49 (21.12%)	54 (21.95%)
Noun Phrase	146 (62.94%)	157 (63.82%)
Existential "it"	1 (0.43%)	2 (0.81%)
Existential "There"	7 (3.02%)	7 (2.85%)
Extending NP	13 (5.60%)	8 (3.25%)
Group/Phrase Complex	12 (5.17%)	5 (2.03%)
Embedded WH	-	-
Embedded Non-Finite	2 (0.86%)	7 (2.85%)
Embedded That	-	-
Relatives	2 (0.86%)	5 (2.03%)
Predicator	-	1 (0.41%)
<b>Marked Topical</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>28</b>
Dependant Clause	12 (37.5%)	6 (21.43%)
Prepositional Phrase	12 (37.5%)	12 (42.86%)
Adverb Group	8 (25%)	10 (35.71%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>274</b>

Table 30 above illustrates detail description of Unmarked and Marked topical Themes realized in both the low and high scoring essays. It is seen that the total number of occurrences of Unmarked and Marked topical Theme of the high scoring essays is 274 occurrences. It is higher than the low scoring essays with only 264 occurrences.

In term of Unmarked topical Theme, Noun phrase and Pronoun were found to be two highest number of occurrences of Unmarked topical Theme units in both the low and high scoring essays making Noun phrase the

highest Unmarked topical Theme units used by the students in their essays. Specifically, it was found that the number of occurrence of Noun phrase and Pronoun in the high scoring essays is higher with 157 (63.82%) and 54 (21.95%) occurrences than the low achievers' essays with only 146 (62.94%) and 49 (21.12%) occurrences.

Moreover, it was also found that the number of occurrences of Existential "it", Embedded Non-Finite and Relatives in the high scoring essay is higher with 2 (0.81%), 7 (2.85%) and 5 (2.03%) occurrences, than in the low scoring essays with only 1 (0.43%), 7 (2.85%) and 2 (0.86%) occurrences. On the other hand, the number of occurrence of Group or phrase complex and Extending noun phrase in the low scoring essays was found higher with 12 (5.17%) and 13 (5.60%) occurrences than in the high scoring essays with only 5 (2.03%) and 8 (3.25%) occurrences. Meanwhile, Existential "There" was found in the same number of occurrences in the low and high scoring essays with 7 (3.02%) and 2.85%) occurrences. The last, Predicator was only found in the high scoring essays with 1 (0.41%) occurrence.

In term of Marked topical Theme, the number of occurrence of all units including Prepositional phrase, Subordinate clause and Adverbial group was found higher in the low scoring essays than in the high scoring essays. Definitely, the number of occurrence of Prepositional phrase of both text categories is the similar to Adverbial group in the high scoring with 12 (37.5% and 42.86%) occurrences. In term of Subordinate clause as Marked

topical Theme, the low scoring essays contained higher occurrences of this unit with 12 (37.5%) occurrences than the low scoring essays did with only 6 (21.43%) occurrences. On the other hand, the high scoring essays contained higher occurrence of Adverbial group with 10 (35.71%) occurrences than the low scoring essays with only 8 (25%) occurrences.

Moreover, findings also reveal that there are some a different number of occurrence of Interpersonal Theme in the low and high scoring essays. A summary of those differences are shown in Table 31 below:

**Table 31. Occurrences of Interpersonal Theme in the Low and High Scoring Essays**

<b>Students Text' Category</b>	<b>Modal Adjuncts</b>	<b>Mental Clause</b>	<b>Total</b>
Low Scoring	6 (29%)	15 (71%)	21
High Scoring	5 (15%)	29 (85%)	34

In Table 31 above, the total occurrence of Interpersonal Theme in the high scoring essays is higher with 34 occurrences than the low scoring essays with only 21 occurrences. Specifically, it can be seen that mental clause is applied mostly by the high achievers. It is shown that there are 29 (85%) occurrences in the high scoring essays and 15 (71%) occurrences in the low scoring essay. Meanwhile, modal adjuncts were the least applied unit in Interpersonal Theme in both the low and high scoring essays. It is shown that there are only 6 (29%) occurrences of Structural conjunction in the low scoring essays and 5 (15%) occurrences in the high scoring essays.

