An Analysis of Students' Essay Thematic Structure in English Academic Writing Course

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing has always been a fundamental skill for higher education students, yet it is still perceived to be a difficult skill to acquire. Accordingly, educators are encouraged to find ways to solve this issue. A concept taken from the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory, namely thematic structure, can be a solution that provides a detailed description of how cohesion and coherence can be structured in a text. Therefore, this descriptive qualitative research is trying to provide a clear description of students' thematic structure in English academic writing courses. The primary methodology framework to analyze and interpret the collected data adopted the SFL thematic structures model from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), named textual metafunction, which identified themes into topical, textual, and interpersonal themes. The findings showed that students tended to employ topical themes, specifically unmarked topical themes, to realize the ideas in their clauses. Conjunctive adjuncts as the textual theme were frequently used by the students to build connections between clauses in the text, while conjunction was barely employed. The interpersonal theme was the least common type of theme employed by the students. However, this situation is quite common in academic writing as personal judgment is avoided to create a more objective text. Thus, future research is encouraged to analyze thematic structure in various texts and contexts.

Keywords: academic writing; systemic functional linguistics; textual metafunctions; .thematic structure

INTRODUCTION

Writing proficiency indeed requires complex language knowledge, which implements several language components such as vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and cohesive devices. Writing requires its doer to go through a process that includes finding ideas, organizing the ideas, and writing down the ideas in the form of words and paragraphs, which then form a coherent and cohesive text. Whether in daily communication or academic context, writing has been extensively believed to be one of the basic skills (Budiana, 2023). Compared to spoken communication, it is stated that through writing, individuals likely have more convenient spaces to deliver and arrange their thoughts effectively (Asyifa & Daulay, 2024). Nevertheless, many learners are encouraged to shape their writing skills, especially college students, as it is imperative for their academic purposes. They most likely encounter various writing activities in their respective fields for scientific purposes that require them to express opinions, findings, and arguments by employing clear, simple, and precise language in the academic style (Erturk & Ozturk, 2022). An awareness of formatting information in clauses

and varied mechanisms for weaving these elements into pieces of discourse is vital to composing cohesive and coherent writing in English (Hawes, 2015). In the process of writing, students can develop their critical skills of utilizing words, ideas, and opinions that construct an academic voice (Mudawy & Mousa, 2017). Furthermore, students may be able to present their research findings in the scope of global readership and international outlets (Raoofi et al., 2017).

Academic writing is an essential competency for college students, yet writing itself has been perceived to be a tough task to undertake. On several occasions, language learners deal with several challenges in mastering writing skills, from insufficient knowledge of a topic to fewer practice opportunities for the technical academic writing process (Budiana, 2023). In addition, students are required to generate ideas and develop them to be a complete text coherently (Setiawati et al., 2017). Despite the challenges, it cannot be avoided that English for academic purposes (EAP) remains an essential real-world writing context that enables students to engage with global academic communities respectively (Chen, 2019). Furthermore, proficient writing skills lead to students' academic success, which assists them in earning an educational degree (Saeed et al., 2021). Therefore, students should understand how to develop and organize ideas in writing a coherent text. A writer cannot simply put a sentence next to another sentence without considering the connection of the ideas, as sentences should make sense to be an understandable and meaningful text. Accordingly, academic writing requires students to deal with a wide range of topics and employ sophisticated writing skills such as developing clauses, formatting sentence structure, utilizing conjunctions, etc. Thus, the awareness of the ability to utilize language features and strategies to create a logical text or essay has to be roused in the students with assistance from educators.

