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# Patterns of value: Systemic Functional Grammar and evaluation in texts*

* This paper is based on research being undertaken for a Ph.D. thesis in the Department of English Language and Linguistics, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

ABSTRACT

In two recent articles in this journal (Kilpert, 2001a;b) I argued that 'method of development', a concept from Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG, associated with M.A.K. Halliday), is useful for teaching tertiary students to write coherent paragraphs. This follow-up article develops a related topic, explaining how the management of the evaluative stance, an aspect of the interpersonal function of language, might be taught by linking it to the management of structure. I draw on the concept of *phase* (Gregory, 1988), and include some detail from APPRAISAL theory (Martin, 2000a; White, 2001). I suggest that text analysis can make teachers aware of the expected patterns and 'voice' of specific genres and provide a technical language for talking clearly about them. I argue that this knowledge is essential for properly informed language teaching and that approaching writing as a teachable skill rather than guesswork will give all students a fair chance, regardless of background.

**Keywords:**
Academic writing; authorial voice; evaluative stance; Systemic Functional Grammar; Appraisal

## 1. Introduction

In two recent articles in this journal (Kilpert, 2001a;b), I explained the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) concept of 'method of development', i.e. thematic progression in texts, and demonstrated how it could be used by a teacher of academic writing to help students produce coherent paragraphs. I argued that it is a useful tool, especially in the context of outcomes-based education, because it facilitates the kind of explicit technical demonstration that is helpful to the student in building skills and making immediate visible improvements. In this article I expand on a point that was introduced briefly in the second of these articles: 'In academic discourse, interpersonal comment needs to be subtly managed, and part of this management is in the placing, i.e. attention to textual patterning' (Kilpert, 2001b: 71). I explore the way the student might be helped to manage the interpersonal function of writing by linking it to the management of structure. In this discussion I focus again on the paragraph, but this time looking at it as a unit of *interpersonal exchange*, and focusing in particular on the part that *evaluation* plays in it. The relation of the two is made clear by Hunston (1994: 191):

> Expressing evaluation in a text involves both a statement of personal judgement and an appeal to shared norms and values. In that it creates a shared point of view of speaker/writer and hearer/reader, its meaning is essentially interpersonal.

First I will situate my discussion in the context of SFG theory and the functions of evaluation in text. In the two articles mentioned, my concern was to draw attention to one of the three 'metafunctions' of language that SFG identifies in the clause grammar, the **textual** – the thematic and informational resources of Theme-Rheme and Given-New that structure a text as a coherent message. There are of course valuable insights for teaching to be drawn from the other two metafunctions: the **experiential** – the resources that we use to construe our experience of the world (such as processes and participants), and the **interpersonal** – the resources that we use to enact the relationship between speaker/writer and hearer/reader. In this article I am again focusing on the textual resources, but now demonstrating how these are involved in structuring a message not only coherently but also persuasively, and how the other two metafunctions are involved, in particular the interpersonal, of which evaluation is a part. While the interpersonal function of language is realised most obviously by the dedicated interpersonal resources of the grammar, Mood and Modality, it is also realised through other resources. It is the most difficult of the three metafunctions to talk about clearly, because it is like a colouring spread over the clause and the

text and it is not always easy to pin it down to particular features.[1] I have focused on how it is realised through structure.

The general functions of evaluation are usefully identified by Thompson and Hunston (2000: 6). They are

(1) to express the speaker's or writer's opinion, and in doing so to reflect the value system of that person and their community;
(2) to construct and maintain relations between the speaker or writer and hearer or reader;
(3) to organize the discourse.

It is this last function that I am most concerned with here, using my discussion of thematic progression in texts to demonstrate the interdependence of structure and evaluation in text and how this works to 'manipulate the reader, to persuade him or her to see things in a particular way' (2000: 8). Novice writers who rely too heavily on direct authorial comment (*I believe ...; In my opinion ...*) and attitudinal lexis (*vitally important ...; extremely valuable ...*) could benefit from being shown the part structure plays in effective argument.

As illustration I return to the analysis in my previous article of a paragraph by an English second-language student (Kilpert, 2001b). There I was concerned with how fluency and readability can be achieved; here I am concerned with how the evaluative elements are managed so as to achieve the desired academic 'voice'. Having done this, I turn to a paragraph of a different kind, written by an accomplished non-academic writer, to show how an expert uses evaluation to organise discourse. Finally, I look at two academic paragraphs to show how their writers exploit the interplay of textual and interpersonal resources to persuade the reader to adopt their point of view.

I have included a glimpse into APPRAISAL theory, a direction of research in SFG which is providing new ways of describing how evaluation works in texts, extending discussion of the interpersonal features beyond grammar into the realm of the semantics (Martin, 2000a; Thompson and Hunston, 2000). I also make use of Gregory's term *phase* (1988) to identify units in a text's structure.

I have been asked by an anonymous reviewer of this article to give evidence of the need for teaching evaluation in texts, and to clarify the relevance of text analysis to teaching. As far as evidence is concerned, I must emphasize that I write as a theorist and not as an action researcher. However, my own and other teachers' experience suggests that the problems I discuss here – difficulties with managing structure and 'tone' – are common amongst novice academic writers. This article starts from the assumption that such problems are a known factor. As to the relevance of text analysis, I suggest that the methods I describe could enable teachers to give explicit and systematic help to students by showing them how to recognize the patterns of language specific to particular genres, to read those genres with better understanding and to improve their production of them, particularly through learning to edit their own writing and, furthermore, that these methods are applicable across the educational spectrum, from primary to tertiary, and across disciplines. Only practical application and research will bear this out.[2] Contact with researchers overseas who

1. See Martin (1992: 11) for further explanation of this phenomenon (illustrated by a sentence that has a distinctively Australian colouring to it), and Hunston (1994) for innovative ideas on identifying the elusive evaluative elements in terms of 'status, value and relevance'.
2. As an example of what might be researched, Whittaker suggests that 'If readers – and especially those reading in a foreign language – come to the text better prepared for the sort of information they may find in certain positions, they should have less difficulty in interpreting its message, or messages' (1995: 105).

*have* tested these methods will be helpful. (For an account of their work in Australia see Martin, 1997; 2000b.) The first stumbling block for Martin and other Australian educational researchers was 'practicing teachers who had no knowledge about language to draw on when considering their students' writing' (Martin, 1997: 412).

Text analysis is simply a way of making teachers conscious of the structure of written (or spoken) text. The analysis in this article is fairly sophisticated, but I would argue that it should not be beyond the capabilities of a teacher who is going to teach academic writing, or indeed of a teacher at any level. The teacher's knowledge of her subject should extend beyond the immediate needs of teaching, because to be able to simplify information for the needs of various levels requires expert knowledge of one's subject. It is strange that when the subject is *language* there is doubt about this fundamental pedagogic principle.

Perhaps the best answer to the question about the relevance of text analysis is provided by a teacher speaking on the educational CD-ROM *BUILT*, [3] which demonstrates the central role of language and literacy in learning, based on the metaphor of scaffolding. In the unit that deals with teaching writing, the teacher comments on an exercise for teaching paragraph structure in narrative, which she uses with all her classes, including year 12:

> ... they're able to do it, and they're able to take the structure because it's laid out for them, so even the very weak students are able to say 'Yes, I start off somewhere that I know ...'... They're very conscious of the movement through the story. I find that if they're able to do that with a small piece of writing like that then they're much more able to analyse that same sort of structure in others' writing. But also, when they go to do a much longer piece, they're able to apply the same sort of movement through the text.

The students need to have a clear picture of the structure the teacher is asking them to produce. To give them this, the teacher needs to have clear picture herself. Simply feeling that you recognize a good paragraph when you see one is not enough: you need a technical vocabulary, not only to be able to convey your understanding to others but also to make it clear to yourself. This article explores some of the understandings a technical vocabulary might give us. The teacher will not necessarily use this vocabulary directly in the classroom, but will base her teaching methods on the understanding it has given her.