Furthermore, findings reveal that the high scoring essays contained more Textual Theme than the low achievers' essays did. A summary of

detail descriptions of the occurrence of Textual Theme units of both text categories is presented in Table 32 below:

**Table 32. Occurrences of Textual Theme in the Low and High Scoring Essays**

<b>Students Text' Category</b>	<b>Structural Conjunction</b>	<b>Conjunctive Adjunct</b>	<b>Relatives</b>	<b>Total</b>
Low Scoring	66 (39%)	53 (32%)	29 (29%)	148
High Scoring	57 (34%)	82 (48%)	31 (18%)	170

From Table 32 above, it can be seen that the highest number of occurrence of Textual Theme unit of the low scoring essays is Conjunction with 66 (39%) occurrences, followed by Conjunctive adjuncts with 53 (32%) occurrences and Relatives with 29 (29%) occurrences. Meanwhile, Conjunctive adjuncts dominate the occurrence of all Textual Theme units in the high scoring essays with 82 (48%) occurrences followed by Conjunction with 57 (34%) and Relatives with 31 (18%) occurrences. From both these text categories, it can be seen that Relatives are the least applied Textual Theme units in the low and high scoring essays.

Moreover, findings also show that both simple and multiple Theme were found in the low and high scoring essays in a different number of occurrence. A summary of detail description of those occurrences is presented in the following table.



**Table 33. Occurrences of Simple and Multiple Theme in the low and High Scoring Essays**

Students Text' Category	Simple Theme	Multiple Theme			Total of Clause
		Textual Topical	Interpersonal Topical	Textual Interpersonal Topical	
Low Scoring	105 (40%)	138 (52%)	11 (4%)	10 (4%)	264
		159 (60%)			
High Scoring	84 (31%)	156 (57%)	19 (7%)	15 (5%)	274
		190 (69%)			

Table 33 above illustrates that the most applied Theme pattern in both of the low and high scoring essays is multiple Theme pattern followed by simple Theme. In term of multiple Theme, the highest occurrence of Theme pattern in both of the text categories is Textual-Topical, followed by Interpersonal-Topical and Textual-Interpersonal-Topical Theme.

In the low scoring essays, Topical-Textual Theme was found with 138 (52%) occurrences, followed by Textual the with 105 (40%) occurrences. The occurrences of Interpersonal-Topical Theme and Textual-Interpersonal-Topical Theme pattern are almost the same with 11 (4%) and 10 (4%) for each, making the Textual-Interpersonal-Topical Theme the least applied Theme pattern in the low scoring essays.

Meanwhile, the occurrence of Textual-Topical Theme pattern dominates the occurrence of all types of Theme pattern found in the high scoring essays with 156 (57%) occurrences. It is followed by Simple Theme with 84 (31%) occurrences and Interpersonal-Topical Theme pattern with 19 (7%) occurrences. The least applied Theme pattern in the high scoring

essays is Textual-Interpersonal-Topical Theme with only 15 (5%) occurrences from all number of occurrence of Theme patterns in the essays.

**b. Thematic Progression Patterns in the Low and High Scoring Expository Essays**

Findings reveal that there are some slight differences of occurrences of thematic progression patterns in both of the low and high scoring essays. Overall, the number of occurrence of all thematic progression patterns in the high scoring essays is higher with 142 occurrences than is in the low scoring essays with only 127 occurrences. For a detail, a summary of those differences is presented in the Table 11 below:

**Table 34. Occurrences of Thematic Progression Patterns in the Low and High Scoring Essays**

Students Text' Category	Thematic Progression Pattern				Total of TP Pattern
	Constant	Linear	Split	Derived	
Low Scoring	62 (48.82%)	63 (49.61)	2 (1.57%)	0 (0%)	127
High Scoring	66 (46.48%)	73 (51.41%)	2 (1.41%)	1 (0.70%)	142

Table 34 above illustrates that the highest number of occurrence of all thematic progression patterns in the low scoring essays is the Linear Theme pattern with 63 (49.61%) occurrences followed by the Constant Theme with 62 (48.82%) occurrences. These two patterns dominate the occurrences of all Theme types in the students' essays. Still in the low scoring essays, there are only 2 (1.57%) occurrences of the Split Rheme

making it the least applied thematic progression pattern in the low scoring essays. In addition, there is no occurrence of Derived Theme pattern found in those essays.

Moreover, the Linear Theme pattern is also the highest number of occurrence of thematic progression pattern in the high scoring essays with 73 (51.41%) occurrences. It is higher than what was found in the low scoring essays. It is followed by the Constant Theme pattern as the second highest number of occurrence with 66 (46.48%) occurrences and is followed by Split Rheme pattern with only 2 (1.41%) occurrences. In addition, there is only 1 (0.70%) occurrence of Derived Theme pattern found in the high scoring essays. It becomes the least applied thematic progression pattern in the high scoring essays.

