

**Unilateral conversations: the role of marked sentence initial
elements in skilled senior secondary academic writing**

Heather Meyer

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**Unilateral conversations: the role of marked sentence initial
elements in skilled senior secondary academic writing**

Heather Lynn Boik Meyer

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Primary Supervisor: Professor John Bitchener

Table of Contents

	Page no.
Table of Contents	i
List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	viii
Attestation of Authorship	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Abstract	xii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review (Part I)	7
2.1 General Introduction to Literature Review	8
2.2 The Educational Context	10
2.2.1 Introduction	10
2.2.2 Writing in the subject English, pre-National Curricula: New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom	12
2.2.3 The Development of the National Curricula	16
2.2.4 Current National Curricula Objectives for academic writing and Descriptors for Assessment as “Excellent” or Grade “A” at senior secondary level, in the UK, Australia and New Zealand	19
2.2.5 Comments from some recent examiners’ reports from New Zealand, Australia and CIE	27
2.2.6 Papers and articles commentating on the teaching of academic writing post-National Curricula implementation	29
2.2.7 Academic writing in the New Zealand context	39
2.2.8 Conclusion to Literature Review Part I	51
Chapter 3: Literature Review (Part II)	53
3.1 Introduction to Literature Review Part II: Theoretical Background	54
3.2 The concept of Theme in Systemic Functional Grammar and related research	55
3.2.1 Introduction	55
3.2.2 The development of the concept of Theme	55
3.2.3 Early criticism of Theme	58
3.2.4 The current concept of Theme within SFG	59
3.2.5 Some answers to the criticism of Theme	61
3.2.6 Further recent developments regarding the role of sentence initial elements and the interpersonal metafunction	69
3.2.7 Models of Argumentation validating the rhetorical significance of sentence initial position and unilateral nature of the argumentative dialogue	80

3.2.8	Psycholinguistic research validating the cognitive significance of sentence initial position	85
3.2.9	Conclusion to Literature Review Part II	92
3.3	Summation and General Conclusion to Literature Review	94
3.4	Research-based Rationale for the Study	95
3.5	Research Questions	101
Chapter 4: Methodology		103
4.1	Introduction to Methodology	104
4.2	General Rationale for the Project	105
4.3	Specific Rationale for the Analytical Method	109
4.4	Data Collection Procedure	114
4.5	Ethical Considerations	116
4.6	Data Analysis	118
4.6.1	Grammatical Analysis	119
4.6.1.1	Unmarked category	121
4.6.1.2	Receptive category	123
4.6.1.3	Heavy nominal groups	124
4.6.1.4	Adjuncts	127
4.6.1.5	Subordinate clauses	132
4.6.1.6	Projecting clauses	133
4.6.1.7	Equatives	135
4.6.1.8	Theme Predication	142
4.6.1.9	Thematicised comment	144
4.6.1.10	Direct object / Complement	146
4.6.2	Metafunctional Analysis	147
4.6.3	“Other Sentence Type” Analysis	156
4.6.4	Statistical Analysis	158
4.6.4.1	Descriptive statistical testing	158
4.6.4.2	Inferential statistical testing	161
4.7	Conclusion to Methodology	165
Chapter 5: Results		167
5.1	Introduction to Results	168
5.1.1	Layout of the results	168
5.1.2	Focus of research questions	168
5.2	Results of Grammatical Analysis	170
5.2.1	Relevant research questions	170
5.2.2	Background to presentation of grammatical findings	172

5.2.3	Results of grammatical analysis of first sentence element in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions	173
5.2.3.1	Key findings with regard to grammatical features of first sentence element	190
5.2.4	Results of grammatical analysis of all sentence initial elements in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions	191
5.2.4.1	Key findings with regard to grammatical features of all sentence initial elements	195
5.2.5	Results for receptive voice sentences	196
5.2.5.1	Key findings with regard to receptive voice analysis	198
5.2.6	Results for equative type sentences	198
5.2.6.1	Key findings with regard to equative type sentences	200
5.2.7	Results for analysis of nominal group constituents	201
5.2.7.1	Key findings with regard to nominal group constituents	208
5.2.8	Concluding statements on grammatical results	209
5.3	Results of Metafunctional Analysis	211
5.3.1	Relevant research questions	211
5.3.2	Results of metafunctional analysis of first sentence element, in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions	212
5.3.2.1	Key findings with regard to metafunctional features of first sentence element	224
5.3.3	Results of metafunctional analysis of all sentence initial elements in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions	225
5.3.3.1	Key findings with regard to metafunctional features of all sentence initial elements	233
5.3.4	Dual and triple metafunction, and multiple, sentence initial elements	235
5.3.4.1	Key findings with regard to dual, triple and multiple sentence initial elements	239
5.3.5	Concluding statements on metafunctional analysis results	240
5.4	Combining grammatical and metafunctional results	243
5.4.1	Relevant research questions	243
5.4.2	Grammatical structures contributing to metafunctional results, in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions	244
5.4.3	Summary of key findings with regard to the use of different grammatical structures as topical, textual and interpersonal elements, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions	253
5.4.4	Concluding statements on combining grammatical and metafunctional results	254
5.5	Results of “Other Sentence Type” Analysis	255
5.5.1	Relevant research questions	255
5.5.2	Findings for “Other Sentence Type” analysis	255

5.5.3	Summary and concluding statements on “Other Sentence Type” analysis	259
5.6	Statistical analysis of results for significance	261
5.6.1	Relevant research questions	261
5.6.2	Statistical findings comparing timed to untimed writing	262
5.6.2.1	Summary of statistical findings comparing timed to untimed writing	263
5.6.3	Statistical findings comparing grammatical characteristics of sentence initial elements in all locations and in grouped locations	264
5.6.3.1	Summary of statistical findings for grammatical characteristics	266
5.6.4	Statistical findings comparing metafunctional characteristics of sentence initial elements in all locations and in grouped locations	267
5.6.4.1	Summary of statistical findings for metafunctional characteristics	270
5.6.5	Statistical findings for combined grammatical and metafunctional results	271
5.6.6	Concluding statement on the statistical analysis of results	272
5.7	Conclusion to Results	274
Chapter 6: Discussion of Results		276
6.1	Introduction to Discussion of Results	277
6.2	Application of the Linguistic Results to the Educational Context	278
6.2.1	Challenges and difficulties identified in academic writing	278
6.2.2	The potential role of selected SFG concepts in addressing the writing difficulties	280
6.2.3	The interface of academic writing requirements (challenges and difficulties) and the linguistic findings of this research project	282
6.2.3.1	Application of findings related to grammatical and metafunctional results and combined grammatical/metafunctional results	283
6.2.3.2	Application of findings related to receptive voice, equative structures and “other sentence types”	297
6.2.3.3	Application of findings related to nominal group constituents	305
6.2.4	Concluding remarks on application of findings to educational context	308
6.3	Theoretical Relevance of the Results	310
6.3.1	Observations on the theoretical concept of Theme	310
6.3.2	The role of the interpersonal metafunction: unilateral conversations	315
6.3.3	Concluding remarks on theoretical relevance of results	324

6.4	Conclusion to Discussion of Results	325
Chapter 7: Conclusion 326		
7.1	Summation	327
7.2	Evaluation, Limitations and Future Directions	329
	7.2.1 Significance of this study to theory and in application	329
	7.2.2 Limitations of this study and future directions for research	331
7.3	Final Remarks	333
References..... 335		
Appendices A – E 345		
	Appendix A (Participant Information Sheets)	346
	Appendix B (Participant Consent Forms)	351
	Appendix C (Semi-structured interview questions for teachers)	354
	Appendix D Table D: Development of list of common factors in Objectives and Descriptors for senior secondary writing on National Curricula, chapter 2, section 2.2.4 (see also List A, chapter 6)	356
	Appendix E Table E: Sample of analysis of one sentence from each Locational category	363