In my conclusion, I discuss further why I think SFG is a suitable language for teaching needs. The question of how to give language teachers this understanding in the current crisis in South African education is beyond the scope of this article, which aims primarily to explain and demonstrate the SFG model for those who might want to use it.

## 2. The student paragraph revisited

Here is the student paragraph again, with the evaluative elements italicised:

> However, in South Africa, the economy is changing people's attitudes towards women. Technology as an economic factor has meant that most employment positions require skilled workers rather than physical strength as was the case years ago. Intelligence is becoming a major prerequisite, which gives everyone a chance to rise to the top. *I fully*

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Would not ESL students who are unaccustomed to the thematic and informational patterns of English be helped by being taught them explicitly?

3. *BUILT* (*Building Understandings in Literacy and Teaching*), 2001, University of Melbourne; extract from Unit 3, video clip 1–138.

> *agree with Wade and Travis* (1994: 126) where they state that "It is no longer news that a woman can run a country, be a Supreme Court justice, or a miner ...". For example, a Sowetan newspaper article (2000) reported on Dr Renosi Mokate, who has been appointed a chief executive officer of a large state-financed central energy fund and is still holding other high employment positions, which she achieved by merit over a number of male candidates. Francis (1993) argued that two thirds of the work in the whole world is done by women but only one tenth of the wealth is owned by women. But currently the situation is changing, *as I believe*. This clearly shows change in attitudes towards women. (Spelling and minor grammar errors corrected.)

In this paragraph, difficulties with managing structure led to difficulties with managing evaluation. The explicitly evaluative lexis sticks out like two sore thumbs: *I fully agree with authors Wade and Travis where they state that* ... and *But currently the situation is changing, as I believe* (Kilpert, 2001b: 71). A lecturer's response might be to advise the student to take these out and make his text more impersonal and 'scientific'. However, the essay topic that was set asked the student to 'summarise and **evaluate** the major arguments' (Kilpert, 2001b: 83). Having asked for such a response, the lecturer now has an obligation to help this student learn how evaluation is managed in academic writing. This means that s/he should be able to show him explicitly the features of clause- and text-level grammar that we use to construct an argument persuasively in the academic genre. Attention to the patterns that are created by the interplay of the thematic (Theme-Rheme) and information (Given-New) structures – the 'method of development' and 'point' of a text (see Kilpert, 2001a for details) – can be helpful here. The student's authorial comments – *I fully agree* and *as I believe* – are problematic not only because they sound somewhat inappropriate for the genre (student essay) but also because their placing is not well managed, and this tends to weaken rather than strengthen the argument. Peter White observes that 'students typically don't know where to put in the explicitly evaluative appreciation' (personal communication). The problem for the novice writer is to know where the right places are, at both macro- and micro-level, i.e. at text and at clause level.

I will consider the *text* level first. The placing of the first of the two interpersonal comments, *I fully agree*, is awkward because it precedes the citations that the student is agreeing with: an arrangement which makes the reader feel she is being asked to agree before seeing the evidence. Thompson and Hunston point out that 'evaluation, in writing as in speech, tends to occur at **boundary points** in a discourse, thereby providing a clue to monitoring its organization'. They go on to say that in spoken dialogue this evaluation can be seen in the form of remarks such as 'the teacher's *Yes*, *That's right*, or *Good* after a student's contribution' or the '*Mm mm*, *Sure*, or *Yeah* in a casual conversation'. These 'indicate that the discourse is on track and that what is being said is not being challenged'. The evaluative elements in written monologue have something of the same function: 'It is as if the writer kept up a constant commentary on the progress of the discourse itself'. They say that 'evaluation at the end of each unit (for example at the end of a paragraph) marks that a point has been made and that the reader's acceptance of that point is assumed' (2000: 11). The student's comment *I fully agree* does not come at a suitable boundary point by this definition. It seems to 'jump the gun'.

The underlying problem here is that the information in the paragraph as a whole needs re-ordering to make it read better and strengthen the argument. A more logical order, taking advantage of the natural coherence of chronological sequence (putting the 'history' section first, instead of last, Kilpert, 2001b: 73), makes it clearer where the boundary points are, as shown below. I have split the rewritten paragraph into sections, with sub-topics in brackets, and italicised the evaluative elements. Important reference items are in bold, and the boundary points are marked.

However, in South Africa the economy is changing people's attitudes to women.

> In 1993, Francis argued that two-thirds of the work in the whole world is done by women but only one tenth of the wealth is owned by women. Currently the situation is changing, because the economy is changing.
>
> A *significant* factor in **this** change is technology. Most employment positions now require workers who are skilled rather than physically strong. Strength is no longer so important; while intelligence is becoming a major prerequisite, which gives everyone a chance to rise to the top.
>
> *As evidence* of **this**, Wade and Travis (1994: 126) state: "It is no longer news that a woman can run a country, be a supreme court justice, or a miner ...", and, to point to a local example, a Sowetan newspaper article (2000) reports on Dr Renosi Mokate, who has been appointed a chief executive officer of a large state-financed central energy fund, and is still holding other high employment positions, which she achieved by merit over a number of male candidates.
>
> *I believe* **this** *clearly* shows change in attitudes to women.

In this reorganised version, the three boundary points become clearly distinguishable. The importance of the reference item ***this*** for signalling these points is evident.[4] Each boundary point is a suitable place for indicating that a point has been made and may now be evaluated. At the first one, I added *significant* to the student's original *factor*: this seemed to me a good place to indicate the writer's attitude towards the point he is making. (It is more or less *de rigueur* for an academic to suggest that the findings are 'important', or 'interesting', or preferably both; laying claim to academic credibility, as Thompson and Hunston observe; 2000: 7–8). At the second boundary point, quoting an authority is evaluative in itself (the writer is in effect saying 'I'm sure you will agree with me, because so-and-so says so too'), so in rewriting the paragraph I changed *I fully agree* to the less personally intrusive *As evidence of this*. I retained the interpersonal comment *I believe* at the third boundary point, and the evaluative adverb *clearly*, because a good enough argument had now been set up to warrant these. The original organization of material in the paragraph had not led sufficiently clearly to a summing-up point where evaluation might be expected.

Finding the right place for evaluation at *clause* level depends on exploiting the backgrounding and foregrounding effects produced by the interaction of Theme-Rheme and Given-New. This enables the writer to structure an argument not only coherently but also convincingly. The reader should feel s/he is being guided rather than pushed, and this can be achieved by ensuring that we produce the expected patterns, putting the routine information in the Themes, and the 'news' we want to emphasize in the Rhemes. As Halliday and Matthiessen (1999: 238–9) explain it:

> If the Theme of the clause (realized as the element in first position) is also explicitly located as Given, this has a very strong 'backgrounding' effect: the message is 'you already know this; now use it as a stepping-off point for a further move, to something you don't know'. By the same token, the remainder of the clause (either the whole of it or at least the

4. In my previous article I pointed out the weakness of the *this* in the student's concluding sentence (Kilpert, 2001b: 73, 86). It did not clearly mark a boundary point, because the poor arrangement of the information in the paragraph made it difficult to tell what *this* referred to. Improving the structure made the referent of this pronoun identifiable and converted it into a naturally strong summing-up and boundary-marking device.

culminating element) is strongly 'foregrounded'. The total construction is obviously a powerful device for reasoning and argumentation.

The power depends not only on producing the expected pattern but also on breaking the pattern every now and then – at the appropriate places. In Kilpert (2001a;b) I discussed in some detail how a marked Theme breaks the pattern, for example, in a declarative clause, putting an adverbial instead of the Subject in Theme position, but here I am exploring another kind of pattern-breaking – putting the New where Given might be expected, i.e. arranging the information in the less usual (marked) way.