In order to comprehend the complexities of learning writing skills, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), specifically textual metafunctions, offers a valuable concept representing language models as a social tool for analyzing students' choices in weaving ideas and reality (Forey & Sampson, 2017). Textual metafunction reveals the information of a message embedded in a text and the arrangements of the message itself (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Textual metafunctions concern the development of text materials and clauses to create messages having a concept of theme-rheme to classify clauses within a sentence (Hidayah et al., 2023). Theme indicates the matter of a clause being the departure point where the role is crucial in forming the message's coherence and success (Forey & Sampson, 2017). Halliday (1985) first classified themes into three categories based on their metafunction, namely topical, textual, and interpersonal themes. The implementation of the categorization of themes in a text can provide information to analyze the development of the ideas in a text. This thematic structure has been employed by many researchers to investigate the way a writer organizes their ideas in a text that reflects its coherence and cohesion.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was initially introduced by Halliday (2004) and explained as an approach to studying the works of language semantically and its use in a context. Additionally, SFL provides theories that account for language implementation in various contexts (Cecario & Lisdawati, 2022). It is possible because Matthiessen (2024) further developed the metafunctional system to uncover the multiple modes of meaning, namely ideational, interpersonal, and textual, embedded in a language organization. As a result, metafunctions can assist language learners in apprehending the language within contexts through the lens of their experiences, interpersonal relationships, or verbal words (Lukitasari, 2019).

In the view of Systemic Functional Grammar, a theme is the initiating point of the message, providing a framework to interpret the meanings of the message. A theme is also considered a device to organize meanings that indicate the writer's way of ordering the

information within the clause; it also assists the writer in structuring the flow of information that shapes the main point of the text as a whole (Hilyah et al., 2023). Sometimes a theme is utilized in the form of a clause, which also occurs in various ways and commonly makes it into a nominal group, adverbial group, prepositional phrase, or nominalization. Even up to the present, the structuring of theme is still a discussion in the language use discourse, which Matthiessen (2024) does not stop harnessing the metafunctional system called topical, textual, and interpersonal themes.

The first element of the experiential meanings of a clause is also identified as the Topical theme, which commonly occurs as participant, process, or circumstance (Forey & Sampson, 2017). Oftentimes, a nominal group, a prepositional phrase, or an adverbial group is the common form of a topical theme used in a clause of a sentence. Even though a topical theme mostly appears in the initial position in a clause, it is not always the subject. A topical theme functioning as a subject of a clause is recognized as an unmarked topical theme. However, if a topical theme is not the subject of a clause, it can be claimed as a marked topical theme.

Textual theme functions to create cohesive relations among clauses in a text within its specific context. Textual theme functioning as a text-creating meaning occurs as any compound of continuatives, such as *oh, well, now, yes, no,* conjunctions, for example, *because, and, who*, and lastly conjunctive adjuncts like *in addition, likewise, for instance* (Forey & Sampson, 2017). Conjunctive adjuncts can be further classified into some types, namely additive, adversative, appositive, causal, comparative, concessive, conditional, corrective, dismissive, respective, temporal, verifactive, variative, and summative (Kuswoyo & Susardi, 2017).

Interpersonal themes are often located before the rheme that shows participants' relation in the text or their position shown in the clause. Interpersonal themes are commonly realized in the form of a finite in interrogative clauses, where it goes before the subject, modal adjuncts like *fortunately, in my opinion, surprisingly*, and lastly, vocatives such as a personal name used to address (Forey & Sampson, 2017). Khalifa (2020) explained that the utilization of interpersonal themes within the written text indicates writers' competence to display their voice and stance.

In writing a text, information is formulated as themes and rhemes. Through these two components, the relation of meanings that conceive information can be identified from the theme structure. Identifying thematic structure accounts for the writer's attitude in developing ideas in a text (Mahriyuni et al., 2023). Especially in academic writing, a theme is a key announcing the genre and the delivered notion relatively (Chen & Gardner, 2021). Accordingly, the theme structure constitutes the logical organization of the messages shown through the clauses and text arrangements (Chen, 2019). As students are at the developing phase of writing in an academic context, their awareness of the fundamental role of theme variations and functions in writing should be evoked. Consequently, they will have the skill to uphold the appropriate equivalence of different types of themes that generate positive development of their writing (Khalifa, 2020).