List of Figures

	Page no.
Chapter 3	
Figure 3.1	Diagram indicating widening breadth of focus facilitated by multiple / marked sentence initial elements in skilled academic writing
	97
Chapter 5	
Figure 5.1	Graph comparing the percentage of sentences with grammatically <i>unmarked</i> first elements, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions
	177
Figure 5.2	Graphs comparing the percentage of each grammatical structure as first sentence element in introduction initial, medial and terminal locations, for timed and untimed conditions
	181
Figure 5.3	Graphs comparing the percentage of each grammatical structure as first sentence element in paragraph initial, medial and terminal locations, for timed and untimed conditions
	182
Figure 5.4	Graphs comparing the percentage of each grammatical structure as first sentence element in conclusion initial, medial and terminal locations, for timed and untimed conditions
	183
Figure 5.5	Bubble graph showing the four locations with the highest percentage of heavy nominal groups and Adjuncts, as first element, for timed and untimed conditions
	186
Figure 5.6	Bubble graph showing the four locations with the highest percentage of subordinate and projecting clauses, as first element, for timed and untimed conditions
	187
Figure 5.7	Bubble graph showing four locations with the highest percentage of Theme predication, thematicised comment and Direct object / Complement, as first element, for timed and untimed conditions
	188
Figure 5.8	Graph comparing the percentage of receptive voice verbs in main clauses, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions
	197
Figure 5.9	Graph comparing the percentage of equative sentence structures, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions
	200
Figure 5.10	Graph comparing percentage of <i>unmarked</i> first sentence elements (topical element, that either is, or is the same as, the grammatical Subject, ideational metafunction) in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions
	216
Figure 5.11	Graph comparing percentage of marked topical elements as first sentence element, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions
	217
Figure 5.12	Graph comparing percentage of textual elements as first sentence element, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions
	217
Figure 5.13	Graph comparing percentage of interpersonal elements as first sentence element, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions
	218

Figure 5.14	Bubble graph showing four locations with highest percentage of marked topical, textual and interpersonal elements in first sentence element, for timed and untimed conditions	220
Figure 5.15	Graph showing difference in number of interpersonal elements from a count of first element only, to a count of all initial elements, in all locations, for both time conditions	228
Figure 5.16	Graph showing the number of topical, textual and interpersonal elements per 100 sentences on average in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions in the untimed writing condition only	231
Figure 5.17	Graph showing the number of topical, textual and interpersonal elements per 100 sentences on average in initial, medial and terminal locations, in the untimed writing condition only	231
Figure 5.18	Graph showing the number of topical, textual and interpersonal elements per 100 sentences in each location, in the untimed writing condition only	232
Figure 5.19	Grammatical structures contributing to total number of topical elements in each location, for timed condition and untimed condition	245
Figure 5.20	Grammatical structures contributing to total number of textual elements in each location, for timed condition and untimed condition	247
Figure 5.21	Grammatical structures contributing to total number of interpersonal elements in each location, for timed condition (above) and untimed condition	250
Figure 5.22	Percentage of sentences using first person plural (We / us) as Subject or Complement and first person singular (I / me) as Subject or Complement, for timed and untimed conditions	258

List of Tables

	Page no.
Chapter 2	
Table 2.1	Objectives and (top level) assessment descriptors for academic writing in senior secondary English in the UK, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, New Zealand and Cambridge International Examinations 20
Table 2.2	Advice on good writing from a selection of guidebooks 41
Table 2.3	Level 6 asTTle Progress Indicators for transactional writing (explanation and argument) 44
Chapter 4	
Table 4.1	Analytical categories for sentences and number in each category 118
Table 4.2	Grammatical categories used in analysing sentence initial elements 119
Table 4.3	Nominal group constituents 124
Table 4.4	Metafunction and Grammatical Analysis 126
Table 4.5	Examples of Adjunct types 129
Table 4.6	Examples of major Adjuncts 130
Table 4.7	Examples of Adjuncts occupying first to fifth position within sentence initial elements, indicating type 131
Table 4.8	Examples of initial subordinate clauses 133
Table 4.9	Examples of projecting clauses and projections 134
Table 4.10	Examples of intensive relational type: identifying and attributive 136
Table 4.11	Examples of circumstantial relational type 137
Table 4.12	Examples of possessive relational type 138
Table 4.13	Subtypes of identifying clauses 139
Table 4.14	Examples of assignment intensive equative structures 140
Table 4.15	Interpretive examples of assignment equative structures 141
Table 4.16	Examples of thematic equatives 142
Table 4.17	Examples of Theme predication 143
Table 4.18	Examples of sentences with thematised comment 145
Table 4.19	Examples of sentences with Complement (or part thereof) in initial position 146
Table 4.20	Criteria for metafunctional categories 148
Table 4.21	Examples of unmarked topical Theme as sentence initial element 149
Table 4.22	Examples of sentence initial topical elements (ideational metafunction) 150
Table 4.23	Examples of sentence initial textual elements 151
Table 4.24	Examples of sentence initial interpersonal elements 152
Table 4.25	Examples of dual metafunction sentence initial elements 154
Table 4.26	Examples of triple metafunction sentence initial elements 155
Table 4.27	Examples of multiple sentence initial elements 156
Table 4.28	Examples of 'other sentence types' in the sample 157
Chapter 5	
Table 5.1	Distinct grammatical elements within sentence initial position 172
Table 5.2	Percentage of sentences beginning with each grammatical structure, in each location, timed and untimed 175

Table 5.2(a)	Location of highest and lowest percentage of different structures as first element, for timed and untimed conditions	178
Table 5.3	Number of each grammatical structure per 100 sentences, within sentence initial position, in each location, timed and untimed	192
Table 5.4	Percentage of sentences using receptive voice verbs in the main clause, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions	196
Table 5.5	Percentage of sentences using the equative structure in each location, for timed and untimed conditions	199
Table 5.6	Nominal group constituents and examples	202
Table 5.7	Nominal group analysis showing number of each constituent type per 100 sentences, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions	203
Table 5.8	Average number per 100 sentences for each constituent type overall, in timed and untimed conditions and for introductions, paragraphs and conclusions	206
Table 5.9	Percentage of unmarked and marked topical, textual and interpersonal first sentence elements, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions	213
Table 5.9(a)	Location of highest and lowest percentages for topical, textual and interpersonal elements, timed and untimed	219
Table 5.10	Overall averages for marked topical, textual and interpersonal first elements and averages for introductions, paragraphs and conclusions, timed and untimed conditions	222
Table 5.11	Averages for marked topical, textual and interpersonal first elements in initial, medial and terminal locations, combined (both time conditions) and for timed and untimed conditions	222
Table 5.12	Number of topical, textual and interpersonal sentence initial elements per 100 sentences, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions	226
Table 5.13	Overall average of each element type and averages for introductions, paragraphs and conclusions	229
Table 5.14	Average number of each element type for initial, medial and terminal locations, for combined time conditions and for timed and untimed conditions	229
Table 5.15	Examples of dual, triple metafunction elements and multiple sentence initial elements	235
Table 5.16	Number of dual and triple metafunction sentence initial elements per 100 sentences in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions, with element type indicated	237
Table 5.17	Number of multiple sentence initial elements per 100 sentences in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions, with element type indicated	238
Table 5.18	Percentage of sentences using the structure or feature indicated, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions	256
Appendices		
Table D (Appendix D)	Development of list of common factors in Objectives and Descriptors for senior secondary writing on National Curricula	357
Table E (Appendix E)	Sample of analysis of one sentence from each locational category	364