As an example of the unmarked and the marked arrangement of information in a clause, we might consider the difference between two possible answers to the question *Where did the cat sleep?* The unmarked arrangement would be Given in first position (Theme) and the New in second (Rheme):

| *The cat* | *slept **on the bed**.* |
|---|---|
| **Theme** | **Rheme** |
| **Given** | Given **New** |

The reverse order is less usual, and so calls attention to itself. Here the information about the cat's sleeping place is given extra emphasis:

| ***On the bed*** | *is where the cat slept!* |
|---|---|
| Theme | Rheme |
| **New** | Given |

Pattern-breaking is not arbitrary but functional: there will have been a reason for answering thus. (Perhaps the speaker wants to elicit the hearer's indignation at the inappropriateness of the cat's choice, or admiration of the owner's indulgence of its whims.) Of course, in speaking we can answer with New only – *On the bed* – and indicate by intonation whether we intend it to sound surprising or not. In writing, we can make up for the absence of intonation by using Theme-Rheme positioning to convey our emphasis on the New. (I have used an exclamation mark in my example, but this is a luxury academic writers usually deny themselves.)

At the end of the student paragraph the pattern has been broken, but not effectively, and it disturbs rather than persuades the reader. The second interpersonal comment, *as I believe*, sounds like a slightly desperate afterthought. Using our knowledge of how thematic and information structure work, we can pinpoint what went wrong here. In the following table I have analysed the two problem clauses as one T-unit (Kilpert, 2001b: 72), for simplicity:

| *But currently the situation is changing,* | ***as I believe**.* |
|---|---|
| **Theme** | **Rheme** |
| **Given or New**? | **New**? |

Because it is situated in the position where we expect to find New information, the interpersonal comment becomes obtrusive. It is as though the writer is protesting too much. But its awkwardness also results from the difficulty the reader experiences in determining the status of *But currently the situation is changing*. One way we recognize information as Given is from the co-text. The immediately preceding sentence is *Francis (1993) argued that two thirds of the work in the whole world is done by women but only one tenth of the wealth is owned by women*. That would suggest

that information about *change* is New information. But in relation to the rest of the paragraph, which talks about the changing status of women, the information that *currently the situation is changing* is Given. Hence the reader's confusion, coupled with the feeling that if this is Given information, it seems superfluous to stress that you *believe* it. To sum up, what the writer has done is place what should be a mildly evaluative comment in a position where it will be very prominent, bringing itself to the reader's attention by the expected intonation pattern (stress falling on the Rheme, where we expect to find the New), and at the same time causing momentary hesitation over what the pattern actually is.[5]

Ultimately the confusion stems from the underlying poor structure of the whole paragraph. Re-organising the paragraph removed the Given-New confusion, and made it easier to put the interpersonal evaluation in its expected place, where it would receive the appropriate emphasis. Persuasive use of evaluation depends on good textual organisation. I expand on this in section 4, below, and in section 6 I discuss the pedagogical implications of using technical terms to discuss language. Meanwhile, in case the above seems to be excessive fuss over a tiny stylistic error, I would point out that an accumulation of such errors is responsible for a student like this getting lower marks than those who have mastered the patterns. The respondents who read the student's original paragraph and my rewritten version all reacted in favour of the latter, the one which adhered to the expected academic patterns (Kilpert, 2001b: 74–5).

## 3. Overdoing the explicitly evaluative elements

Despite all my adverse comments on this one paragraph, this ESL student's management of evaluation was not *very* bad, and it took only a little rewriting to make it work. The examples below are from an essay by a first-language English speaker, whose fluent command of English idiom and bigger vocabulary led him into different problems with evaluation. Here it is not so much a case of *where* to put the explicitly evaluative lexis as *what kind* and *how much* to use. Much evaluation in texts is of course created through lexical choice, by exploiting the positive and negative connotations of words. Here, inability to manage lexical evaluative resources in acceptable academic style is noticeable in the inappropriate and too numerous attitudinal adjectives, adverbs and quantifiers:

> I believe that I have contributed <u>only minutely</u> to an <u>absolutely massive</u> field, with <u>a world of</u> research potential ... a <u>great</u> in-depth look into the attitudes ...another <u>immensely difficult</u> task ...

and in locutions typical of the informal spoken rather than formal written register:

> ...made me take a few steps back before I could really get stuck in ... seemed to have to wade through a lot of ... It did prove a little difficult ... only a regular(ish) listener ...

These features are easy to see and not very difficult to correct. However, toning down or simply removing them may leave the student feeling that the argument has lost its force. The teacher can reassure the student by pointing out there are other devices that also work to create an evaluative

5. Another factor contributing to the awkwardness is that the *as I believe* clause may be an anomalous ESL construction. The student does not appear to be entirely fluent in the use of *as*, which can be tricky. I would suggest that, instead of treating this as a separate factor, we might investigate whether learning the textual patterns of English might have a spin-off effect on the ESL student's command of English idiom. No research has yet been done, to my knowledge, on how Theme works in Xhosa, or in other indigenous South African languages. Such research could contribute to our understanding of the problems speakers of these languages have with academic writing in English.

stance. This student in fact demonstrated his ability to control some of these, such as interpersonal Themes, and conjunctions:

> I believe that I have contributed only minutely to an absolutely massive field, with a world of research potential. I think that radio station managers across the globe would benefit from a great in-depth look into the attitudes towards the accents used on their stations during news broadcasts. And, in fact, not just towards accents during newscasts but also towards accents used for everyday broadcasting.

If we ignore the heavily coloured evaluative lexis, we can see that his use of such devices is not unlike that of an experienced academic writer:

> I believe that part of the cohesiveness of this text is contributed by the fact that both *a growing number* and *out of fashion* construe meaning on the evaluative dimension of Usuality. In fact, they are in semantic contrast in this text, even though they are not lexically in any sense antonyms. (Lemke,1998: 9)

The student could be taught to develop his control of these patterns and and rely less heavily on evaluative lexis (*massive*, *minutely*, etc.). Interpersonal comments (*I believe*, *I think*) are useful resources for persuasion, if placed well, but should be used sparingly because their obviousness lessens their effectiveness. Conjunctions are more subtle. The student who is learning to manage these for structuring an argument is learning to be less obvious, because conjoining is a grammatical resource that does not call attention to itself the way evaluative lexis does. Thompson and Hunston explain that 'conjuncts such as *and* and *but* and subordinators such as *because* and *although* assume a common ground between reader and writer in terms of what is expected or unexpected at any point in the discourse' and they observe that 'the less obtrusively the evaluation is placed in the clause, the more likely it is to successfully manipulate the reader' (2000: 9).[6] In academic text we would not want the evaluation to be too obvious, because the reader is supposed to be convinced by the validity of our argument, not by our personal forcefulness. (That at least is the theory; I have more to say on this topic in section 5, below.) If the explicitly evaluative lexis is removed from the rewritten version of the ESL student paragraph, and some conjunctions added, it will still read like a persuasive argument, simply by virtue of its structure. The least obvious resource for evaluation is good organisation of the material; and writing that is well organised needs few 'artificial aids'. I demonstrate this in the next section.

## 4. A well-crafted paragraph

The paragraph I have chosen as model is from a *Time* magazine article, *In Praise of Quality*:

> This renaissance comes at an interesting time. The forces of globalization, standardization and mass production are widely decried as threats to such hand-crafted quality. Industrialized agriculture long ago forced tasty, locally grown food products out of most supermarkets, and small farmers have only recently begun to discover new, niche markets. Franchised retailers and mega-discounters are supplanting friendly corner shops and personalized service. Manufacturers of clothing, motor cars and other consumer products are merging into giant, cross-border enterprises to take advantage of economies of scale –

6. This may sound somewhat Machiavellian, but the benefit of teaching students the 'tricks' of persuasive writing is that they may become not only better writers but also better readers, alert to the ways they may be manipulated. In this article I have barely touched on the interesting subject of the grammatical resources academics employ to downplay the evaluative nature of their texts; on this topic see Hodge and Kress (1993: 15-35) and Hoey (2000).