## **B. Discussions**

The findings presented above reveals some interesting points related to the research focus addressing the thematic choices made by students in their expository essays, the thematic progression patterns applied by these students and the differences of both the thematic choice and progression of the low and high scoring essays. This section provides comprehensive discussions about these findings which are elaborated into following three sections.

## **1. Thematic Choices in Students' Expository Essays of IELTS Academic Writing**

This section discusses the thematic choices made by students in their expository essays as reflected by the common types of Theme and thematic progression patterns applied by the students in their essays and what they reveal. The findings have shown that all types of Theme are present in a different number of occurrences in students' expository essays. The most applied Theme type is Unmarked topical Theme followed by Textual Theme and Marked topical Theme, while Interpersonal Theme is the least applied one. The occurrences of these Theme types obviously represent the three language functions which are to share the ideas or experiences, to build relationship, and to organize and shape itself (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Hence, they also unconditionally contribute to the students' message construction.

Furthermore, in term of thematic content, all of the four Theme types are also present in both the low and high scoring essays. The high scoring essays contain more Themes than the low ones. It can be seen through the frequency of occurrence of each Theme types in both of these groups. This is similar to study conducted by Ping (200) which show that good essays elaborates more Themes than weak ones. This higher frequency of occurrence of Theme types in the high scoring essays correlates to the students' proficiency level. As stated by Choung (2017), students' choices of thematic structures are affected by the level of proficiency, although the enhanced proficiency does not involve the improvement in all aspects of thematic organization. North (2005) adds that the

thematic choices in students' essays reflect different conception of knowledge of academic writing which themselves contribute to success in course assessment. Further discussion on each types of Theme are discussed in the following sections.

**a. Unmarked Topical Theme**

Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) state that unmarked or marked topical Theme must be present in every single clause, while interpersonal and textual Theme are optional. In the present study, it was found that the most common Theme type applied by students in their expository essays is unmarked topical Theme (52%), including in both the low and high scoring essays. This finding is comparable to the studies conducted by Jalilifar (2009; 2010), Bangga, (2013), Safitra (2013), Ping (2007), Thalib (2014), Februana (2014), Liu & Tucker (2015), Marfuaty & Wahyudi (2015), Sianipar (2015), Narita (2016), and Jing (2015). They also found that unmarked topical Theme constituted by subjects are the most common constituents chosen by students as thematic head in their writing.

In the present study, there are eight units of subject found in students' essays. In term subject selection, brief noun phrases is the most common subject applied by students followed by pronouns. On the other hand, other expanded nominal structures such as extending noun phrases, group/phrase complexes, and embedded non-finite (nominalization) were less applied. In addition, there was no embedded WH and embedded *that* clause found. These similar findings were also be observed in both the low

and high scoring essays. The first unit is brief noun/noun phrase. Its occurrences is the highest of all units constituting unmarked topical Theme in all over students' essays, including in both the low and high scoring essays. In the present study, it was observed that the use of brief noun/noun phrases are typically related to the statement of issue provided in the IELTS writing test which must be developed by students in their essays. In this case, "*globalization is lead people to the total loss of cultural identity*" was become statement of the issue of the test.

For instance, in most of students' essays, the first sentence in the first paragraph is started by *globalization*. It becomes the starting point of the messages that were later developed in the following sentences. The Themes occurred in the following sentences commonly refer to *globalization* such as, *communication and technology*, *this phenomenon*, *people*, and *the issue*. In the following paragraphs, some Themes such as *cultural identity*, *people*, *other country*, etc. which are part of arguments representing students' reasons or evidences to what extends they agree or disagree to the issue were also observed in most of students' essays. Similar noun phrases were also chosen frequently to support the thesis proposed.

The second unit is pronoun. It is the second highest occurrence of all units realizing the unmarked topical Theme in students' essays. In the present study, the most common pronoun found is personal pronoun such as *they*, *it*, *we*, and *I*. These pronouns were used to refer to particular noun or noun phrases that have been mention earlier in the previous clauses. The

high occurrence of this unit in students' essays plays significant roles in creating a less monotonous text by avoiding the repetition of the same words. As a cohesive ties, the use of appropriate pronouns in the students' essays also contributes to building cohesive text (Bloor & Bloor, 2004). It may also give impacts to the increase of their writing score since cohesion and coherence are two aspects determining students' score (IELTS, 2019).

The use of these brief topic-related nouns or noun phrases and pronouns as thematic heads in students' essays shows that these students tried to consistently provide topic-related arguments based on their proposed thesis statement. The use of these Themes correlates to the specific communicative purpose of the essays. In this IELTS, the students have to write an essay consisting of at least 250 words based on the topic provided. They were required to give opinion, point of views, arguments and supporting evidences. These texts belong to expository or argumentative essays.