Many studies have proven that thematic structure has a significant role in realizing a piece of good writing, especially in the context of university students (Trung, 2024; Feri et al., 2023; Hilyah et al. 2022; Alotaibi, 2020; Chang & Lee, 2019; Kuswoyo & Susardi, 2017; Herdiawan, 2017; Setiawati et al., 2017). Trung (2024) discovered that topical themes were employed dominantly in students' IELTS essays, and the students relied on the use of textual themes to create a cohesive flow of information in the essays. Another result of research found out that high-achieving students employed more varied types of themes and were able to maintain cohesion and coherence in writing expository text compared to low-achieving students (Feri et al., 2023). Based on the previous studies' results, the researcher is convinced

to conduct similar research as the thematic structure has a significant role in creating a cohesive and coherent text. Furthermore, the research can give more insights into students' writing skills. By having such information, both students and teachers can find ways or solutions to shape students' writing skills to be better. Thus, this research aims to describe the ways students organized thematic structure in academic writing.

It is expected that the findings of this study will bring more discussion and solutions to teaching and developing higher education students' academic writing skills. Focusing on the thematic structure taken from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), educators may use the findings to gain more insight about the practice of structuring themes in an academic writing context. Later in their class, they can introduce the thematic structure by exploring textual metafunctions to harness students' writing skills.

METHODOLOGY

Creswell (2009) explained that research design comprises plans and procedures for conducting research, which requires a decision-making process of general assumptions to precise methods of collecting and analyzing data. This research was carried out with the main goal of finding out the ways students organized thematic structure in academic writing. Qualitative research is intended to explore and understand social or human issues. This type of research commonly commences from arising questions and procedures, collecting data in the participant's situation, analyzing specific or extensive themes, and interpreting the data (Creswell, 2009). A descriptive qualitative research design was selected by the researcher to conduct the research. This design was chosen because the researcher focused on investigating the organization of thematic structure in a text. Thus, a model of analysis was also applied to provide a description of the research objective. The descriptive statistic technique is also applied to provide the sums of the most frequent theme types that students employed and to comprehend the students' manner in composing ideas throughout the text. The concept from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was employed as the primary methodology framework to analyze and interpret the collected data. Adopting Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) model specifically, the thematic structure of students' essays was examined through the lens of topical, interpersonal, and textual themes. This systematic approach of SFL uncovered the language patterns employed within sentences of students' essays constructively. The analysis result then provided insight into students' linguistic choices and rhetorical strategies to set up themes in their essays. The main sources of the data in this research were 21 essays written by university students who were at that time studying academic writing in the Academic Reading & Writing course. The students were in the fourth semester at a private university located in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In collecting the data from the essay, some steps were conducted, namely reading the students' essays, coding each clause in the essays, partitioning the clauses into theme-rheme, identifying the type of theme in each theme clause, describing the result of the analysis, and finally drawing conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher displays the results of the analyzed text after each theme of the clauses in the students' text was identified using Halliday's theme classification types. The explanation given in this section exhibits the identification of themes in the students' essays, which are classified into topical, textual, and interpersonal themes. The researcher was able to successfully discover that some students applied three types of themes. However, not all texts applied three different types of themes at the same time.

TOPICAL THEME

Based on the quantitative analysis, the students frequently applied topical themes in their academic essays. The identified topical theme was used 149 times collectively in students' essays. Accordingly, this research discovered that students were able to utilize two types of topical themes, namely unmarked topical themes and marked topical themes, as the subject of their sentences. However, unmarked topical themes were more often used by the students, with 106 times of exertion used in the essay, while marked topical themes were applied 43 times by the students. Since the students' writing topic is around academic context, this result is considered common to occur as the topical theme is applied to talk about participants, circumstances, or processes that are commonly conceived in the clause (Arunsirot, 2015).