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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Abstract

This research is a practical attempt to develop academic writing pedagogy at secondary level in New Zealand because from interviews with teachers, personal experience and literature in the professional journal for teachers of English in New Zealand, *English in Aotearoa*, it appears that this would be a useful enterprise. Literature relating to this, and extending to the related contexts of the UK and Australia has been reviewed. The approach taken is an investigation of top-rated senior secondary writing in subject English, using elements of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The concepts of SFG chiefly drawn upon, namely, Theme and linguistic metafunctions, and their application to the data are presented and explained. This grammatical model was chosen because it allows the interface of grammatical structure and linguistic function to be explored, which in turn permits insight into how the qualities of top-rated writing may be formulated grammatically. This insight may then become part of teaching resources in academic writing by way of both pre- and in-service training material for teachers.

Over 100 top-rated English literature essays (graded by teachers) were collected from students, via their schools, so that the data obtained were authentic. Two samples were collected: timed and untimed writing. Each sentence of each essay was typed into one of nine Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, representing locations within the essay. The nine locations were: three introduction locations: initial sentence, medial sentences, terminal sentence; three paragraph locations (all paragraphs in the body of the essays, not introductions or conclusions): initial sentence, medial sentences, terminal sentence; and, three conclusion locations: initial sentence, medial sentences and terminal sentence. The initial grammatical elements and their metafunction(s) for each sentence were categorised. Percentages in each category for each location were calculated so that individual locations could be compared for grammatical and metafunctional characteristics. Grouped locations were also considered where this seemed felicitous; for instance, introductions were compared to conclusions or medial sentences compared to boundary sentences (initial and terminal). Comparisons were also made between the timed and untimed samples.

The results showed that some grammatical structures could be associated with particular grouped locations and metafunctional characteristics were not independent of location. The research was also able to suggest grammatical means to achieve metafunctional effects that align with descriptors for writing given by examination boards. For example, clear, logical organisation of writing is highly valued by examination boards. This is achieved by means of elements that perform the textual linguistic metafunction. A variety of grammatical elements to perform this function and their most prominent locations were identified. It is intended that the findings may be a highly directed way to help teachers address some of the writing challenges faced by their students at secondary level.

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

It is hardly surprising that what would inspire a conscientious language educator is learning how to be a better one. That goal has motivated and driven this enterprise. Being a firm believer in Vygotsky's tenet "Instruction is one of the principal sources of the schoolchild's concepts and is also a powerful source in directing their evolution; it determines the fate of his mental development" (1962 translation, p. 85) and then encountering Christie's "The development of abstraction in adolescence in subject English" (2002), the possibility emerged of using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as a means not only to identify advancing academic writing, but also to engender it and its attendant cognitive growth.

Over the last decade, the value of academic writing, especially at secondary level, has come under question. First there is the unrelenting Information and Communication Technology (ICT) revolution motivating such speeches and papers as those delivered in 1999 by Kress and McLuhan at an English Conference in New Plymouth, New Zealand, which insinuated that the subject English may have to undergo radical digital transformations in the (then) near future. Then, there are the views of some writing theorists such as Weigle (2002, p. 232) that due to electronic communication developments "well-formed sentences and felicitous word choices" may no longer count, and, sadly, the hopes of some teachers of English that essays might go away entirely for some students (Minos, 2007). Despite all of these, the reality is that in New Zealand, Australia, England, America and very likely several other countries, the writing of academic-style essays remains entrenched as a means of encouraging and assessing students' learning in many subjects.

In the last few years, it has been recognised, albeit mostly implicitly, that "the IT [Information Technology] written form may become something of 'a third medium', neither the traditional written form nor the spoken form" (Ross, 2006, p. 45). This is fortunate for two reasons. Firstly, the iconic nature of many ICT productions could never represent the infinite variety of connections and complexities that language does, "Pictures alone can never clarify ambiguities" (Cambourne, 2004, p. 12), which means that such media cannot foster the same kind of cognitive development that academic writing can. And, secondly, assessing a student's learning via an online forum or even a PowerPoint display is not appropriate in every aspect of every subject.

Currently, then, and as the literature reviewed in chapter 2 confirms, an attempt to investigate and describe skilled academic writing in more linguistic detail may be worthwhile. This research focuses on a small area of linguistic inquiry as a means of developing academic writing pedagogy at secondary level. It has no pretensions of offering a composite picture of all the skills involved in such writing, nor of addressing all of these from a linguistic perspective. It is a grammatical study as far as “grammar is seen as a resource for making meaning ... [that is] ... a network of interrelated *meaningful choices*” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 31, emphasis added) and entails chiefly the use of the SFG concept of linguistic metafunctions (ideational, textual and interpersonal) and a modified form of the SFG construct of (sentence) Theme.

The first metafunction, the ideational, has two components: experiential and logical. The experiential entails the construal of human experience into language by naming participants (people and things), processes (actions and states of being) and circumstances (“sequences related by time, cause and the like”, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 29). The logical component involves language that represents how the experiential components are connected (prepositions and some items of conjunction). A second metafunction, the textual, “relates to the construction of text ... an enabling or facilitating function ... organising the discursive flow and creating cohesion and continuity as it moves along” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 30). The third metafunction, the interpersonal, entails language “enacting our personal and social relationships with the other people around us” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 29). The sentence below, drawn from the data sample, indicates metafunctional values:

(Surely)^{interpersonal} (then)^{textual} (Othello's true self)^{experiential (ideational)} (has been reversed)^{experiential (ideational)} (by)^{logical (ideational)} (his placement)^{experiential (ideational)} (in)^{logical (ideational)} Cyprus^{experiential (ideational)}.

The concept of “Theme” is part of the Theme/Rheme construct in SFG. It is a means of analysing the clause (or sentence) as a “message” (which aligns with its textual metafunction). As defined by Halliday’s SFG, Theme has a positional and two functional aspects, highlighted in the following quotes. Theme is: “the element which serves as *the point of departure* of the message; it is that which *locates and orients* the clause within its context” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 64, emphasis added) and it is “the element the speaker selects for ‘*grounding*’ what he is going on to say” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004,

p. 58, emphasis added). Thus, we could say that Theme is the initial part of a clause or sentence (position) that has to do with “grounding” and “locating / orienting” (functions). Grammatically, “the Theme of a clause ends with the first constituent that is either participant, circumstance or process [experiential metafunction].” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 79). But it is argued in this thesis (in the Methodology and Discussion chapters) that there are often constituents that contribute to the functions of “grounding” or “orienting” a little beyond the first experiential constituent, especially since this study takes as its unit of investigation the sentence, rather than the clause. Therefore, owing to the particular focus of this study, which is to examine the role given to the initial elements of a sentence, by skilled writers in the selected context, the “point of departure” has been expanded to “sentence initial elements”, which are defined as: “all grammatical elements, up to the main verb of the main clause, and, in the case of initial main clauses which constitute projecting clauses, Theme predication and thematicised comment, extending up to (but not including) the verb of the subordinate clause immediately following”.¹

Partly because the Theme or “point of departure” (sentence initial elements) “orients” the sentence, in other words, controls textual direction, and partly because the metafunctions explain what the language is doing (its function) these concepts were chosen as an entry point for the investigation of linguistic characteristics of skilled academic writing at senior secondary level in the subject English.² Although the “meaningful [grammatical] choices” (see Halliday & Matthiessen, above) of skilled writers are probably not conscious, it is assumed that “by analysing the kinds of grammatical choices that help students successfully accomplish assigned tasks, we can identify the choices that are highly valued in academic writing tasks” (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 4). This would be of special benefit to less skilled writers because if we know what those choices are, then “some of them can be brought to consciousness in teaching-learning activities” (Christie & Mission, 2002. p. 10). But, in order to do that, the thematic (or sentence initial) grammatical and metafunctional choices being made by skilled writers first need to be identified, as well as how these combine and how they may differ across different locations within an essay.