In term of communicative purpose, these findings are contrast to studies conducted by Ping (2005) and Liu & Tucker (2015). Ping (2005) found that the most common thematic head in in spontaneous talk is pronoun. He assumed that "it could be due to the nature of face-to-face interactions where speakers tend to pronominalize shared knowledge or details recoverable from context. The character of such exchanges, where effort is regularly made to maintain rapport, may also help to explain the prevalent use of personal pronouns" (p. 721).

Meanwhile, Liu & Tucker (2015) found that person (participant) was the most common thematic head used in radio news texts. They explain that it the high frequent use of person (participant) as thematic head correlates to the specific purpose of the text. News reported information of what was happened broadcasted through either radio, television or newspaper. The major purpose is to answers the five W's: Who? What? When? Where? Why?, and specially centers on one subject, either somebody or something, and expounds on when and where something happens to somebody.

In addition to the nature of text, basically, the high frequent use of unmarked topical Theme occupying subject position in students' essays is due to the nature of expository text which is mainly composed of declarative clauses. It is unlike procedure text or other similar texts included into genre of instruction which are mainly composed of imperative clauses in which the thematic head of the clause is predicator or verb (Schleppegrell, 2004: 94).

Furthermore, Eggins (2004) and Schleppegrell (2004) argue that brief noun phrases and pronouns is characteristic of conversation, while expanded nominal structures are characteristic of written academic discourse. There is one expanded nominal structure which contributes significantly in argumentative or expository writing. It is nominalization which is constituted of embedded non-finite.



Nominalization is a resource of grammatical metaphor where “meanings are construed in new ways that enable the abstraction, technicality, and development of arguments that characterize advanced literacy” (Schleppegrell, 2004: 72). Mellos (2011: 37) states that having point of departure as a nominalization is effective because Theme encapsulates the purpose of the sentence since it contributes to providing strong arguments. In the present study, it was observed that the frequent use of nominalization in the high scoring essays is higher than the low the low scoring ones. It is in line with the studies conducted by Mellos (2011).

Moreover, Jalilifar (2010a) and Ebrahimi & Ebrahimi (2012) argue that this high frequent use of unmarked topical Theme may be also indicative of structural simplicity of students’ writing at different level of language proficiency. They explains that by putting subject in Theme position, students could make sure that their sentences are grammatically correct. This is the simple way of constructing canonical English sentences that follow *Noun Phrase-Verb Phrase* pattern, owing the fact that the students’ writing ability is far from native speaker’s ability.

This is in line with the fact that the writers of these essays are students that are mostly not from English background and their IELTS writing band scores range only from 5 to 6.5. Besides, the characteristic of IELTS writing test seems to influence students to simplify their sentence structure. Jalilifar (2010a) and Ebrahimi & Ebrahimi (2012) further explain that this high frequent use of unmarked topical Theme indicates that the

students tend to be in shielded position by ensuring that they write correct sentences and avoid mistakes grammatically as they should achieve high score as well.

This case is strongly influenced by the situation of the test in which students tend to focus more on grammatical aspects. As stated by Curry (2004) in Khuder and Harwood (2015), test situation influences writers' writing product where their focus tend to be on word level (grammar and vocabulary choice) rather than the substance of their writing (generating ideas and considering the coherence of their arguments).

Thus, the analysis of unmarked topical Theme found that students have less capacity to introduce abstract notions about texts in Theme position. This could be due to the test situation in which students have very limited time. In addition, the minimum use of expanded nominal structures in students' essays indicates that most of the students still encountered challenges in following the characteristic of formal academic writing including the low and high achievers.

#### **b. Marked Topical Theme**

There are three units realizing the marked topical Theme observed in the present study. They are subordinate clause, prepositional phrase or circumstance and adverbial group. The findings show that there are only 8% of the occurrence of marked topical Theme in the students' essays. It is extremely lower than the use of unmarked topical Theme. Of all the three

units, prepositional phrase is the most common unit used by the students. The same case was also observed in both the low and high scoring essays. In both of these groups, the marked topical Theme was found in a very limited number. However, the low scoring essays contained more the marked topical Theme than the high scoring essays.

This lower use of the marked topical Theme seems to correlate with the high frequent use of the unmarked topical Theme. As discussed previously, in test situation students tend to focus more on grammatical structure by choosing simple structure following noun phrase-Verb phrase structure. It is because they have very limited time to complete their essays. Whereas, they have to achieve high score as well as. As stated previously, in this IELTS test students have to write sort essays containing at least 250 words in 45 minutes. In addition, there are also four main scoring criteria to consider including task response, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical range and accuracy. Therefore, they will carefully pay attention to all of these aspects in order to complete this task successfully and tend to avoid complex structure that may cause grammatical mistakes.