Based on the analysis, the unmarked topical theme is the most frequently applied by the students, around 106 times or 71%. Trung (2024) also found that students used more unmarked topical themes in their IELTS essays. It is further explained that students' tendency to use unmarked topical themes is to ensure the grammatical correctness of their clauses. The unmarked topical theme also states the departure point of the message clearly in a sentence (Trung, 2024). A similar finding is also found in the education news article, where unmarked topical themes appeared to be the most employed by the author in the form of a nominal group, which was utilized 83 times or 78% (Hidayah et al., 2023). Additionally, Hilyah et al. (2022) also found that university students employed the nominal group the most in their essays. Being the most frequently employed type of unmarked theme, the application of a nominal unmarked theme shows the students' tendency to use the simplest way of formatting ideas in their writing. Employing an unmarked theme is preferable because it provides an easy, understandable structure. Using an adverbial group or prepositional phrase before a subject might lead to confusion (Hidayah et al., 2023). This phenomenon appeared because students often used declarative clauses in which the theme is carried directly in the form of a sentence subject. The next type of unmarked topical theme applied in the students' essays was the embedded clause, which was used 18 times, or 17% of the students' essays. The last type of topical theme that appeared in the students' essays was a nominal group complex, yet the analysis result found a minor application of it, with 5 times exertion or 5%.

TABLE 1: Excerpt of nominal unmarked theme

Positive reinforcement	is considered a critical aspect that should be implemented in the classroom.
Subject (Nominal) Topical (Unmarked) Theme	Rheme

The sentence in excerpt 1 shows an example of the topical theme in the form of a nominal. The sentence is a declarative clause in which the student employs a noun phrase as the subject of the sentence. As the subject becomes the departure point of the message, it states the sentence's idea clearly. The fact that unmarked nominal themes found in the students' essays were highly employed indicates that the students preferred a less complicated means of making sentences, so they could be easily conceived. It is also a less risky way that the students felt more comfortable using in writing their essays. They can show the main point of the discussion of their essay in the subject sentence clearly so that it will not give readers difficulties in understanding their essays.

Then, the second type of topical theme moderately discovered in the essays was marked topical theme with 43 times of occurrence or 29%. A similar result to this research was also discovered by Trung's (2024) analysis, in which the students rarely occupied

marked topical themes in writing their IELTS essays. A similar finding was also found by Hidayah et al. (2023) in which the author of an education news article employed marked topical infrequently compared to the unmarked theme. Trung (2024) assumed that the students employed marked themes in their IELTS essays because they wanted to exhibit their emotions and standpoints or direct readers to focus on specific phrases. This research's analysis has uncovered that students applied diverse marked topical themes, with 5 variations identified notably. Nominal is the most appeared type in the essay, applied 21 times or 49% usage. Secondly, the prepositional phrase is also applied quite multiple times, around 17 or 40%. Then, embedded clauses and nominalization are equally applied in the students' essays only 2 times, or 5%. The last is a nominal group clause complex with a small number applied only 1 time or 2% in the students' essays.

TABLE 2: Excerpt of prepositional marked theme

Through individual work,	students	can find their motivation to prompt themselves to complete their tasks.
Prepositional phrase Topical (Marked)	Subject (Nominal) Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme
	Theme	

The example of a marked theme is shown in excerpt 2. The sentence indicates that the student employed a prepositional marked theme. The students positioned the prepositional marked theme in the first part of the sentence, which makes it the departure point of the message in the sentence. It is stated that adverbial groups or prepositional phrases are the most common marked theme employed, which serve as circumstantial adjuncts in the initial position (Trung, 2024). In excerpt 2, the prepositional marked theme serves as a contextual circumstance that frames the interpretation of the rheme.

Even though the practice of applying marked theme in writing is sophisticated, it still has a fundamental role in the information distribution and emphasis on message delivery (Mahriyuni et al., 2023). In addition, it is evidenced in a study that marked topical themes provided a more overt cohesion in the text (Ebrahimi, 2016). Marked topical theme also account for interpreting the conveyed ideas or message, especially when the information about time is necessarily emphasised (Forey & Sampson, 2017). However, a finding of a study also revealed that one characteristic of topical theme is to indicate a topic shift, its utilization in academic texts generally is not mandatory (Ebrahimi, 2017).