To this end, top-rated essays in English literature³ at Year 13 level, in New Zealand, were collected and analysed for the grammatical and metafunctional characteristics of their sentence initial elements. Then, the ways in which the metafunctions were performed by

different grammatical structures were considered and the locations within the essays, where each metafunction and some grammatical structures predominated, were identified.⁴ As the literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 will show, using the SFG concepts of Theme and of different types of linguistic metafunction to investigate academic writing has been undertaken before. What is new in this research is the detailed examination of the interface of grammatical structures and metafunction and the locational analysis. The result of this was insight into how the writers of top-rated essays used these elements to construct the kinds of meaning, reasoning and argument expected in the context in which they were writing.

The educational relevance claimed for all this is that it is argued that when students in schools learn to use language they are learning to make relevant language choices for the construction of important kinds of meaning. The various school subjects or 'disciplines' represent ways of building information and ways of reasoning with that information. In order to understand the different kinds of information and their associated methods of reasoning, *students must learn the language patterns in which these things are encoded.* (Christie & Mission, 2002, p. 10, emphasis added)

This research uses SFG to find some of those patterns used for encoding the information, reasoning and argument valued in subject English that have not been explored previously, for the purpose of making them more explicit to teachers of academic writing and in turn their students. It achieves not only this, but also makes observations on the theoretical concept of Theme and contributes towards the greater body of research using SFG to investigate academic writing by highlighting especially the role of linguistic elements with an interpersonal metafunction.

Chapter 2 reviews the broad educational context to which this study is relevant, and concludes with a specific focus on New Zealand. Chapter 3 traces the development of the concept of Theme and how it fits into SFG, presents a variety of grammatical structures recognised in SFG which are used in the project, and then focuses on research into the interpersonal metafunction in academic writing. It also considers some contributions from the disciplines of Argumentation and Psycholinguistics, where relevant to this study, mainly with regard to their validation of the interest in sentence initial elements. Chapters 4 and 5 present the Methodology and Results of the project, respectively, and chapter 6 is a Discussion of the findings as they relate to the educational context and theoretical background. The conclusion, chapter 7, is both a summation and evaluation of the project.

¹ Specific grammatical structures constituting “elements” are listed and defined in chapter 4, Methodology, section 4.6.1, Table 4.2. The inclusion of the structures mentioned here as initial elements is justified in the same chapter, section 4.3. They are defined in sections 4.6.1.6 (projecting clauses), 4.6.1.8 (Theme predication) and 4.6.1.9 (thematicised comment). In addition, those sentence initial elements considered “marked”, as referred to in the title of this thesis, are defined and explained in chapter 4, section 4.3, also.

² A fuller justification and explanation for these choices is given more appropriately in chapter 4, Methodology, sections 4.2 and 4.3.

³ See chapter 4, section 4.2, General Rationale for the study, for justification of the selection of English literature essays.

⁴ Locations were referred to in the Abstract but see chapter 4, Methodology, section 4.6 and chapter 5, Results, section 5.1.2, for full details on the nine locations and locational groupings.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW (Part I)

2.1 General Introduction to Literature Review

2.2 The Educational Context

2.1 General Introduction to Literature Review

All applied research faces the challenge of reconciling the theory underpinning the research methodology to the context from which the data were obtained. The findings, which are essentially a product of the research methodology, need to be implanted back into the context if they are to be relevant. For this reason, this literature review is in two parts. Literature Review Part I (chapter 2) is an overview of the educational context in New Zealand, with a focus on approaches to teaching academic writing at senior secondary level, and since policies here are (and historically have been) strongly influenced by educational practices in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia, those two countries are also considered. Some American research papers in academic writing are also presented but not the teaching context as this differs from the approach taken in New Zealand, Australia and the UK. Towards the end of chapter 2, the justification for selecting Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) for the study becomes evident. Literature Review Part II (chapter 3) explains and justifies the aspects of SFG used as the methodology for the study, with brief input from Psycholinguistic research and Argumentation Models, which underscore the validity of examining sentence initial elements as cognitive clues within a text. These facilitate the “unilateral conversation” between writer and reader, which is proposed by this thesis as a useful concept in teaching academic writing.

The complicating issue in academic writing pedagogy is whether to approach the skill with a focus on content and ideas, or from a rhetorical, communicative angle, or from the perspective of the formal logic of argumentation and, of course, where grammar fits into the teaching process. Quite plainly, all of these have a role to play. According to Vygotsky (1962), it is verbal development, acquired socially, that allows the cognitive development necessary for logic and argument to be attained. Then, the argument must be communicated in writing, which requires grammatical skill. Moreover, some theorists propose that the actual writing process of producing grammatically accurate, organised text creates a feedback loop, which then further influences cognition (Bereiter, 1980; Emig, 1977). Such integration suggests that a separation of the text (writing and grammar) from the meaning (ideas and logic) is inappropriate. It makes sense, then, that SFG is helpful in developing more effective teaching strategies for academic writing as it enables the investigation of the

interface of grammar and linguistic metafunctions (ideational, textual and interpersonal) which have to do with meaning and logical development of text.

The SFG concepts of Theme, or as more broadly defined in this research, “sentence initial elements”, and metafunction are useful in accounting for the “unilateral conversation” that this thesis argues is evident in successful academic writing. Thus, it is intended that this investigation into the way skilled writers use sentence initial elements will contribute to the development of greater clarity within academic writing instruction by linguistically operationalising some of the writing descriptors given by examination boards both in New Zealand and further afield.

2.2 The Educational Context

2.2.1 Introduction

In their international overview of research into writing at different educational levels over the years 1999 – 2004, Juzwik et al. (2006) found that “middle and high school students are least studied” (p. 451) despite the fact that “arguably [these are] the most critical years of writing development that are undoubtedly consequential for postsecondary and adult writing” (p. 469). A little before that Myhill (2001, p. 13) noted that “there has been relatively little new research in writing in recent years, particularly in the UK. Since ... work on process approaches, the National Writing Project [both of the 1980s] and the work of Australian genre theorists, there has been silence.” And Australian theorists themselves, Christie and Derewianka (2008, p. 2) observed that “much less attention has been paid to writing development from late childhood into adolescence” [than to emergent literacy, up to age 12]. This is beginning to change recently with research being undertaken in the UK, Australia (much by the researchers mentioned themselves) and the US that addresses the writing of later school years, which, of course, means that academic writing will come into focus more strongly rather than the emphasis being on creative and narrative which is the focus of earlier school years. This move is extremely fortunate because it is the opinion of a vast number of theorists and researchers, that not only has the teaching of academic writing been neglected, in comparison to creative writing, but that academic (or argumentative-type) writing stimulates cognitive development of an entirely different nature from creative or narrative because of the linguistic demands it makes (Andrews, 2005; Bereiter, 1980; Bruner, 1986; Christie, 2002a & 2005; Emig, 1977; Fitzgerald and Shanahan, 2000; Limbrick and Ladbrook, 2003; Myhill, 1999, 2001 & 2008; Vygotsky, 1962; Wilkinson, 1990; Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna & Swan, M, 1980). If students do not learn to construct argument, they are deprived of one of the fundamental “two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience ... irreducible to one another” (Bruner, 1986, p. 11).