This finding also correlates to students' proficiency level. As Eggins (2004) and Christy & Drefyus (2007 in Mellos (2011) explain, marked Theme occurs frequently in successful writing. Thus, it is not surprising if there were only a limited number of occurrence of this Theme in these essays as these essays were grouped into medium level. As mentioned, the scores of these students' essays range from 5 to 6.5 which are categorized

into medium category. However, comparing the low and high scoring essays. This finding is contrast with studies conducted by Mellos (2011) which found that the low scoring essays contained more marked Themes than the low ones.

Furthermore, another interesting finding reflected through topical Theme related to the nature of clause type in expository text as is that there are a very limited number of occurrences of imperative clause which features predicator as Theme position. It is only 0.27% of the total number of occurrence of units realizing topical Theme. This is smaller than what Thalib (2014) found in her study on the Theme on thematic progression in Malaysian advertorials. She found that there are 5.3% occurrences of imperative clauses. She argues that the occurrences of imperative clause in advertorials are common and become characteristic of advertorials itself to persuade readers. Meanwhile, the insignificant occurrence of imperative clause in expository essay is not surprising, as the nature of exposition texts is to provide the viewpoints or arguments, not to persuade or instruct someone to do something (Schleppegrell, 2004: 85; Knapp & Watkins, 2005: 187; Pardiyono, 2016: 150; Mahsun, 2014: 23). This finding implies that the use of imperative clause by students in their expository essays is due to their lack of understanding of the nature of expository texts.

### **c. Textual Theme**

The next Theme type is textual Theme. It is the second most applied Theme type in students' expository essays (34%). There are three units realizing this Theme. They are structural conjunction, conjunctive adjunct, and relative. All of them link ideas within a clause or inter clauses. Structural conjunctions which include relatives, are used to relate ideas within sentence or clause complex (two parts in a single unit). They provide both semantic and grammatical relationship. Meanwhile, conjunctive adjuncts relate ideas inter clauses and provide semantic relationship only (Halliday, 1994: 49-50; Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Eggins, 2004). Furthermore, McCabe (1999) mentions that textual Themes are links which specify relationship of the clause to the surrounding text and context.

The high occurrence of textual Theme in students' essays contributes significantly to text coherent and cohesion. McCabe (1999) claims that the high occurrence of textual Theme both structural conjunctions and conjunctive adjuncts in academic texts amounts to the argumentative nature of the texts which contributes to greater coherence and cohesion and it contributes significantly to the quality of students' essays.

As stated previously, the aspect of coherence and cohesion are important in IELTS academic writing test as they are two aspects of scoring criteria (IELTS, 2019). It can be seen that the more the students use appropriate cohesive devices such as conjunctions, the higher their scores in coherence and cohesion aspects are. As stated by Lee (2000) in Mellos

(2011), cohesion is one of significant elements which characterizes coherence in writing. In addition, Vande Kopple in Mellos (2011) says that text's incoherence can be the result of a lack of textual Themes.

Furthermore, comparing both the low and high scoring essays, the high achievers applies more textual Themes in their essays than the low ones. It is comparable to a study conducted by Mellos (2011) which also found that the high group used textual Theme more than the low group. In the present study, the high achievers tend to choose conjunctive adjuncts more as their textual Themes, while the low achievers choose more structural conjunctions. An interesting result is gradual increase of conjunctive adjuncts associating with students' level of proficiency. This is comparable to the studies conducted by North (2005) and Jalilifar (2010b).

In addition to textual Theme, the massive use of structural conjunctions including relatives correlates to the high application of multiple Theme pattern. In the present study, it is found that multiple Theme is the most applied pattern particularly textual-topical Theme. It indicates that most of the students are able to construct complex structure in their essays which are demanded in this IELTS academic writing. This high frequent use of the textual Theme also indicates the high application of multiple Theme in students' writing and it has been proven to correlate to their level of proficiency.

As shown previously, the number of occurrence of multiple Theme in the high scoring essays is higher than the low scoring essays. In contrary,

the occurrence of simple Theme is higher in the low scoring essays than the high scoring essays. It is in line with Jalilifar (2010a) who claims that “as the students’ level of language proficiency increased, the number of simple Themes decreased and number of the multiple topical Themes increased”.

