

ABSTRACT

Naufal, Aly Muhammad. (2026). An Analysis of Theme Types and Thematic Progression in Undergraduate Students' Argumentative Texts: A Systemic Functional Approach.

Undergraduate EFL students often struggle to organize ideas coherently in argumentative writing. This difficulty concerns how information is introduced and developed across clauses. Therefore, this study aimed to identify theme types and thematic progression patterns in undergraduate students' argumentative texts.

This study employed qualitative content analysis. The data consisted of 20 argumentative texts written by second-semester students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. The texts were segmented into 218 finite ranking clauses and analyzed using Halliday and Matthiessen's and Bloor and Bloor's frameworks.

The findings revealed 346 theme elements: topical themes (63.01%), textual themes (35.26%), and interpersonal themes (1.73%). Topical themes were dominant, indicating that students mainly used experiential elements as clause starting points. Among 198 thematic relationships, constant theme patterns were the most frequent (32.32%), followed by linear theme patterns (28.79%), brand-new themes (22.22%), derived theme patterns (10.10%), split rheme patterns (5.05%), and the empty use of "there" (1.52%). These results show that students generally maintained established topics and developed information from preceding rhemes, although brand-new themes sometimes weakened thematic continuity.

The study concludes that students used various thematic resources to organize their arguments, but some thematic shifts were not clearly connected to previous information. Lecturers are recommended to teach theme and rheme organization explicitly, while students should review connections between clauses to improve coherence.

Keywords: *Theme and rheme, Thematic progression, Argumentative texts, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Undergraduate students*