Vocabulary in ESL writing

Look at the two columns of ‘n-grams’ taken from the essay portion of a high-stakes international test of Academic English. Which column likely represents the higher scoring students? What qualitative differences are there between the two lists?

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| **A** | **B** |
| 1. a lot
2. kind of
3. lots of
4. I think
5. more and more
6. a lot of
7. you can
8. have to
9. some people
10. as far as
11. agree with
12. according to me
13. totally agree
14. a lot of things
15. if you want to
16. so I
17. to me
18. daily life
19. and so on
20. each and every
 | 1. (be) able to
2. those who
3. (the) ability to
4. lead to
5. and therefore
6. would argue that
7. regardless of
8. (can) be argued that
9. I believe
10. just as
11. a few
12. while it
13. in a way that
14. the fact that
15. are required
16. to ensure that
17. in hand
18. (can) contribute to
19. as long as
20. may not
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