In term of IELTS academic writing tests, more specifically, the range of structure becomes one of the aspects of grammar range and accuracy that is one of the four scoring criteria in the IELTS academic writing test (IELTS, 2019). This high frequency of occurrence of multiple Theme four in this study indicates that most of the students are able to construct sentences in wider ranges. It contributes to their essay quality as the wider the range of structure the students make, the higher the score they can achieve in grammar range and accuracy aspects. In addition, the high application of textual-topical Theme pattern also indicates the students’ ability in organizing and maintaining connecting ideas. As stated previously, the use of structural conjunctions which links ideas within a clause and conjunctive adjuncts which link a clause to previous clauses gives significant contribution to create a cohesive text.

#### **d. Interpersonal Theme**

The last Theme type is interpersonal Theme. It is comprised by either modal adjuncts or mental clauses which are place in the Theme position (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The use of this Theme is to provide speakers’ comment, assessment or attitude towards the message and

to express the speakers' opinion (Eggins, 1997: 2; Bloor & Bloor, 2004). As the primary aim of expository text is to provide arguments or viewpoints towards an issue (Knap & Watkins, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2004), the use of this Theme cannot be avoided. Supporting this claim, this study also reveals that there are a small number of interpersonal Theme found in the students' essays, even though its occurrence is the lowest of all Theme types found.

The occurrence of interpersonal Theme was also observed in some previous studies such as studies conducted by Ping (2007), Sianipar (2015) and Undayasari & Saleh (2015) on Themes in exposition or argumentative essays. Besides, it was also found in narrative (Jalilifar, 2010a; Narita, 2016) and recount texts (Yunita, 2018). However, there is a very limited number of interpersonal Theme found in scientific book (Jalilifar, 2009) and English news texts (Liu & Tucker, 2015; Rahnemoon, Ahangan & Nourmuhammadi, 2017) and advertorials (Thalib, 2014). This limited number of occurrence is due to the nature of the scientific and news texts which maintains impersonality and objectivity (Liu & Tucker, 2015: 502). Therefore, its application is rare in those text types.

Furthermore, in the present study, the most common forms of interpersonal Theme found are mental clause (i.e. *I believe that, it is true that, and most of people believe that*) which express the writers' believe toward the evidence which support the thesis statement proposed. The occurrences of interpersonal Theme in the students' expository essays support the characteristic of exposition text.



As Knap and Watkins (2004) and Schleggrel (2004) say, the primary aim of exposition is to provide a view point of a writer by proposing a thesis statement and providing evidences that support the thesis proposed. Hence, the use of interpersonal Theme such as mental clause and modality contribute to providing strong arguments through claims (Schleppegel, 2004: 85) and personal arguments (Martin, et al, 1997: 25) to ensure the readers to agree or disagree to the thesis proposed.

In addition, the use of modality (i.e. *honestly*, *probably*, and *presumably*) aims to show the writers' stance to commit themselves "to the truth or correctness, certainty or strength of the proposition that follows" (Bloor & Bloor, 2004: 77). The higher frequent use of interpersonal Theme in the high scoring essays indicates that high achievers generally tend to maintain high relationship with readers through the frequent use of mental clause. They tend to be more personal in their text than the low achievers.

Based on the explanations above, it can be seen that there are two important points of these findings. The first point is that students' thematic choices in their expository essays of IELTS academic writing naturally support the characteristic of expository text in term of argument development. It is in line with Fries (1992) in Xu (2000) who claims that thematic content including unmarked and marked topical Theme, textual Theme and interpersonal Theme correlates with genre or registers and generic structure of the text. It is supported by Vande Kopple (1991) and Fries (1995 in Choung (2017) that say writers' choice of topical Theme

tends to be affected by text types. The second point is that students' thematic choices are different based on their proficiency level. The high scoring essays elaborates more Themes that the low scoring essays.

## **2. Thematic Progression in the Students' Expository Essays of IELTS Academic Writing**

This section discusses on the thematic progression patterns used by students in their expository essays of IELTS academic writing. Adapting Bloor and Bloor's (2004) model of the thematic progression analysis, there are four patterns which are observed in this study. They are the constant Theme, the linear Theme, the split Rheme and derived Theme. In some other studies, there are some other terms used to refer these patterns. In this case, Theme reiteration is used to refer to the constant Theme, zigzag pattern or cross reference links is used to refer to the linear Theme, multiple Theme is used to refer to the split Theme and there is no other term used to replace derived Theme.

The findings of this research have shown that these four patterns are found in the students' expository essays in different number of occurrences. The highest one is the linear Theme followed by the constant Theme. These patterns are the most applied patterns in the students' essays which are found in a very significant number of occurrence. Meanwhile, the two other patterns, the split Rheme and derived Theme, are found in a very low number of occurrence. Between these two patterns, derived Theme is the lower one.