TEXTUAL THEME

Based on the analysis, this research found that the students also applied textual themes in their essays. The analysis result shows that among the three types of themes, students quite often applied textual themes in their essays and made it the second type of theme, mostly utilized 33 times of usage or 18%. A similar result was also found by Hilyah et al. (2022) and Trung (2024), who discovered that textual theme was the second type of theme frequently employed in the essays of university students. This phenomenon is considered common since showing cohesion among ideas in an essay is important, and it can be done by applying a textual theme type. The connection of clauses to the preceding clauses within the text can be signalled cohesively by using textual themes (Trung, 2024). Moreover, it functions to show connections of a clause to its neighboring clause. Feri et al. (2023) stated that the textual-topical themes' frequent application in a text showcases students' capability to construct ideas into complex clauses, which indicates their language mastery level. Therefore, this research's result analysis signifies that the students may possess the awareness to develop cohesion through the application of textual themes in their writing. In addition, students have

various choices of textual theme as it has diverse forms such as continuatives, conjunctions, and conjunctive adjuncts (Forey & Sampson, 2017).

The analysis showed that the conjunctive adjunct was the most frequently used textual theme, followed by conjunctions in the students' essays. A similar result was also discovered in which students employed conjunctive adjuncts more frequently than conjunctions in constructing research article abstracts (Alotaibi, 2020). Herdiawan (2017) also discovered that conjunctive adjuncts, which were then classified as external conjunctions, occurred significantly in students' backgrounds in the study. Conjunctive elements usually represent cohesive ties that connect sentences in a text and frame the text in an interpretative message (Hosseinpur & Pour, 2022). Then, it is explained that the extensive use of conjunctive adjuncts may indicate students' tendency to chain arguments explicitly, which also shows students' limited understanding of effective strategies to link their text (Jing, 2015). From the 33 textual themes applied in the students' essays, it can still be further identified specifically.

TABLE 3: Excerpt of additive conjunctive adjunct, textual theme

Furthermore,	multimodal learning	is also an ideal form of learning to be implemented in this age of technology, since teachers would be able to use as many technological media as possible with multimodal learning in mind.
Conjunctive (Additive)	Adjunct Subject (Nominal)	
Textual	Topical (Unmarked)	Rheme
	Theme	

The first type of conjunctive adjunct mostly employed was additive, 27%. This type of additive conjunctive adjunct was also frequently utilized by the students when writing their final project report, specifically in the background of the study (Herdiawan, 2017). Excerpt 3 shows the application of the additive conjunctive adjunct "*furthermore*". This indicates that the students tried to elaborate their sentences by adding more equal ideas to make them more developed. This also means that the students were actually trying to show the connection of the ideas between clauses in their essays.

TABLE 4: Excerpt of adversative conjunctive adjunct, textual theme

On the other hand,	initiate conversation	can make students focus on the material provided and can help keep the classroom environment conducive.
Conjunctive (Adversative)	Adjunct Subject (Nominal)	
Textual	Topical (Marked)	Rheme
	Theme	

The second type of conjunctive adjunct applied was adversative, 21%. In contrast, Alotaibi (2020) found that adversative was the most conjunctive adjunct applied by the students in writing a journal article abstract. The employment of adversatives is to contrast ideas by showing an opposition to other ideas. Excerpt 4 shows the application of the adversative "on the other hand" to contrast ideas between clauses in the essay.