> and to bear the ever-growing expenses of marketing and technology. Yet perhaps because of these forces, quality is today valued more than ever. Against the blandness of mass-market products, hand-made goods stand out as beacons of individuality and soul. And Europe, for centuries the capital of craft and care, is the center of this new appreciation for excellence. As the world comes to re-value things produced the old, careful way, Europe is still making them. Today more than ever, Europe is the capital of quality. (Rod Usher. *Time* magazine, August 20/27, 2001: 41–43)

This paragraph demonstrates neatly how an evaluative stance may be constructed through good organisation. The most obvious feature of the paragraph is that it is structured around two lexical chains, one consisting of entities construed as bad, and the other of those construed as good:

| The big bad forces of *globalization*; *standardization*; *mass production*; *industrialized agriculture*; *supermarkets*, *franchised retailers*; *mega-discounters*; *manufacturers of clothing, motor cars and other consumer products*; and *giant, cross-border enterprises* | ARE CONTRASTED WITH | THE 'RENAISSANCE' OF SMALL-SCALE INDIVIDUAL STYLE AND QUALITY: *small farmers*; *new niche markets*; *hand-made goods*; *beacons of individuality and soul*; *craft and care*; *appreciation for excellence*; and *things produced the old, careful way*. |
|---|---|---|

It is interesting to note the kinds of evaluative lexis this paragraph does *not* contain. There are none of the interpersonal comments that are so plentiful in academic discourse (*I believe*; *I would argue*; *as X points out*...) and indeed, despite the highly evaluative topic, there is very little direct expression of the writer's personal feelings about it. There is the adjective *interesting* in the first sentence, and perhaps *tasty* in the third; other than these, the attitudinal lexis is indirect. Martin's terms 'inscribed' and 'evoked' are useful here for distinguishing these two kinds of evaluation. Apart from the two adjectives mentioned, the appraisal is the evoked variety, where 'an evaluative response is projected by reference to events or states which are conventionally prized' (Martin, 2000a: 142; editors' introduction). For example, in the context of this writer's position on globalization, terms such as *standardization* and *mega-discounter* evoke disapproval, while *small farmers* and *hand-made goods* get the thumbs-up. *Blandness* in the seventh sentence is an interesting example of how the distinction may be made grammatically. By expressing this as an abstract noun, rather than adjectivally, as *bland*, the writer keeps his distance: the reader is being *invited* rather than *ordered* to evaluate, and thus the evaluation is kept unobtrusive. Yet the paragraph is powerfully persuasive, even removed from its setting in *Time* magazine, where it is supported by the surrounding illustrations of vineyards, Venetian gondolas at sunset, and so on. This writer can dispense with obvious techniques, such as direct interpersonal comment and strongly evaluative lexis, because he has control of the more powerful evaluative technique of organisation that exploits the thematic and informational patterns a reader has unconsciously come to expect.

TABLE 1 shows how the writer has organised his information.[7] An immediately obvious feature is the way the paragraph is divided into two parts. There is a broad movement from the 'forces' (bad) of the first half to the 'things' (good) of the second, with a transition at the important pivot point signalled by the conjunction *Yet*. To tease out the details of this structure the paragraph has first been divided into clauses, and the Themes and Rhemes identified. This makes visible the

7. The TABLES referred to – 1 to 5 – are in the Appendix.

*method of development*, which is composed of the material in the topical Themes, and is 'where the writer is proceeding from', and the *point*, the material in the Rhemes, which is 'where the writer is leading the reader to'. The processes are shown in bold. (*Process* is the SFG term for the verb or verbal group, seen in terms of its function.) The marked Themes are underlined; in this text these are *circumstances*: **i** cause (reason), **j** location (spatial), and **n** location (time).[8] I will use Gregory's terms *phase* and *transition* to talk about the different sections of this paragraph:

> Phase is used to characterize those stretches of discourse in which there is a significant measure of consistency and congruity in what is being selected from the three metafunctional resources of the language. What are termed transitions in and out of phases are indicated by a marked change in choice from one or more functional components. (1988: 318)

TABLE 2 simplifies the picture of this paragraph and takes a more specifically semantic angle on its structure. It identifies broad semantic groupings that correspond to the two phases and the transition between them. It also identifies the Hyper-Theme, the first clause or clause complex, and the Hyper-New, the last clause or clause complex. This idea is not new to teachers of writing. We can all recognize a 'topic sentence'. What is new here is a unified terminology which explicitly recognizes the similarities in the informational pattern at all levels: in a well-constructed essay there is a point of departure for the clause (*Theme*), a point of departure for the paragraph (*Hyper-Theme*), and a point of departure for the whole essay (*Macro-Theme*). There is a corresponding unity in the terminology for the 'point' of the text at all levels: *N-Rheme* (Fries's term (1994) for the typically co-occurring Rheme and New), *Hyper-New* and *Macro-New*. (See Martin, 1993: 244–258 for detailed explanation of these.) Interestingly, in the context of the whole *Time* magazine article, the paragraph I have chosen functions as Macro-Theme. It sets up the belief system ('small is beautiful'), the Given that underpins the whole article. The preceding five paragraphs are a narrative about a cello – a Stradivarius – so it is really with this paragraph that the discussion begins. This may explain why in reading the article I had the impression that this paragraph had been particularly carefully crafted: it occupies a key position in the whole text.

Setting out the text diagrammatically enables us to show how we recognize phases, a dynamic movement through the text. Partly this is semantic: in this paragraph it is easy to see the change from large to small, bad to good. But there is more to it than that: the phases are also constructed by the grammar and the way it changes from phase to phase. Looking at TABLE 1, we can pick out features of the grammar that predominate in each phase, particularly the **experiential** features of process and participant type,[9] and the **textual** features of marked Theme and textual Theme. Features of the **interpersonal** grammar are harder to identify, apart from the important *perhaps* at the transition point from Phase One to Phase Two. (In section 5, below, I discuss a paragraph in which interpersonal resources are used more obviously to signal the phases.)

Taking the **experiential** features first, we can see that the processes in Phase One (in bold, TABLE 1) have something in common: they are predominantly **material** – processes of *doing*. The effect is of an onslaught of physical force, particularly in *forced* and *are supplanting* (**c** and **e**). By contrast, the material process in **d** – *have begun to discover* – seems weak, to suit the picture of the small farmers challenging global forces:

8. As explained by Martin, Matthiessen and Painter, 'When the topical Theme of a declarative clause is not the Subject, it gains a greater textual prominence. Non-Subject Themes are "marked" Themes and are often important in structuring the larger discourse' (1997: 24). See Martin et al. also for classification of types of circumstances (1997: 104).
9. For details of experiential grammar see Butt et al. (2000); Halliday (1994); Martin et al. (1997).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **c** | *industrialized agriculture* | ***forces out*** | *local products* |
| **d** | *small farmers* | ***begin to discover*** | *new markets* |
| **e** | *retailers and discounters* | ***supplant*** | *small shops* |
| **g** | *[manufacturers]* | ***take advantage of*** | *economies of scale* |
| **h** | *[manufacturers]* | ***bear*** | *expenses* |
| | ACTOR | MATERIAL PROCESS | GOAL |

(Clause **f** seems superficially to fit this pattern, but *are merging* is better analysed as a relational (identifying) process, because *manufacturers* and *enterprises* refer to the same entity: the first is becoming the second, not doing something to it.) The material processes of Phase One are picked up like a refrain at the end of Phase Two: *Europe* ***is*** *still* ***making*** *them*.