Although Linguistics is not the only discipline that may be relevant in remedying this situation, Myhill (2008, p. 271) points out that “linguistics has been slow to address itself to

the development of competence in writing”. Indeed, from discussions with secondary teachers of English in New Zealand, Meyer (2008a) has observed that very few have had *any* linguistic training to bring to the teaching of academic writing. Historically, this has been the case since the 70s when Professor Pride of Victoria University in Wellington, responsible for senior secondary English syllabus development at the time, removed grammar and grammatical terminology from schools (Gordon, 2005). As students were no longer to be taught grammar explicitly, it was no longer necessary to teach it to the teachers. In fact, “it was possible to complete a B.A. in English and become a teacher of English in a New Zealand secondary school without having spent a single hour studying the English language” (Gordon, 2005, p. 50).

This changed in the 90s, when the new National Curriculum for English was published. It recognised the need for students, and therefore teachers, to know about language, for the sake of learning, teaching and assessing writing; however, *Exploring Language*, the handbook intended to assist teachers with this was not only “superficially messy” in terms of grammar (Gordon, 2005, p. 62) but the text did not get a high enough profile, with some teachers knowing of its existence, but not its contents (Gordon, 2005). Furthermore, only some teachers were selected for in-service training with the resource and even this was only “enough to show the advantages of learning about grammar, but ... never enough to give the support and tuition needed” (Gordon, 2005, p. 64).

In 2007, it appeared from the paper descriptors and contents available on web pages that Waikato School of Education (University of Waikato, 2007) and Wellington’s College of Education (Victoria University of Wellington, 2007) offered papers which included some Linguistics material, entitled *Academic Literacy* and *English Curriculum Studies 2*, respectively; but most New Zealand teacher training courses did not include detailed linguistic material with regard to teaching academic writing despite the fact that such writing becomes more significant in many subjects, the further a student progresses. Lately, (July 2009) details of the content of papers on teacher training programmes are no longer in the public domain (AUT, 2009; Bethlehem Tertiary Institute, 2009; Massey University, 2009; New Zealand Graduate School of Education, 2009; University of Auckland, 2009; University of Canterbury, 2009; University of Otago, 2009; University of Waikato, 2009; Victoria University of Wellington, 2009). However, it is not usually those currently training

or even recently trained who teach academic writing to senior students. It is senior teachers, many of whom trained some time ago.

On interviewing 23 currently practising, senior secondary teachers of English, it was found that only two had had any training in Linguistics and this had not been part of their teacher-training programme (Meyer, 2008a). At the end of this chapter, approaches to teaching academic writing as described by these 23 teachers, as well as the most accessible resources available to New Zealand teachers and students are presented. This will show that there is a place for the linguistic research undertaken in this project, which investigates and describes in some detail the actual linguistic characteristics of top-rated writing, produced in authentic conditions, in New Zealand, at high school level in subject English. The findings could be made available to both pre-service and in-service teachers to enhance academic writing pedagogy. The possibility is that all teachers whose subjects include academic writing requirements could be given the opportunity to have access to more detailed linguistic information about writing that is graded highly. Thus, this project addresses two slightly overlooked areas in New Zealand: the linguistic characteristics of skilled academic writing at senior secondary level and the possible role of linguistic information in teaching academic writing more effectively.

2.2.2 Writing in the subject English, pre-National Curricula: New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom

Unlike America, in New Zealand, Australia and the UK, students do not generally have a separate “Composition Class” in their curriculum. Academic writing, and any difficulties students may experience with it, is addressed within the contexts of the subjects that require it and additional support may be offered to non-native speakers in a variety of ways. Teaching composition separately from a subject suffers from the same kind of disjunction experienced when teaching formal grammar and spelling separately from writing: skills are not necessarily transferred effectively to the subject or activity in which they are actually needed. On the other hand, teaching academic writing within the subjects that require it often means that it has too little time given to it, as texts and subject content dominate due to time constraint. Since the literature suggests that neither approach has produced the ideal

academic writing pedagogy, it is realistic to say that it must be possible to work to improve it in either condition.

Perhaps amusingly from a 2009 perspective, in 1980, Odell (1980, p. 139) stated:

There is, in fact, a writing crisis. Many of our students are not accustomed to writing at all; most of them do not write as fluently, as perceptively, or even as correctly as we might wish But ... what has been called a writing crisis is, in fact, a teaching crisis. Students do not write well because they are not taught to write.

Odell attributes this to the fact that multiple-choice tests had become widespread and an insufficient amount of writing was required of students and that which they were required to produce received only superficial commentary by teachers. Since this so-called crisis was observed in 1980, presumably, writing had been deteriorating through the previous decade of the 1970s, perhaps even before. Odell writes from an American context but soon after, similar trends were noticed in New Zealand, Australia and Britain.

In the 60s and 70s, subject English seemed to develop an identity crisis as to what its role in society and education should be in all of these nations, and twenty or so years later, the matter had still not been resolved (Andrews, 1990; Davies, 1991; Dixon, 1991; Snow, 1991; Goodwyn, 1992). As commentators point out, the difficulties were partly owing to political intervention in educational matters. In the UK, most teachers rejected the idea that English as a subject served mainly to pass on cultural heritage (Andrews, 1990, p. 3) but were not willing to embrace a purely economics-driven role for the subject as preparing students for a life outside school, using their language skills to compete in the marketplace. The different views would obviously have implications for the purposes and forms of writing to be pursued. In an historical overview, Australian academic, Christie (2004), traces the problems emergent in education in the subject English further back, to “the declining significance of rhetoric”, “expanding systems of mass education [where grammar] was increasingly dissociated from any interest in meaning or in text”, (p. 147) and to after the Second World War when the first significant changes to the teaching of English began for the twentieth century. All of these had an impact on writing.

She identifies a 1967 publication by Dixon, *Growth Through English*, as perhaps the catalyst for a serious and ongoing polarisation among teachers of English with regard to the

role and importance of imparting grammatical information in the process of teaching English. This polarisation was noted by Andrews (1992, p. 2) when he refers to “polemical exchanges [that] seem to occur between educationalists on the one hand and linguists on the other”, ongoing since the 1980s. Christie (2004) identifies the two groups as “non-linguists” (with whom she would include Dixon) and “linguists” who had already begun making use of material from the discipline of Linguistics to enhance language teaching. Naturally, the “linguists” saw a role for Linguistics (with a functional grammatical orientation) in teaching students about language as a phenomenon worth investigating in itself, as well as, how to participate in social processes by means of their language skills and resources. The so-called “non-linguists” or “educationalists” had a more idealist vision, perhaps, of children learning about themselves and the world through language, with teachers as facilitators and encouragers. The “linguists” were possibly too pragmatic for the “non-linguist” “educationalists”, because of their focus on the “adult needs” of students, which was only one of the “five ‘views’ of the role of English in the curriculum” presented in the UK’s Cox Report of 1989; the latter subsequently informed the new UK National Curriculum (Snow, 1991, p. 18). In fact, “adult needs” was the priority placed last in a priorities survey undertaken among English teachers in 1992. The priority placed first was, indeed, “personal growth” (Goodwyn, 1992). With such divergent views among teachers of English themselves, it is hardly surprising then, that the role of writing has been unsettled.