The tendency of high occurrences of the linear Theme and the constant Theme pattern in this study are comparable to some previous studies on thematic progression within the similar genre. Crompton (2004), Rakhman (2013), Mafruaty and Wahyudi (2015), Ebrahimi and Ebrahimi (2014), Adawiyah (2017) and Xu (2000) in their studies found that the linear Theme is the most applied pattern by students in their expository and argumentative texts which is followed by the constant Theme. Meanwhile, Undayasari and Saleh (2018) found that these two patterns are found in the same number of occurrence in students' expository essays. Moreover, the high frequency of occurrence of linear Theme was also observed in research articles (Ping, et al, 2018), academic texts (Jalilifar, 2009) and journals (Jalilifar, 2010a).

On the other hand, the findings of the present study are contrast to the findings of some previous studies on thematic progression in other text types including narrative, recount, news report, and marketing text. Studies conducted by Jalilifar (2010b), Safitra (2013), Februana (2014), and Narita (2016) reveal that the constant Theme pattern was observed in high frequency in students' narrative texts. Besides, Liu and Tucker (2015), Sharndarma (2013), and Varela (2014) also found that the constant Theme is the most applied thematic progression pattern by the writers in news reports. The high frequency of occurrence of the constant Theme was also observed in marketing (Alyousef, 2016) and recount texts (Noviyanty, 2015; Yunita, 2018).

The high frequency of occurrence of both the linear and the constant Theme pattern in students' essays indicates that these patterns are simple

writing strategy used by students to maintain coherence and cohesion in their writing. As the most basic type of thematic progression (Danes, 1974 in McCabe, 1999), the linear pattern achieves cohesion in a text by building on newly introduced information (the information contained in Rheme) and gives the text a cumulative development (Eggins, 2004).

Besides, the constant Theme achieves cohesion through the continuous use of the same topic which creates static style and stagnant sensation (Enkvist, 1974 in Jing, 2015; Eggins, 1994). Thus, this pattern gives more emphasis on the specific participants or things. Abed (2010) further adds that constant Theme is “techniques of simple explanation and description”. As these essays were written as a part of IELTS test, perhaps, the use of simple thematic progression patterns such as the constant and linear Theme is a simplest way to organize ideas in the texts, providing connected ideas through selecting either Themes or Rheme of the preceding clauses. This strategy is used perhaps due to the nature of IELTS writing test in which students should write at least 250 words in limited time.

Furthermore, (McCabe, 1999) argues that the high frequency of occurrence of the linear Theme pattern in the students’ essays indicates that students are able to set up relationship implying cause and effect, develop ideas and improve cohesion between sentences in a paragraph. This is what must exist argumentative or expository writing such as academic texts in which students are demanded to present complex arguments (Eggins, 2004). As stated previously, the linear Theme pattern is created through continuous use of

information provided in the Rhemes. It allows the writers to expand their ideas from what they have introduced.

On the other hand, the presence of the constant Theme pattern in argumentative writing is pondered by McCabe & Belmonte (1998) and Jalilifar (2010b). They remarked that the use of the constant Theme in students writing indicates that they tend to not go into depth on the ideas introduced in the text by not expanding on information introduced in the Rhemes. Therefore, their texts are more like list than a group of arguments, whereas in argumentative or expository writing particularly students are encouraged to provide strong arguments and expand their ideas. However, due to the presence of this pattern in IELTS academic writing task 2, Ebrahimi and Ebrahimi (2014) understand that it might be because the students should present ideas in limited time and words. They should provide arguments in a minimum of 250 words within 45 minutes.

Regarding the phenomenon shown above, there is one important aspect which contributes significantly to the high frequency of occurrence of the linear Theme in the students' expository essays. It is the structure of the text itself. According to Fries (1992), Ghadessy (1995) in Guizaro and Zamorano (2009) Wang (2007), and Ebrahimi & Ebrahimi (2014), thematic progression pattern correlates with the structure of the text/text type/genre. They explain that different discourse genres (i.e. narrative, descriptive, argumentative and so on) have different pattern of thematic progression. It is also supported by Francis (1990), and Bloor & Bloor (2004) which explain that linear Theme is dominant

in argumentative text, while constant Theme is dominant in biography, narrative and descriptions.