In Phase Two, by contrast, the processes are predominantly **mental** and **relational**. The effect is of movement in the first phase and stasis in the second, which is a good way of construing the difference between the pushy progressive forces of globalization and the conservative reaction of the small craftsman and the discriminating buyer:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **i** | *quality* | ***is valued*** | ***[by the world]*** |
| | **Phenomenon** | **mental process** | **Senser** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **l** | *the world* | ***comes to re-value*** | ***things produced the old, careful way*** |
| | **Senser** | **mental process** | **Phenomenon** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **j** | ***hand-made goods*** | ***stand out as*** | ***beacons of individuality and soul*** |
| **k** | ***Europe*** | ***is*** | ***the center of this new appreciation*** |
| **n** | *Europe* | ***is*** | ***the capital of quality*** |
| | **Identified** | **relational process** | **Identifier** |

**Turning to the textual** features, we may note that Phase One reads like a list. The only two textual Themes (the conjunction *and* in **d** and **h**) are within sentences rather than at the beginning, so are not very salient. The method of development in Phase One is to pile up examples. In Phase Two the method of development is to argue a case. Now we have three textual Themes (**i**, **k** and **l**), with the conjunctions (*Yet*, *And*, *As*) salient because they begin sentences. (The persuasive strength of these is evident, and makes us realise that the old-fashioned prohibition on using *And* to start a sentence deprives a writer of an effective tool.) Another change from Phase One to Two is the change in the topical Themes. In Phase One these were all Subjects, consisting of nominalizations such as *standardization* and noun agents such as *retailers*. Phase Two changes the pattern by introducing two consecutive marked Themes (the circumstances in **i** and **j**) and then three noun Subjects: *Europe, the capital of craft and care* (the second is a noun in apposition: a rewording of the Subject); *the world*; and *Europe* (**k**, **l**, **m**). These changes in experiential and textual grammar are subtle but powerful in organising the flow of discourse from the first phase to the second, and in so doing persuading the reader that the scenario of the second phase is to be evaluated as better than the first. As Hodge and Kress observe, ‘Ideology involves a systematically organized presentation of reality’ (1993: 15).

It is more difficult to pin down the way the **interpersonal** features differ in the two phases. The Mood choice is declarative throughout, and *perhaps* is the only Modality feature (i.e. the writer has not signalled any degrees of usuality or probability – *might be*, *sometimes is*, etc.). His statements, apart from the clause beginning *perhaps* (**i**), are categorical – 'bare declaratives' (White, 2001) – as is typical of popular writing.[10] Yet there is a difference, and to see it we need to look at the evaluation: the way the writer persuades the reader to reject one set of values and accept another. Systematic organization involves semantics as well as grammar; an obvious feature is the movement from predominantly *bad* in the first phase to predominantly *good* in the second. The paragraph is very clearly polarized. We can demonstrate more subtle differences between the two phases by showing that each foregrounds a different feature of the APPRAISAL system. The writer has grouped his evaluations of the two ways of manufacturing products into two kinds of assessment of human behaviour: one which focuses on 'people behaving': forces and agents and actions; and one which focuses on the 'products' (concrete or abstract) of that behaviour. The first is an ethical judgement, the second an aesthetic appreciation. JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION are neutral technical terms in APPRAISAL theory: they imply judging / appreciating something as either good or bad. With AFFECT, which is the term for our human reactions to experience, they comprise the three sub-systems of the system of ATTITUDE (White, 2001). Martin suggests that AFFECT may be seen as the basic system, which is 'institutionalized' in discourse in two ways: judging people's behaviour, and appreciating natural phenomena and the products of human behaviour (2000a: 147), as shown in the figure below.

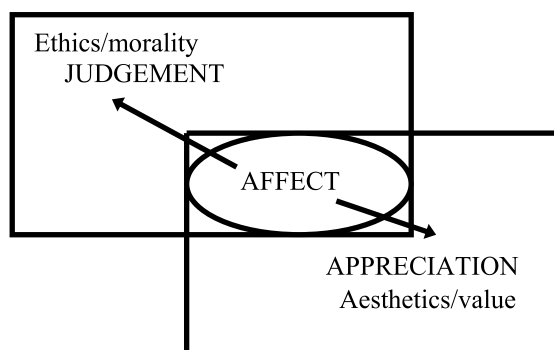


Figure from Martin (2000a: 147); adapted slightly.

TABLE 3 shows that AFFECT, in the form of 'interest', (*This renaissance comes at an* ***interesting***

10. See Halliday, 1994: 354ff. for discussion of Modality.

*time*),[11] branches out into, on the one hand, JUDGEMENT (of the forces of globalization and its agents as *bad*, and those of the 'renaissance' and its agents as *good*) and, on the other, APPRECIATION (of the products of globalization as bad and of the 'renaissance' as good). To see how these are arranged, it is helpful to underline the elements of JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION and *bad* and *good* each in a different colour in TABLE 1. The result is crudely summed up in the following table:

| | Theme | Rheme |
|---|---|---|
| Phase One | **b–h** judgement – bad<br>< **d** judgement – good > | **b–h** judgement – bad<br>< **d** judgement – good > |
| PhaseT wo | **i–j** judgement – bad<br>**k–m** judgement – good | **i–j** appreciation – good<br>**k–m** appreciation – good |

This summary does not do full justice to the picture, because some items have more semantic weight than others, for example, the examples of JUDGEMENT referred to in the top left box are 'weighty' because of the nominalizations (e.g. *globalization*, *standardization*) and the effect of repetition. But a picture does emerge of a movement from 'behaviour judged as bad' in Phase One to 'things appreciated as good' in Phase Two.

I would caution that, despite appearances, we are not doing geometry here. These tables make things look neater than they really are. There are asymmetries and irregularities, and these are essential; they are what makes writing an art as well as a craft. An example of an irregularity is the intrusion of clause **d**, detailing the good processes, into a phase which is primarily about the bad. Just as a text can be 'over-signalled' by an excess of cohesive devices (Kilpert, 2001b: 70), which paradoxically makes it *less* easy to read, it can also be 'over-structured', which makes it mechanical and unattractive to the reader.

To sum up, this paragraph was chosen because it is easy to analyse (being a simple polarization of good and bad) and because it illustrates my point that organisation on its own can create an evaluative stance. It is powerfully persuasive because its structure parallels its topic. The word 'renaissance'– bringing to mind Europe, and the revival of classical civilisation after a period dominated by barbaric forces – sets up the expected pattern right from the first clause (the Hyper-Theme). We anticipate that the movement will be from the bad forces of the present to rebirth of the good: the pattern appeals to a universal sense that progress in time ought to mean progress in the sense of 'getting better'. This movement is captured in the paragraph by itemizing the bad forces in Phase One and then discussing the revival of quality in Phase Two. Besides the top to bottom movement, there is a movement from left to right, for example, from the forces in Themes **b**, **c**, **e**, and **f** to their tyrannical activities in the corresponding Rhemes: *forcing*, *supplanting*, *merging*, *taking advantage*. The left-to-right movement is again exploited to highlight contrast between bad and good in clauses **i** and **j**: the *forces* on the left and the *valued quality* on the right; the *blandness of mass-market products* on the left and the *beacons of individuality and soul* on the right. These two clauses echo in their movement from left to right the contrastive *bad* ÷ *good* movement from the top half to the bottom half of the paragraph. The directions of reading – from top to bottom down the page and from left to right across the page – take the reader through the text and through its message, from present to future, bad to good, judgement to appreciation.

The switch from the large, impersonal and bad to the small, individual and good is signalled by

11. Martin categorizes 'interest'(e.g. curiosity) as an example of AFFECT along with more obviously emotional responses to experience such as 'misery' and 'happiness' (2000a: 152).

the important strategic conjunction *Yet* in the textual Theme of clause **i**. This boundary point is the crux of the paragraph. It is the only point where the writer uses an interpersonal Theme, and he does not have to be strident, because he can be sure the reader is being carried along by his careful structuring. He underscores this pivot point with the two following marked topical Themes **i** and **j**, signalling the transition between the two phases.

However, this paragraph is not an ideal example for learning academic writing, which typically deals with more controversial and complex issues and is expected to modalize its assertions. In the next section I look at the problems a teacher might experience in finding a suitable example from real academic text.