In an attempt to focus on progress in teaching academic writing specifically, as opposed to the subject English in general, Meyer (2004) documents the “last fifteen years’ discussion of academic writing in the senior secondary years” in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, with some Australian contributions, by surveying the professional journals for teachers of English in those countries. It appears that for them all, the problems with writing in particular, became increasingly urgent during the 1980s when the focus changed from product to process in the teaching of writing, in response to what Myhill (2001, p. 13) calls “Donald Graves’ (1983) seminal work on process approaches to writing”.

Instead of being subjected to a once off writing exercise and grading for an essay, which caused the focus to be on the grade, students were being encouraged to approach their written pieces as a means of individual development, in accordance with the *Growth Through English* mentality and the process approach. Personal development through and in

writing was achieved by means of planned writing stages and a process of revision. This came under criticism too, for producing mechanical writing stages instead of a more fluid, fluent and natural approach to writing (Walshe, 1988; Bloodgood, 2002). But whether it was an inability to decide on the role of English, the loss of a rhetorical or grammatical orientation towards teaching English, a personal development through the process approach to writing, or a move to multiple choice tests and restricted writing opportunities, or in fact, all of the above, that had caused writing to become problematic both before and increasingly during, the 1980s, is almost impossible to ascertain, nor is it particularly relevant any longer. What is relevant is that problems with academic writing have continued to plague the teaching profession and solutions have been limited.

In response, US universities started centres for studying writing and developed the National Writing Project and the Writing Across the Curriculum programme. These were investigated by New Zealand educationalist, Rathgen, on a US-New Zealand Education Foundation funded trip in 1988 in response to a 1987 International Education Achievement Report that stated that New Zealand students were weak in formal writing. The intention was to apply some of the developments in New Zealand. The UK developed the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project, which had been intended to assist teachers with implementation of the national curriculum prescriptions (see below). It made use of grammar teaching to examine the social implications of language and had implications for the writing programme by making explicit how different forms of writing have different social functions. In 1991, it was decided not to proceed with official publication although materials were made available both nationally and internationally (LINC, 2007). Instead, The National Literacy Strategy, with its now famous daily “Literacy Hour”, was developed for primary students and pursued into secondary years, although some secondary teachers complained that it limited time available for literature study. In Australia, Halliday’s SFG was already being used to investigate educational issues involving language and produce texts for schools, using the genre approach to writing. This was having a smaller, overflow effect in New Zealand. In the UK, some acknowledged the genre approach with its connections to the social implications of written forms, which was also an integral part of the LINC materials but it was not so well received by all. There was some scathing criticism that the concept lacked definition (if at all definable) and led to a very limited focus on restricted linguistic models (Stratta & Dixon, 1992). Andrews (1992) delivered a

balanced view stating in an editorial that “the value of a genre approach to language is that it enables the teacher and/or student to make distinctions between different types of language situation. ... Its aim is not to classify and fossilise, but to clarify” (Andrews, 1992, p. 1).

Beneficial or not, these initiatives were barely underway, in educational terms, as changes take some time to be fully implemented, let alone have observable results, when political stances in all three countries caused a change in direction. Instigated by media reports and ensuing public opinion, as well as the move towards commodification in all social spheres, educational authorities decided that teachers had to work towards more specifically measurable outcomes in student achievement. What transpired is presented below.

2.2.3 The Development of the National Curricula

A White Paper by Sir Keith Joseph in 1985 recommended a National Curriculum for Britain largely because of an economic downtrend blamed on schools’ poor preparation of students for participation in the workplace. After consultation the government passed the British Education Reform Act in 1988, which established a framework for the National Curriculum. Implementation of its prescriptions began in 1989 for primary schools and moved upwards into secondary during the 1990s. Britain’s National Curriculum consists of a ten-year cross-curricular system of Achievement Objectives, relating to ten years of schooling. The prescriptions include the types of assignments required in each subject at different levels and assessment descriptors. There are four Key Phases based on broad developmental levels, the first two primary and Phases 3 and 4, secondary. The curriculum has been reviewed regularly and currently is being overhauled, starting with the upper Key Phases, to allow for greater flexibility, giving schools the opportunity to develop their own specific curricula, based on the basic requirements of the National Curriculum, which has statutory and non-statutory subjects. The statutory subjects include subjects and skills which authorities term “an entitlement” of every citizen. English is one of these. Each subject includes descriptors of key concepts, key processes, and attainment targets describing eight levels of achievement plus a higher, “exceptional performance” level, and exemplars of students’ work. The eight levels of attainment extend over all four Key Phases

with levels 1 - 4 attained by entry to Key Phase 3. Implementation began in September 2008 with a view to the new system being fully effective by 2010 (House of Commons, Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2009; Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA], 2008 & 2009).

Australian education authorities developed National Goals for Schooling in Australia in 1989, which consisted of eight levels of achievement but failure to bring in a full National Curriculum due to inter-state disagreement on details meant that in 1993, states were given the opportunity to decide the specifics of subjects and descriptors independently. At present, this arrangement still holds but the Australian government is working on a National Curriculum initiative and appointed a National Curriculum Board of representatives from all states and territories who began the enterprise in consultation with the profession and the public, in January 2009. The new curriculum will be based on a system of “national capabilities” and every state and territory will be required to provide students with the opportunity to attain these but the means of doing so will allow some freedom to individual states and professionals. In other words, an Australian National Curriculum is intended to give the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) a more definite framework within which to operate to reduce apparent disparities between states and territories and ensure that Australian students receive instruction that will enable them to participate in the “Knowledge Society” envisaged for Australia. A National Curriculum is also intended to make it easier for employers and the general public to understand what school leavers are capable of, especially in the event of inter-state migration but there is a recognition that too much prescription is likely to be rejected by local authorities and practitioners as this has been the historical pattern in Australia up until this point. Beginning with English, mathematics, the sciences and history, the board plan to have the new system designed and in place by 2011 (National Curriculum Board, 2008; Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEST], 2008).

The same educational concerns of the 1980s resulted in The Education Act of 1989 in New Zealand. This led to the institution of The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in 1990. It undertook a long-term process of systematising the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to include school qualifications and all forms of tertiary education and

training with similar intentions to the current Australian initiative: all education providers and participants are required to follow prescribed criteria and meet standards registered on the NQF so that the public and employers know what skills and knowledge specific qualifications entail. Initially, following the Australian 1989 model, there were eight levels of achievement, covering secondary schooling (levels 1 - 3), tertiary and postgraduate education (4 - 8) but this has been extended to ten levels, which enables different levels of postgraduate education to be specified. The system consists of Unit Standards and Achievement Standards. Unit standards have replaced many trade and sub-degree qualifications without externally set examinations and are attained without discrimination as to degree of competence, as Credit, or in a few cases with limited discrimination as Credit or Merit. Achievement Standards, with external examinations, are taken at school in a variety of subjects and attained as Achievement, Achievement with Merit or Achievement with Excellence. Descriptors for achievement levels are specified in all areas of all subjects and intended to direct teachers in their overall planning, choice of assignments and assessment criteria for students (NZQA, 2008a).

