

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **A. Research Design**

This research aims at analysing thematic choice and progression of students' expository essays of IELTS academic writing. It is a kind of descriptive research in which the researcher describes the under-researched phenomena. The approach used in this study is qualitative with quantitative data to support the qualitative analysis. Snape & Spencer in Nursanti (2013: 69) explain that qualitative approach is "a research method that aims to provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the data which may produce detail description and classification, identify patterns of association or develop typologies and explanations." The quantitative data supporting the qualitative analysis in this study are number of occurrence of Themes types and thematic progression patterns used by students in their essays.

This research is categorised into content analysis with specific reference to thematic structure realised in clause (Theme and Rheme) and paragraph level (thematic progression) in the students' essays. According to Krippendorff (2004: 215), content analysis is a research method that aims at making valid and replicable inference from the data with their content. It tries to analyse document to understand its content and meaning. The framework used in this research is Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics. Halliday & Matthiessen's (2004) framework on Theme types is used to analyse thematic choices and Bloor & Bloor's (2004)

framework on thematic progression is used to map the thematic progression patterns in the students' essays.

## **B. Subject of the Research**

The subject of this research is English expository essays of IELTS writing test. These essays are writing products of IELTS test. These essays are academic writing Task 2. They are categorised into short essay because they consist of approximately five paragraphs or 250 words in length (3 up to 5 paragraphs). These essays were written by forty students taking IELTS test preparation program at the Language Centre of Yogyakarta State University on December 2018. The students writing these essays are lecturers at some universities in Indonesia. They took these IELTS preparation course and test to prepare them to continue their study in doctoral program. As they all are lecturers, they have hold a master degree in various disciplines. The two groups of essays compared in this study consist of 24 essays, 12 low scoring essays and 12 high scoring essays. Detail description of these essays are presented in Appendix 2.

## **C. Object of the Research**

The object of this research are thematic structure of students' expository essays of IELTS academic writing. This structure are divided into two categories as follow:

### 1. Thematic choice

Thematic choice is related to any type of Themes used by students in their expository essays. There are three types of Theme analysed in this study. They are topical including both unmarked and marked topical, textual Theme, and interpersonal Theme. Basically, a clause consists of at least one clause, one topical simple Theme when Theme. Moreover, the use of these Themes varies according to the writers. When a clause consists only one Theme, it is called simple Theme, meanwhile when a clause contains more than one Theme, it is categorised into multiple Theme.

### 2. Thematic progression

Thematic progression is pattern of connecting Themes and Rhemes inter clauses. Based on the framework of Bloor and Bloor (2004), there are four patterns analysed in this study. They are the constant Theme pattern, the simple linear Theme pattern, the split Rhemes pattern, and derived Themes pattern.

## **D. Research Procedure**

This study was conducted through several steps. They are as follow:

1. First, the researcher wrote all indicators that were used to identify Theme types in the students' expository essays.
2. Second, once the students' essays had been taken from Language Development Centre of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, the researcher typed all those texts in Microsoft Word in order to ease him to analyse

Themes of each clause within paragraph. Once this process had been finished, the researcher read all texts carefully.

3. After reading all texts, the researcher broke down each paragraph of each text into clauses. This is to ease the researcher to identify Themes and Rheme. This was done based on experts' suggestion that one complex sentence can be separated into several clauses.
4. After separating each clause, the researcher identified and classified the Themes and Rheme of each clause. The table below was used to help the researcher classify the Themes and Rheme.

**Table 3. Theme and Rheme Classification**

Cl.	Textual Theme	Interpersonal Theme	Topical Theme		Rheme
			Marked	Unmarked	
1					
2					
3					

After identifying and classifying all Themes and Rhemes, the researcher counted the frequent occurrences of each Theme in all students' expository essays and provided its percentage. To identify the occurrence of Themes of each clause, Butt et. al. (2000) in Thalib (2014) provides a mode table as follow:

**Table 4. Total Occurrences of Theme Types**

	Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	
			Marked	Unmarked
Occurrence				

- Once the identification of Theme types of all of the students' texts was done, the researcher then identified and mapped thematic progression pattern in each text. It was done through mapping all related Themes and Rhemes inter clauses. After that, the researcher counted the total occurrences of each thematic progression pattern. The following table was used to assist the researcher.

**Table 5. Total Occurrences of Thematic Progression Patterns**

	Constant Theme Pattern	Linear Theme Pattern	Split Theme Pattern	Derived Themes
Occurrences				

- When Theme type analysis had been done, the researcher then compared the number of occurrence of Theme types and thematic progression patterns in both the low and high scoring essays.
- Finally, the researcher provided findings, made interpretation and conclusion.

### **E. Technique of Data Collection and Instrument**

The data of this research are primary data which are taken directly from students followed the IELTS test assisted by Language Development Centre of Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta. The technique of collecting these data is test. Language Development Centre conducted post-test of IELTS prediction test in order to assess students' proficiency level of all four skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing after following three-months training program. Then, the

researcher only took the essays of academic writing task 2. The instrument used in analysing these data is human instrument. It means that the researcher himself is a key instrument that describes, analyses and interprets the data. In order to analyse the data, the researcher followed guideline of thematic structure analysis. This guideline is a list of indicators that provides detail information about Theme and Rheme and thematic progression identification. These indicators can be seen in detail in Appendix 3.

#### **F. Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The data were analysed through descriptive data analysis. The students' texts were divided into clauses. This was followed by the identification of Theme and Rheme for each clause. The table 2 above is the example of table used for Theme and Rheme classification. For the investigation of thematic progression, the essays are divided into paragraph. Unlike Theme analysis which is done within the clause, thematic progression identification was carried out within paragraph. In this study, each Theme and Rheme was labelled with a number according to its element (i.e. T2, T2, T3 and R2, R2, R3, etc.). Similar element found in the subsequent Theme and Rheme were labelled by the same number.

The labelled Theme and Rheme were then isolated and portrayed using diagrams as outlined by Bloor and Bloor (2004) to ascertain the pattern of thematic progression. After finishing all of these processes, the findings of all types of Themes and thematic progression were displayed in tables in order to facilitate the comparison between the occurrence of different patterns of Theme and thematic

progression. The comparisons were also made to the low and high scoring essays to find out what are the differences made by the low and high achievers in thematic choices and progressions. The findings were then interpreted and discussed through related theories and previous research findings. Detailed analysis of the data is presented in Appendix 4.

### **G. Data Trustworthiness**

The researcher did check and recheck the result of data analysis to make sure that there are no mistakes in analysing the data that will affect the validity and reliability of the study. The trustworthiness of the data was also measured through expert judgement. The experts were asked to evaluate the analysis of thematic structure done by the researcher to measure its validity and reliability. The expert that was involved in this study is a lecturer who has a background in Systemic Functional Linguistics and understands the concept of thematic structure and its analysis particularly in English.