## 5. How to choose a model paragraph

It is surprisingly difficult to find a good example paragraph for demonstrating to a novice how evaluation is managed in academic writing.[12] First, we need to find one with simple clause structures that can be analysed easily into clauses and into Theme and Rheme units. But academics typically use densely packed grammatical structures that are problematic for analysis (for instance because of multiple embeddings),[13] and complicate the patterns we want to display. Second, we need a paragraph in which the evaluative features are the kind that a teacher might approve of in a student essay. In searching for such a paragraph – one with the right 'voice' – I became aware of 'the high traffic in evaluations of various sorts' (Hoey, 2000: 32) that there is in academic articles.[14] We may like to think we are scientifically objective, but this is belied by the tenor of many of these, and some might strike an ordinary reader as quite pugnacious. The following is an example from a landmark article in linguistics:

> There are undoubtedly many verbal skills which children from ghetto areas must learn in order to do well in the school situation, and some of these are indeed characteristic of middle-class verbal behavior. Precision in spelling, practice in handling abstract symbols, the ability to state explicitly the meaning of words, and a richer knowledge of the Latinate vocabulary, may all be useful acquisitions. But is it true that *all* of the middle class verbal habits are functional and desirable in the school situation? Before we impose middle-class verbal style upon children from other cultural groups, we should find out how much of this is useful for the main work of analyzing and generalizing, and how much is merely stylistic – or even dysfunctional. In high school and college middle-class children spontaneously complicate their syntax to the point that instructors despair of getting them to make their language simpler and clearer. In every learned journal one can find examples of jargon and empty elaboration – and complaints about it. Is the 'elaborated code' of Bernstein really so 'flexible, detailed and subtle' as some psychologists believe? (Jensen, 1968: 119). Isn't it also turgid, redundant and empty? Is it not simply an elaborated *style*, rather than a superior code or system? (Labov, 1969: 192).

Plainly we cannot offer this to the student as a model, because s/he does not have the authority to

12. It is a principle of SFG not to make one up: we must find a real example, and not tamper with it. See Halliday, 1994: xxxiii on the problem of choosing examples.
13. See Kilpert, 2001a: 55-6 for explanation of this term.
14. Whittaker, for example, points out in her study of the Themes of academic articles that 'well under 10 per cent' were interpersonal Themes (1995: 124); but even this might seem a lot when compared with non-academic writing. In her article she lists an astonishing variety of authorial evaluative remarks: *We would contend that ... I am inclined to think that ... It is often argued that ... Small wonder then that ... Of course, it may be counter-argued that ...* and many more.

speak with so strong a voice. I do not have space to discuss it in detail, but have given a clause analysis in TABLE 4, which could be a basis for discussion of how the evaluation in this paragraph, and the ideology of the whole text, was constructed. The paragraph is an interesting model from the point of view of phases built out of variations in the **interpersonal** grammar. The four clauses in the interrogative (**d**, **h**, **i**, **j**), a marked Mood choice in academic text, form a phase on their own – a discontinuous phase, because it is interrupted by another phase distinguished by three heavily emphatic marked Themes (**e, f, g**). It is interesting for its variety of evaluative techniques, and worth studying as an example of how powerful such rhetoric can be.[15] Perhaps the most important lesson the language teacher can teach is awareness of the resources of the grammar that are available to writers for promoting ideologies and dismissing views they do not share.

In the end I chose the *Time* magazine paragraph as a fair sample of the kind of clear-cut topic that a student might be asked to write about and of the kind of evaluative writing that a lecturer might feel had achieved the right tone. But a genre evolves to serve a function, and the function of a popular magazine is different from that of an academic journal. The writer of the *Time* paragraph did not have a *very* difficult case to make. Labov, on the other hand, had a good deal of reader resistance to overcome ('first contact with Larry would produce some fairly negative reactions ... it is probable that you would not *like* him any more than his teachers do'; 1969: 193); hence the use in this article of a panoply of evaluative techniques. A student who wrote like this, however, would be asked to 'tone it down'. Four rhetorical questions in one paragraph would not be acceptable; it is doubtful whether s/he would get away with even one.

TABLE 5 is an example, found after lengthy searching, of an academic paragraph that would make a good model for student writing. It is arguing a point against a prevailing orthodoxy: the authors are arguing *against* conventional explanations, and *for* their own better explanation, of why writers of business English persist in using inordinate quantities of nominalization, despite being warned against the practice by well-meaning advocates of Plain English:

> Speakers and writers under stress are less fluent. Stroke victims' linguistic error rate (qualitatively dependent upon the area of damage) rises when they are tired or upset. Second-language speakers' fluency drops under stress. Basic writers' use of a range of syntactic structures drops under examination pressure; in fact, students do better, in general, on take-home exams than under the pressure of time in class. All of this suggests an easy explanation for superfluous nominalization in corporate writing; the other guys,[16] whose writing skills are less developed to begin with, lose what control they do have over their writing processes when they are under pressure. They are not central among their peers because they do not express themselves well, and vice versa. And maybe they are not as good at what they do in other areas either. Maybe skill with language corresponds to competence generally. This all has a certain appeal and probably some truth. And it fits well with the current and popular mythology of meritocracy. But we are not convinced that dysfluency caused by mediocre competence or stress entirely explains our writers' behaviour. (Brown and Herndl, 1986: 18)

15. Bernstein's reputation is only now, thirty years later, being rescued from this onslaught. According to Halliday, 'He was totally brutalized: it drove him right out of the field'. Halliday says: 'I generally accepted his view of cultural transmissions and the framework he was using at the time: family role systems and their effect on language. He struck me as the one leading sociologist who really built language into his theory' (Thompson and Collins, 2001: 134).
16. This is not, as it appears to be, a lapse into colloquialism. The authors of this article use it as a technical term to categorize the second of two groups in the workplace: there are those who are recognized as good writers, the 'central peers', and then there are the 'other guys'.

I offer the Theme-Rheme analysis in TABLE 5 without further comment other than italicising the directly interpersonal features and suggesting that one particularly interesting feature here is how clearly the Hyper-Theme predicts this text's method of development; a phenomenon demonstrated in a study by Fries (Martin, 1993: 244).

A final comment, then, about the problem of finding the perfect model is that, while advising the student to learn by reading academic articles, we would also want to point out Thompson and Hunston's and second function of evaluation, mentioned in the introduction, above, which is to build solidarity and maintain relations. The student's options as a newcomer to the academic community are limited: s/he has to be careful to choose evaluative resources that are in keeping with the status of a novice vis à vis experienced academics. This is a factor the teacher should be able to point out by describing the features explicitly and explaining their likely effects on a marker. However, an established member of the community can get away with using highly marked grammar; for example, with using imperatives, the most marked Mood option in academic text: 'Get involved; get a life.' 'Be extravagant; get real.' (Martin, 1997: 434, 442).

## 6. Demystifying the craft of writing

I will now take a last look at the student paragraph and consider the advice the writer was given. The marker's response was typical of those made by any busy teacher faced with hundreds of paragraphs of this kind. The student's last four (handwritten) lines have been annotated like this:

| Losing your | *women but only one tenth of the wealth is owned* |
|---|---|
| way a | *by women. But currently the situation is chang* |
| bit here. | *ing, as I believe. This clearly shows change* |
| Maybe split | *in attitudes towards women.* Ask yourself: what is the |
| this para? | main idea of this paragraph? Check that you have stuck to it, OK? |

The marker was right: the student clearly was 'losing his way' at this point, and was attempting to shore up the crumbling argument with the interpersonal comment *as I believe*. The diagnosis was correct, but how effective was the prescribed treatment? The student took the advice to split this paragraph and others (this was his draft), and was rewarded by a good mark for his final version, which he had worked hard at, but now it was in newspaper rather than academic format, composed of short two-, three- and four-sentence paragraphs. He had learned to avoid rather than confront the difficulties of putting together a coherent paragraph. Yet his original eight-sentence paragraph was very close to being coherent. As I have shown, it took only a little rearranging to get it into shape (Kilpert, 2001b). I have demonstrated in section 2 (above) that there is much technical help the student could be given at the point where he was 'losing his way'. Preferably, the teacher could analyse paragraphs such as the *Time* magazine one as a scaffolding exercise for the class. This would have the function of introducing the student to some metalanguage that provides technical understanding of how written language works.