The first outcomes-focused New Zealand schools curriculum implemented in 1992 has been revised with professional and public consultation beginning in 2000, and developed into the 2007 New Zealand schools curriculum (Years 1-13). It identifies five “key competencies”: thinking; using language, symbols and text; managing self; relating to others; participating and contributing. These are developed in eight demarcated “Learning Areas”: English, the arts, health and physical education, languages, mathematics and statistics, science, social sciences and technology (New Zealand Ministry of Education [NZMoE], 2007). (Interestingly, these are very similar to the Learning Areas currently used in Western Australia: see Curriculum Framework, 1998, pp. 111 - 112). As in the statutory subjects in the United Kingdom curriculum, in New Zealand, covering all the Learning Areas is compulsory in years 1 – 10 for all schools but the ways in which they are combined and structured may be unique to each school. As in the United Kingdom and Australia, then, some flexibility has been built into the New Zealand system with regard to the means by which students pursue the prescribed achievement objectives. Over four years, 2002 – 2005, the National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) was introduced at the senior secondary phase in New Zealand, with NCEA Level 1 being sat in Year 11, by 15-16 year olds and Level 3 sat in Year 13, by school leavers.

2.2.4 Current National Curricula Objectives for academic writing and Descriptors for Assessment as “Excellent” or “Grade A” at senior secondary level, in the UK, Australia and New Zealand

Within the broad educational frameworks described above, it is relevant for this research, to examine the assessment criteria and/or writing objectives that pertain to what is considered the highest achievement in academic writing in the subject English in the final phase of secondary schooling. To this end, presented below are:

1. the United Kingdom Key Phase 4 Key processes, range and content for (academic) writing, descriptors for the attainment targets in writing in subject English at Level 8 and for “Exceptional performance”
2. a selection of objectives, outcomes and content for Advanced and Extension Stage 6 English (based on their relevance to writing) and the top performance band (6) descriptors for writing in subject English for New South Wales, Higher School Certificate (HSC)
3. objectives for writing “Beyond Level 6” (6.75) for Victoria, and Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) educational objectives (those involving writing) and VCE critical descriptors for expected qualities in writing to achieve 9 - 10 (the top grade)
4. Year 12 writing objectives in Western Australia and Grade related descriptors (for A grade)
5. the New Zealand NCEA Level 3 writing objectives at Level 8 and descriptors for “Achievement with Excellence” in the writing strand in subject English for:
Response to written texts studied, Shakespearean drama studied; Unfamiliar prose and poetry texts; Oral or Visual texts studied, and, because the above are rather limited, the advice to students in the examination answer booklet is included
6. assessment objectives and descriptors of Grade A writing at A-Level in Literature in English for Cambridge International Examinations (since many schools in New Zealand also offer this to school leavers)

Examining these, it is possible to develop an idea of the quality of academic writing expected of students at senior secondary level in subject English if they are to be awarded a high grade¹.

Table 2.1 Objectives and (top level) assessment descriptors for academic writing in senior secondary English in the UK, (three states of) Australia, New Zealand and Cambridge International Examinations

1. UNITED KINGDOM	
OBJECTIVES	Students should be able to: • write imaginatively, creatively and thoughtfully, producing texts that interest, engage and challenge the reader • write fluently, adapting style and language to a wide range of forms, contexts and purposes • present information and ideas on complex subjects concisely, logically and persuasively • establish and sustain a consistent point of view in fiction and non-fiction writing • use a range of ways to structure whole texts to give clarity and emphasis • use clearly demarcated paragraphs to develop and organise meaning • use a wide variety of sentence structures to support the purpose of the task, giving clarity and emphasis and creating specific effects, and to extend, link and develop ideas • support and strengthen their own views by incorporating different kinds of evidence from a range of sources • select appropriate persuasive techniques and rhetorical devices • draw on their reading and knowledge of linguistic and literary forms when composing their writing • use planning, drafting, editing, proofreading and self-evaluation to revise and craft their writing for maximum impact. Technical accuracy Students should be able to: • use the grammatical features of written standard English accurately to structure a wide range of sentence types for particular purposes and effect • use the full range of punctuation marks accurately and for deliberate effect • spell correctly, including words that do not conform to regular patterns and words that are sometimes confused in use. In their writing students should: • analyse and evaluate subject matter, supporting views and opinions with a range of evidence • develop and sustain ideas and views cogently and persuasively • use formal, impersonal and concise expression to explain or describe information and ideas relevantly and clearly. (QCA, 2008a)

DESCRIPTORS Attainment target: Level 8	Pupils show creativity in the way they select specific features or expressions to convey effects and to interest the reader. Their narrative writing shows control of characters, events and settings, and shows variety in structure. In non-fiction, they express complex ideas clearly and present them coherently, anticipating and addressing a range of different viewpoints. Their use of vocabulary and grammar enables fine distinctions to be made or emphasis achieved. Their writing shows a clear grasp of the use of punctuation and paragraphing. (QCA, 2008a)
Exceptional performance	Pupils' writing is original, has shape and impact, shows control of a range of styles and maintains the interest of the reader throughout. Narratives use structure as well as vocabulary for a range of imaginative effects, and non-fiction is coherent, reasoned and persuasive, conveying complex perspectives. A variety of grammatical constructions and punctuation is used accurately, appropriately and with sensitivity. Paragraphs are well constructed and linked in order to clarify the organisation of the writing as a whole. (QCA, 2008a)

2. AUSTRALIA

2a. New South Wales

OBJECTIVES New South Wales HSC Stage 6 English Advanced and Extension Objectives, Outcomes and Content (selected by relevance to writing)	• A student engages with the details of text in order to respond critically and personally by composing sustained arguments supported by textual evidence and evaluating the responses of others. • A student develops skills in effective communication at different of levels of complexity. • A student adapts and synthesises a range of textual features to explore and communicate information, ideas and values for a variety of purposes, audiences and contexts. They learn this by: 1. identifying and explaining the effects of language forms and features, and structures of texts 2. composing and adapting texts to address different purposes and audiences. 3. refining the clarity of their composition to meet the demands of increasing complexity of thought and expression 4. using and manipulating a range of generic forms in a range of modes and media for different audiences and purposes using stylistic devices appropriate to purpose, audience and context. (Board of Studies, New South Wales [BOS, NSW], 2007a, pp. 45 – 48, 53 – 56 & 85 - 94)
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DESCRIPTORS Performance Band 6	• demonstrates extensive, detailed knowledge, insightful understanding and sophisticated evaluation of the ways meanings are shaped and changed by context, medium of production and the influences that produce different responses to texts. • displays a highly developed ability to describe and analyse a broad range of language forms, features and structures of texts and explain the ways these shape meaning and influence responses in a variety of texts and contexts. • presents a critical, refined personal response showing highly developed skills in interpretation, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of texts and textual detail. • exhibits an ability to compose imaginatively, interpretively and critically with sustained precision, flair, originality and sophistication for a variety of audiences, purposes and contexts in order to explore and communicate ideas, information and values. (BOS, NSW, 2008a)
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2b. Victoria