TABLE 5: Excerpt of causal conjunctive adjunct, textual theme

Therefore,	individual work	is good to give to the students after the teacher gives the material, to make sure that the students understand and remember the material.
Conjunctive Adjunct (Causal) Textual	Subject (Nominal) Topical (Marked) Theme	Rheme

The analysis also discovered that the causal conjunctive adjunct was the third conjunctive adjunct applied by the students. It was found in the students' essays around 18%. In his study, Alotaibi (2020) also found that the application of causal conjunctive adjuncts used by chemistry and physics students to write abstracts was quite significant. The causal conjunctive adjunct functions to show the cause-effect relation between two ideas. Applying causal conjunctive adjuncts will make the connection between the two clauses clearer. Thus, the reader might not have difficulty understanding the clauses. Excerpt 5 shows the use of the causal conjunctive adjunct "therefore" which indicates that the present clause has a cause-effect relation with the preceding clauses.

TABLE 6: Excerpt of summative conjunctive adjunct, textual theme

In conclusion,	pre-task	is used to help students in understanding the task instructions and preparing the task.
Conjunctive Adjunct (Summative) Textual	Subject (Nominal) Topical (Marked) Theme	Rheme

Even though it appeared not quite often, with a small percentage of 7%, the summative conjunctive adjunct was also employed by some students in their essays. This result is quite similar to Alotaibi's (2020) result, in which the summative conjunctive adjunct was employed rarely by students in writing their abstract. Summative conjunctive adjunct indicates a brief explanation. Excerpt 6 shows the example of the use of the summative conjunctive adjunct "in conclusion" used by the student in his essay. This was used as a mark of the end of the essay by stating a conclusion summarizing the main point of the essay in one sentence.

TABLE 7: Excerpt of verifactive conjunctive adjunct, textual theme

Positive reinforcement,	in fact,		is one of the four kinds of operant conditioning model proposed by B. F. Skinner.
Subject (Nominal) Topical (Unmarked)	Conjunctive (Verifactive) Textual Theme	Adjunct	Rheme

TABLE 8: Excerpt of Conditional conjunctive adjunct, textual theme

On the same note,	researches on multimodal learning	has proven that it is a lot more effective to be implemented when compared to the traditional one-dimensional learning style approach, due to how much easier and how much larger the benefits that multimodal learning has when compared to the traditional one-dimensional learning style approach.
Conjunctive Adjunct (Conditional) Textual	Subject (Nominal) Topical (Marked) Theme	Rheme

Lastly, the analysis result exposed that two conjunctive adjuncts were occupied equally in the students' essays, with a small percentage at 3% only. The two conjunctive adjuncts were verifactive and conditional. Verifactive is used to emphasize the importance of an idea. Meanwhile, conditional is used to define the situational conditions under which certain terms to happen. These types of conjunctive adjuncts seem to be rarely applied, especially for novice writers. This seems to happen because most of them appear as a chunk of expression which might be difficult for students to remember or find the right context to employ them. Excerpt 7 shows the application of verifactive conjunctive adjunct "in fact" and excerpt 8 shows the use of conditional conjunctive adjunct "on the same note".

TABLE 9: Excerpt of conjunction, textual theme

And	I	can see an extraordinary teaching skill that shown by the foreign lecturer in the video's below.
Conjunction Textual	Subject (Nominal) Topical (Marked) Theme	Rheme

In this research, conjunction became the second type of textual theme that appeared in the essays written by the students. Conjunctions are groups of words applied to link or bind clauses that occur structurally and semantically (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Conjunctions as components of cohesion function to be transitional elements that connect ideas, thoughts, and statements that assist in understanding the logical progression and relationship between different parts of the text (Sanosi, 2024). The conjunctions were applied in the students' essays around 10%. A small number of percentage was also found in Alotaibi's (2020) research in which students rarely applied conjunctions in writing their abstracts. Even though it is a small percentage, it still indicates that the students were quite aware of connecting ideas by using cohesive devices. In contrast, it seems that writers applied more conjunctions than conjunctive adjuncts in writing news articles (Hidayah et al., 2023) and students' exposition texts (Setiawati et al., 2017). In excerpt 9, the conjunction "and" was applied by the student to begin his sentence. This was apparently employed to elaborate and expand the idea of the previous sentence. Even though the use of conjunctions is not strict to put it in sentence-initial positions, placing "and" in the front part of a sentence is considered improper, especially in formal academic writing (Sanosi, 2024). However, this application can make the relation between clauses more apparent.