To give technical help you need technical terms. The basic terminology of SFG is user-friendly and makes it possible for the teacher to give explicit instruction rather than vague metaphorical encouragement. Teachers are not alone in being vague. Resorting to metaphor (like *losing your way*) in the absence of technical understanding is typical of the numerous writing handbooks that sound so helpful but whose advice turns out to be difficult to put into practice. The following are samples of what I mean, with the metaphorical elements italicised:

You build the bulk of your essay with standard paragraphs, with *blocks of concrete ideas*,

> and they must *fit smoothly*. ... Think of your beginning paragraph, then, not as the middle paragraph's *frame* to be filled, but as a *funnel*. *Start wide and end narrow* ... (Baker, 1990: 39; 43)

> Every paragraph should be *tightly*, and even *self-consciously*, organised. ... Very efficiently, the issue has been *located*, the paragraph has *advanced*, and in no time at all it has *arrived* somewhere new. ... at the end of each paragraph you *pull the threads together* for the reader. (Peck and Coyle, 1999: 105; 106; 107)

Metaphor is not without its uses, but it should be an adjunct to rather than a substitute for explicit instruction. Another problem with handbooks such as the two cited above is that they are helpful at *sentence* level, but have no fundamental principles to base their *text* level advice on. For example, Peck and Coyle suggest, under a heading 'Improving *flow* of ideas' (more metaphor), that the reader should use introductory prepositional phrases such as *During the daytime, I like to study at home* (1999: 280). They do not say *why* such a form should be used. The concept of 'marked Theme' could be used to explain the rationale behind this advice: to show what the function of such a Theme is; at which point in a text it could be effectively used; how it helps structure text, and so on – giving the reader not just one isolated, puzzling instruction but a generalizable principle. Similarly, we can demonstrate to students that learning the principles of good textual organisation will give them a foundation for better management of evaluation – two birds with one stone.

## 7. Conclusion

To teach language well we need more than just a lay vocabulary; we need an expert metalanguage, drawn from a functional grammar such as SFG. Not only does this 'language' allow the teacher to describe language explicitly for teaching purposes; it also enables researchers to communicate internationally and across disciplines; as Martin says, SFG 'is becoming a kind of lingua franca for discourse analysts and applied linguists around the world' (2000b: 13). It provides a systematic way of talking about language – and particularly *grammar* in the broad sense of the syntactic, lexical and semantic patterns of language – that is applicable to all genres, whether spoken or written.

It might be asked what is wrong with reinstating the traditional grammar terms (*noun*, *verb* and so on). Certainly this is better than *no* grammar. SFG continues to use many of these terms. The problem is that 'Conventional terminology is next to useless as far as thinking about genres is concerned; it doesn't help you master the social processes you need to get through school and into the workforce' (Martin, 2000b: 18). Traditional grammar categorizes and labels : it allows you to say what words and phrases *are*, but little about what they *do*. It can describe the *sentence* function of grammatical components, but not their *communicative* function: how the patterns make meaning, how they fulfil social purposes.

I will illustrate with one small example. In TABLES 1, 4 and 5 I have highlighted the important pivotal conjunctions *And*, *Yet*, and *But*. It is noticeable in all three of my example paragraphs how readily these experienced writers use these to begin sentences. However, the suspicion still lingers that it is somehow 'bad grammar' to do this. SFG recognizes them as textual Themes, whose dual function in organizing the text and persuading the reader to accept the writer's evaluation has been explained above. These Themes say 'I am convinced I am right (*evaluation – value of my contention*) and am not afraid of saying so to you (*interpersonal stance*)'. The traditional teacher may have felt instinctively that this tone was too authoritative for a beginner, and fallen back on the 'rule' about 'conjunctions at the beginning of sentences' for want of a better reason for

disallowing the practice. Explaining it in terms of textual Theme enables the teacher to talk clearly about the kind of meaning this pattern conveys to the reader.

It is hard to talk clearly about something you have no technical terms for. Imagine trying to teach physics or biology equipped with only a lay vocabulary. Yet language teachers have to resort to metaphor, analogy and vague commonsense chat. To remedy the situation, researchers such as Butt et al. (2000) are working to discover ways to use the technical language of SFG in the classroom. Perhaps most valuable for the teacher is the way it identifies unity in the disparate features of language, making teaching easier in the long run. Even the first step – setting out clauses, the basic units of meaning, in table form – is a valuable heuristic, giving the teacher a visual aid for demonstrating some general principles of how a good paragraph is constructed, and where a bad one fails.

When recommending technical teaching of language skills it is not unusual to encounter accusations that such explicit teaching is authoritarian and prescriptive. I would suggest, rather, that to teach these explicitly is not to force students into a mould but to offer the possibility of choice. It is the mystery approach that subjugates students, as Christie (1999) has shown in a study that reveals how the students who succeed in an English literature class are those who are best at guessing what the teacher wants and reproducing the accepted evaluation of a text; the ones whose privileged background best enables them to do this. And Bourdieu and Passeron (1994[1965]: 21) observed decades ago that

> ... the ability to manipulate academic language remains the principal factor in success at examinations. Here we encounter one of the most important, though also the most hidden, mediations between the social origins of children and their scholastic fates. The linguistic setting of the family influences a broader range of behaviours than those captured by language tests. Performance on every test of intellectual skills which requires the decipherment or manipulation of complex linguistic structures depends on an apprenticeship in language which is unequally complex, according to family background.

They were complaining of the same problem: that to be a successful guesser you need the right background. Teaching writing as a craft, a technical skill, will go a long way towards eliminating some inequities.

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## Appendix

**TABLE 1 Phase, method of development and point in the *Time* magazine paragraph**

| | textual Theme | inter-personal Theme | topical Theme | Rheme |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **a** | | | This renaissance | **comes** at an interesting time. |
| | | | **PHASE ONE** | |
| **b** | | | The forces of globalization, standardization and mass production | **are** widely **decried** as threats to such hand-crafted quality. |
| **c** | | | Industrialized agriculture | long ago **forced** tasty, locally grown food products out of most supermar-kets, |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **d** | and | | small farmers | **have** only recently **begun to discover** new, niche markets. |
| **e** | | | Franchised retailers and mega-discounters | **are supplanting** friendly corner shops and personalized service. |
| **f** | | | Manufacturers of clothing, motor cars and other consumer products | **are merging** into giant, cross-border enterprises |
| **g** | | | | **to take advantage of** economies of scale – |
| **h** | and | | | **to bear** the ever-growing expenses of marketing and technology. |

**PHASE TWO**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **i** | Yet | perhaps | because of these forces, | quality **is** today **valued** more than ever. |
| **j** | | | Against the blandness of mass-market products, | hand-made goods **stand out as** beacons of individuality and soul. |
| **k** | And | | Europe, for centuries the capital of craft and care, | **is** the center of this new appreciation for excellence. |
| **l** | As | | the world | **comes to re-value** things produced the old, careful way, |
| **m** | | | Europe | **is** still **making** them. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **n** | | | Today more than ever, | Europe **is** the capital of quality. |

| method of development | point |
|---|---|

**TABLE 2 Semantic development in the *Time* magazine paragraph**

| Method of development (Themes) | Point (Rhemes) |
|---|---|
| Hyper-Theme:<br>**a** ***This renaissance comes at an interesting time.*** | |
| **BAD FORCES & BAD AGENTS** | **BAD ACTIONS** |
| **b – h** *The* ***forces*** *of* ***globalization****;* ***standardization****; mass* ***production****; industrialized* ***agriculture****; franchised* ***retailers****; mega* ***discounters****;* ***manufacturers*** *of clothing and other consumer products* | ***forced*** *locally grown food products out of markets****; supplanting*** *friendly corner shops;* ***merging*** *into giant enterprises;* ***take advantage of*** *economies of scale*; ***ever-growing*** *expenses* |
| < GOOD AGENTS ><br>**d** *small* ***farmers*** | < GOOD ACTIONS ><br>***have begun to discover*** *new, niche markets* |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Transition** – boundary point – signalled by textual and interpersonal Themes and two marked Themes<br><br>**i – j** **Yet perhaps**<br><br>***because of these forces***<br>Against the blandness of mass-market products<br><br>**BAD FORCES & BAD PRODUCTS** | *quality*<br>*valued more than ever*<br>*hand-made goods*<br>*stand out*<br>*beacons of individuality and soul*<br><br>**GOOD FORCES & GOOD PRODUCTS** |
| Transition – textual Theme<br>**k - n** ***And***<br><br>***Europe**, for centuries the **capital** of craft and care; the **world; Europe***<br><br>**EUROPE AND THE WORLD** | *comes to **re-value***<br>*new **appreciation** for **excellence**;*<br>***things produced the old, careful way**;*<br>***is still making them***<br><br>**GOOD ACTIONS , QUALITIES, THINGS** |
| Hyper-New<br>**n** ***Today more than ever, Europe is the capital of quality.*** | |