Bloor & Bloor (2004) further explain that texts such as narrative, description and biography emphasize more focus on particular participants of things. Thus, the constant Theme pattern is the most suitable one. As the students' essays belong to expository text, this finding is not so surprising. It can be seen from numerous studies that the constant Theme is dominant in narrative (Franciz, 1990; Jalilifar, 2010b; Safitra, 2013; Februana, 2014; Narita, 2016), descriptive (McCabe & Belmonte, 1998), news report (Liu and Tucker, 2015; Sharndarma, 2013; Varela, 2014) and recount texts (Noviyanty, 2015; Yunita, 2018). Meanwhile, the linear Theme is dominant in argumentative texts (Gomez, 1994; Crompton, 2004; Rakhman, 2013; Mafruaty and Wahyudi, 2015; Ebrahimi and Ebrahimi, 2014; Adawiyah, 2017; Xu, 2000).

Besides these high occurrences of the linear Theme and the constant Theme, another interesting point of this study is there are a very small number of occurrence of split Rheme and derived Theme pattern in the students' expository essays. It is comparable to the studies conducted by Thalib (2014) and Sharndharma (2013) which found that both of these Theme pattern are rarely found in students' writing.

In term of derived Theme, Thomas and Hawes (1997) in Crompton (2004) argue that the application of derived Theme are correlated with students' level of proficiency. He found that derived Theme is mostly found in advanced students' writing and very small percentage in lower intermediate students'

writing. He emphasized that derived Theme is associated with proficiency rather than with genre. Besides, this thematic progression pattern are specifically found in particular text types. As stated by Bloor and Bloor (2004), derived Theme is mostly found in longer academic books such as science and geography book.

Furthermore, since this study focuses on analyzing the thematic progression patterns realizing in students' essays, it is also found that not all of students' texts are connected through thematic progression patterns. It can be seen from the missing of thematic progression pattern in some paragraph in the students' essays. There are some Themes which are not linked to either preceding or following clauses. This is what Bloor & Bloor (1992) as cited in McCabe (1998) say as brand new Theme. The occurrence of this Theme is because the writer introduces too many Themes which do not connect to any preceding Themes or Rhemes. This consequently causes problems to the text. McCabe (1998) argues that the occurrence of this Theme causes problems as indication that the writer does not successfully developed the introduced ideas. Therefore, it makes students' texts less coherent.

In short, it can be seen that the high frequency of occurrence of the linear Theme pattern in students' expository texts are influenced by two factors. The first factor is the nature of the expository text itself which requires students to provide arguments and expand ideas through reasoning. In this case, the linear Theme pattern is the most appropriate pattern to use. The second factor is that this pattern including the constant Theme, is the easiest pattern to be applied in

the students' writing. It is simple strategy that students can use in providing sequenced and connected ideas.

Furthermore, comparing the two groups of essays, it can be observed that the high scoring essays contain more the linear Theme patterns than the low scoring essays. It indicates that the high achievers provide more elaborated ideas in their essays than the low achievers. As stated previously, the linear Theme pattern allows writers to develop ideas of what they introduce in Rhemes. By using this pattern, there is a minimum repetition of the same Theme as what the constant Theme does.

### **Thematic Progression in the Low and High Student Essay**

In addition, the linear Theme pattern associates with language proficiency. In this study, it is found that the number of the linear Theme used by the high achievers is higher than the low achievers. It is in line with the study conducted by Jalilifar (2010b). He found that as students become more proficient, the percentage of using the linear Theme patterns slightly increases. The high frequency of use of this pattern in the high scoring essays indicates that they are able to elaborate more ideas from what they introduce in the Rhemes. Hence, they can expand more information in their writing.

On the other hand, the frequent use of the constant Theme in the low scoring essays is higher than in the high scoring essays. It indicates that the lower achievers tend to focus more on subjects, and give more emphasis on the topic without providing more elaboration on what they have introduced in their Rhemes. It makes their texts like a list and their information tend to be



repetitive. It can be seen that students are truly different in their thematic choices based on their proficiency level. It emphasized that this factors contributes significantly on how students arrange their ideas through different Theme selection. In term of thematic progression, the high achievers applied more the linear Theme pattern as indication that they are able to expand their ideas well.

### **C. Limitation of the Study**

This study aims at investigating the Themes and thematic progression patterns in students' expository essays. It also compares both the Theme types and thematic progression patters realized in both the low and high scoring essays. This study still has limitations. First, a limited number of essays analyzed confines the researcher to have deep analysis of the object of the research. This is due to limited number of test conducted. As can be seen, IELTS test particularly IELTS academic writing is a standardized test that is only taken by those who wants to continue their studies overseas. It is only conducted by authorized institution.

The limited number of the texts also effects the number of essays grouped as the low and high scoring essays which then influences the data analysis. Second, these essays may not reflect the real students' writing ability as they were written in test situation and in very limited time. In this case, this writing test was conducted directly after listening and reading section and Students were only given 40 minutes to finish their texts that effects on students' text quality.