INTERPERSONAL THEME

Interpersonal theme is explained as the language function that performs communicative acts to reveal attitudes, feelings, and judgments (Mahriyuni, 2023). In other words, interpersonal theme allows social relationships to occur between the addresser and the addressee in various contexts of language (Hilyah et al., 2022). In this research, the result of the analysis indicated that the students did not employ interpersonal themes very often in their academic essays. This result is similar to some studies in which the researchers found that interpersonal themes were rarely employed, especially by students. Herdiawan (2017) found that the students did not really explore their arguments written in their final project's background of the study, which was seen from the minor application of comment adjunct and finite. Trung (2024) in his study also discovered that interpersonal themes were the least common type of themes employed by the students in their essays. A finding of study also discovered that the recount text written by the students did not often explore the use of interpersonal themes, which made it a rare finding (Yunita, 2018).

TABLE 10: Excerpt of modal comment adjunct, interpersonal theme

Usually,	the conversation	begins with a greeting.
Modal comment adjunct	Subject (Nominal)	
Interpersonal	Topical (Marked)	Rheme
	Theme	

The employment of interpersonal themes in this research is only 3%. The researcher identified three clauses of interpersonal themes employed by the students in writing their essays in the form of modal comment adjuncts. Excerpt 10 shows the employment of the modal comment adjunct "usually". Based on the choice of modal comment adjunct, it can be indicated that the students tried to explain certain situations by using their point of view from their experience. The less employment of interpersonal themes in writing indicates that writers might want their essays' style to be more objective, which is suitable for the nature of academic writing (Trung, 2024). The fact that the data of this research is mainly academic essays written by college students makes it possible to assume that the small number of interpersonal-themed employment is not necessarily strange. Moreover, Ebrahimi (2016) confirmed that there is a restricted space for interpersonal themes to be applied in academic writing as they are more appropriate existing in an argumentative and impersonal discourse of text. Chang and Lee (2019) further explained that interpersonal meaning application in a text is affected by the writer's disciplinary background.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and discussion regarding how students constructed thematic structures in their essays, this research can draw several conclusions. The students were able to employ three types of themes, even though with different frequencies. The analysis indicated that the students utilized topical themes as the subject of their sentences more than the other types of themes in their academic essays. However, it is a common finding since it is a normal practice of academic writing to involve more participants, circumstances, or processes as a matter of discussion in the text. Specifically, the practice of employing more unmarked topical themes by the students is clearly seen throughout the subject of the sentences in the students' essays. This finding indicates that the students chose to use the safe ways, as unmarked topical themes lead to the meaning or the idea directly. Nevertheless, the students also showed a good potential to be creative, as some of them were eager to employ marked topical themes.

Regarding the textual theme, conjunctive adjuncts were mostly employed by the students to show the connection of the ideas between clauses. This finding indicates that the students have the awareness and capability to develop cohesion and coherence through connective devices like conjunctive adjuncts. Moreover, the students creatively employed the conjunctive adjunct as the result found six types of conjunctive adjuncts employed in the students' essays. The students tended to elaborate their ideas with equal statements since they employed additive conjunctive adjuncts the most. Since conjunction was rarely used by the students, they need to be encouraged to employ conjunction to create more visible cohesion and coherence.

The last is the employment of interpersonal themes. This type of theme was barely employed by the students. This situation occurred because the students were writing in the academic context, which most of the time, personal judgments are not necessarily shown in the text. However, the employment of interpersonal themes in this research's findings was employed to elaborate the explanation in the text with their experiences. Finally, the

researcher would like to encourage language practitioners in English language teaching and learning to explore more thematic structures in various types of texts and contexts in the future. Conducting similar research outside the academic context will also enrich the evaluation of the use of the thematic structure, which can be insightful in finding more solutions to enhance students' writing skills.

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