**TABLE 3 Elements of AFFECT, JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION in the *Time* paragraph**
**(Based on Martin's diagram reproduced above, section 4)**

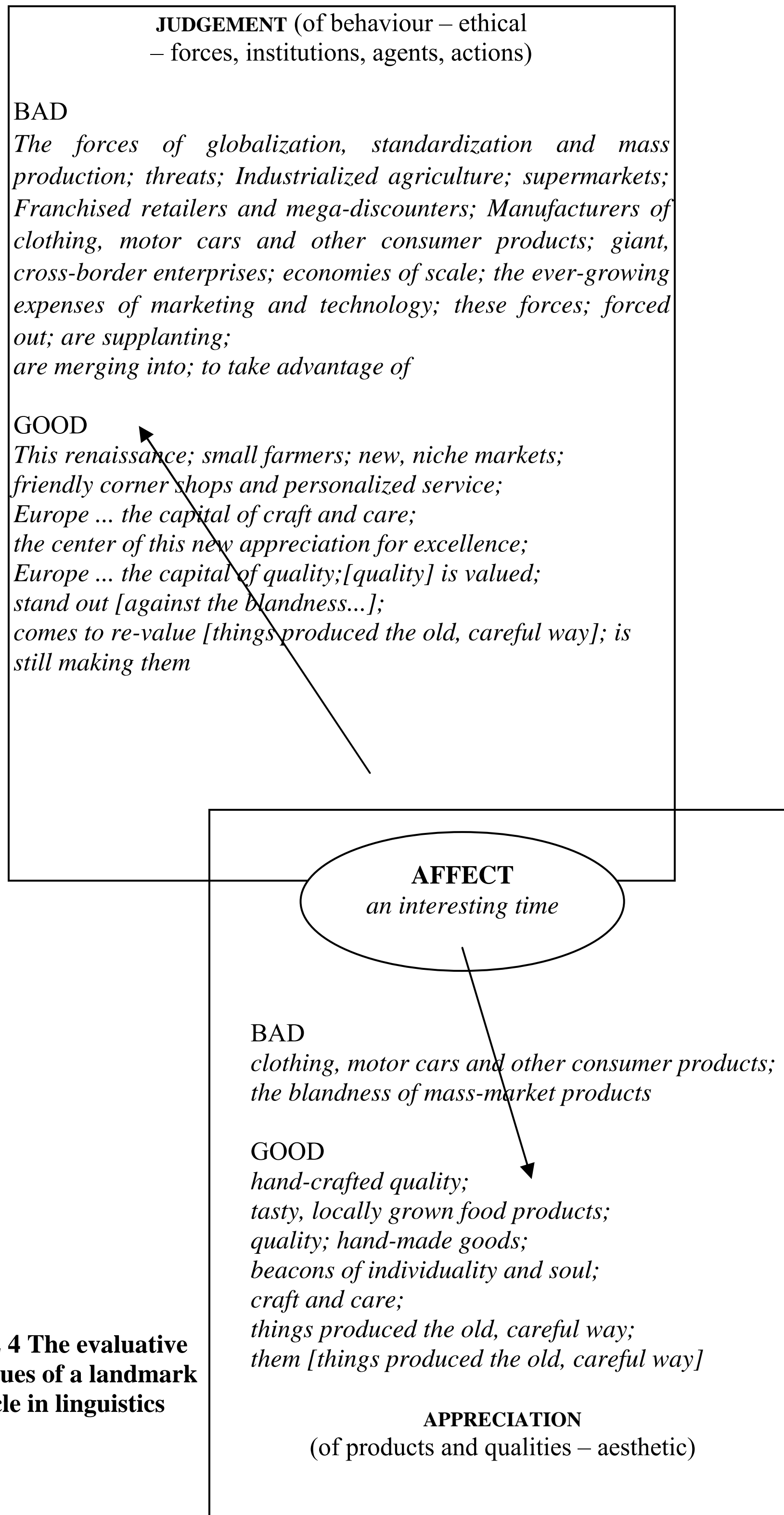


**TABLE 4 The evaluative techniques of a landmark article in linguistics**

| | textual Theme | inter-personal Theme | topical Theme | Rheme |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **a** | | | There | are undoubtedly many verbal skills [[which children from ghetto areas must learn in order to do well in the school situation]],[1] |
| **b** | and | | some of these | are indeed characteristic of middle-class verbal behavior. |
| **c** | | | Precision in spelling, practice in handling abstract symbols, the ability to state explicitly the meaning of words, and a richer knowledge of the Latinate vocabulary, | may all be useful acquisitions. |
| **d** | **But** | | is it[2] | true [[that *all* of the middle class verbal habits are functional and desirable in the school situation]]? |
| **e** | | | <u>Before we impose middle-class verbal style upon children from other cultural groups,</u> | we should find out how much of this is useful for the main work of analyzing and generalizing, and how much is merely stylistic – or even dysfunctional. |
| **f** | | | <u>In high school and college</u> | middle-class children spontaneously complicate their syntax to the point that instructors despair of getting them to make their language simpler and clearer. |
| **g** | | | <u>In every learned journal</u> | one can find examples of jargon and empty elaboration – and complaints about it. |
| **h** | | | Is the 'elaborated code' of Bernstein | really so 'flexible, detailed and subtle' as some psychologists believe? (Jensen, 1968: 119) |
| **i** | | | Isn't it | also turgid, redundant and empty? |
| **j** | | | **Is** it not | simply an elaborated *style*, rather than a superior code or system? |

1. Embedded clauses are indicated in square brackets.
2. Note that when the Mood is interrogative (here, a *yes-no* question), the unmarked Theme is made up of the Finite (auxiliary verb) and the Subject (Halliday, 1994: 47–8).
3. Marked Themes are underlined.

**TABLE 5 A good model for teaching evaluation in academic English**

| | textual Theme | inter personal Theme | topical Theme | Rheme |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **a** | | | Speakers and writers under stress | are less fluent. |
| **b** | | | Stroke victims' linguistic error rate (qualitatively dependent upon the area of damage) | rises when they are tired or upset. |
| **c** | | | Basic writers' use of a range of syntactic structures | drops under examination pressure; |
| **d** | in ... | ...fact,[1] | students | do better, in general, on take-home exams than under the pressure of time in class. |
| **e** | | | All of this | suggests an easy explanation for superfluous nominalization in corporate writing; |
| **f** | | | the other guys,[2] whose writing skills are less developed to begin with, | lose what control they do have over their writing processes when they are under pressure. |
| **g** | | | They | are not central among their peers |
| **h** | because | | they | do not express themselves well, and vice versa. |
| **i** | And | *maybe* | they | are not as good at what they do in other areas either. |
| **j** | | *Maybe* | skill with language | corresponds to competence generally. |
| **k** | | | This | all has a certain appeal and probably some truth. |
| **l** | And | | it | fits well with the current and popular mythology of meritocracy. |
| **m** | **But** | | *we* | *are not convinced* [2] |
| **n** | that | | dysfluency caused by mediocre competence or stress | entirely explains our writers' behaviour. |

1. I have analysed 'in fact' as both textual Theme (conjunctive) and interpersonal Theme (persuasive), as it seems clearly to have both functions.
2. Embedded clauses are indicated in square brackets.

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|---|---|---|

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