OBJECTIVES Victorian Essential Learning Standards Beyond Level 6 (6.75) Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)	• creation of sustained and coherent written texts for specified audiences and purposes • choices of structures and forms that show understanding of the relationship between purpose, form, language and audience in a range of print, non-print and multimodal texts • explanations of their decisions about form, purpose, language, audience and context in their own writing • use of appropriate strategies to review and edit texts for fluency and coherence • consistent control of the conventions of spelling, punctuation and syntax Students further develop their capacity to use written language accurately and have control of conventions of writing. They develop communicative capacities adequate for meeting demands of post-school employment, further education and effective participation in society. They further develop their critical understanding and control of language. They communicate ideas, issues and information effectively to a range of audiences in written, visual and oral texts, in print and digital formats. They present and justify points of view coherently, logically and thoughtfully. (Victorian Essential Learning Standards [VELS], 2007; Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [VCAA], 2008a)
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DESCRIPTORS Victoria VCE critical, expected qualities for score 9 - 10	Text response • Demonstrates a close and perceptive reading of the text, exploring complexities of its concepts and construction. • Demonstrates an understanding of the implications of the topic, using an appropriate strategy for dealing with it, and exploring its complexity from the basis of the text. • Develops a cogent, controlled and well-substantiated discussion using precise and expressive language. Writing in Context • Demonstrates an insightful grasp of the implications of the prompt, and perceptively explores its conceptual complexity using an appropriate strategy for dealing with it. • Achieves an assured, cohesively structured piece of writing in an appropriate form, successfully integrating, in a sophisticated way, ideas suggested by the selected text/s. • Makes fluent and effective use of language appropriate to the purpose and audience specified in the task. Language Analysis • Shows a perceptive and sophisticated understanding of a range of ways in which the written and visual language positions readers in the context presented. • Develops a cogent, controlled and well-substantiated analysis using precise and effective language and expression. (VCAA, 2009a)
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2c. Western Australia

OBJECTIVES 4. Western Australia Year 12, writing	• writing in clear, direct language, suited to the subject matter and audience • adhering to conventions of paragraphing, spelling, grammar, quotation, citation, bibliography etc. • showing awareness of the rhetorical nature of writing using stylistic devices appropriately • using appropriate terminology for literary analysis (Curriculum Council Western Australia [CCWA], 2009, p. 34)
DESCRIPTORS A Grade	• structures a logical argument which supports central ideas through sustained use of supportive textual detail and textural reference. • uses a wide vocabulary which includes the descriptive and organising terminology of literary analysis. • uses the accepted conventions of spelling, syntax, punctuation, paragraphing and quotation. (CCWA, 2001, p. 5)

3. NEW ZEALAND

OBJECTIVES Achievement objectives in writing (Level 8)	• write explanations and reports on complex issues, and debate in depth a proposition or point of view, structuring well researched material effectively, in appropriate styles for different audiences, in a range of authentic contexts • using appropriate terminology, describe, discuss, analyse, and evaluate the way language features, structures, and conventions of a wide range of texts suit the topic, purpose, and audience, and apply these understandings • interpret, evaluate, and produce written texts, identifying and discussing their language and literary qualities and relating them to personal, social, cultural, political, and historical contexts • using a variety of resources and types of technology, retrieve, select, interpret, synthesise, and present accurate and coherent information, evaluating the processes used (Te Kete Ipurangi The Online Learning Centre [TKI], 2008)
DESCRIPTORS NCEA, Level 3 Assessment Criteria: Achievement with Excellence	• Develop an integrated and perceptive critical response to specified aspect(s) of written text(s) using supporting evidence. (Response to written texts studied) • Develop an integrated and perceptive critical response to specified aspect(s) of a Shakespearean drama using supporting evidence. (Response to Shakespearean drama studied) • Read and respond critically and with sustained perception to ideas and language features. (Response to unfamiliar prose and poetry texts) • Develop an integrated and perceptive critical response to specified aspect(s) of oral or visual text using supporting evidence. (Response to oral or visual texts studied) (NZQA, 2008b)

Advice to students in Examination Answer Booklet	• Your essay should develop a critical response based on close analysis of your chosen text. • You should support your ideas with relevant evidence. • You will be rewarded for demonstrating perceptive understanding and sustained insight. • Your essay should include: an introduction, clearly stating the focus and scope of the argument a range of appropriate points, supported by accurate and relevant evidence a reasoned conclusion. • Your essay should show accurate use and control of writing conventions. (NZQA, 2009a)
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4. CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL EXAMINATIONS

OBJECTIVES Assessment objectives	• Ability to respond to texts in the three main forms (Prose, Poetry and Drama) of different types and from different cultures. • Understanding of the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings. • Ability to produce informed, independent opinions and judgments on literary texts. • Ability to communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study. • Ability to appreciate and discuss varying opinions of literary works [A Level only]. (Cambridge International Examinations [CIE], 2008, p. 1)
DESCRIPTORS Assessment Level: Band 1	Very good work, showing detailed knowledge of texts, understanding of theme, characterisation, linguistic features and other textual issues, some awareness of literary conventions and contexts, techniques and genre characteristics, and the ability to address this knowledge and understanding with sustained relevance to the issues raised by the questions. Responses to texts will be perceptive, often freshly personal, and may show originality in approach to and treatment of questions. There may be evidence of sensitive awareness of the contexts in which the literary works studied were written and understood. Candidates will express complex literary ideas and arguments with clarity and fluency. Answers will be coherently structured, with logical progression and effectively linked paragraphs. Control of written English will be accomplished, with few errors. In answers to passage-based questions, work will sustain an appropriate balance between critical appreciation of given extracts and consideration of the broader textual issues raised by the questions, and show striking ability to relate part of a text to its whole and vice versa. (CIE, 2008, p. 1)

If examined closely, it may be said, that many of these much pondered-over documents are, in effect, remarkably similar. In addition to some references to literary content knowledge, they can be summarised to around six factors, which pertain to actual writing skills. These six are common to all and cover²:

1. Fluency, organisation and accuracy at the level of grammar, sentences and whole text
2. Logical, consistent and controlled reasoning emerging through writing
3. Sustained complexity of thought informing insightful/perceptive writing
4. Persuasion through evidence and linguistic devices
5. Flexibility and breadth of style to fulfil a variety of writing situations/conditions/audiences
6. Flair, creativity and originality in expression

All of these factors are, to some extent, relatable to the grammatical model this thesis proposes may be useful in improving instruction in academic writing at senior secondary level: Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). This model provides three metafunctions arising in texts: ideational (to do with actual subject content, both abstract and material), textual (to do with discoursal organisation) and interpersonal (to do with the writer's personal opinion and evaluation as conveyed to the reader). Factors 1 and 2 ("organisation" and "control") largely involve the textual metafunction; factor 3 invokes the ideational metafunction ("complexity of thought"); factors 4 and 6 ("persuasion", "flair", "originality") draw on the interpersonal metafunction and the references to "linguistic devices" (factor 4) and "breadth of style to fulfil a variety of writing situations ..." (factor 5) link directly to the recognition and identification of grammatical and metafunctional elements which facilitate writing styles suitable for different situations. (This application will be clarified more fully by chapter 3: the review of aspects of SFG relevant to the project and related research and the Methodology chapter (4), and later developed in the Discussion chapter (6) of this thesis.)

Some examinations boards have one or two unique objectives or descriptors. These interesting descriptors reflect the specific concerns and interests of those informing the examination boards from which they come. They are (underlining added):

1. the objective of “challenging the reader” and writing with “sensitivity” (UK)
2. “manipulating a range of generic forms” (NSW) and “awareness of ...genre characteristics” (CIE)
3. “structuring well researched materials effectively ... in a range of authentic contexts” (NZ)
4. “sensitive awareness of the contexts in which the literary works studied were written and understood” (CIE)
5. “an appropriate balance between critical appreciation ... and consideration of the broader textual issues ... striking ability to relate part of a text to its whole and vice versa” (CIE)

These too, may be addressed through SFG. “Challenging” with “sensitivity” would involve the interpersonal metafunction and the linguistic devices used to modalise assertions. “Manipulating ... generic forms” and “awareness of contexts” involve consideration of linguistic structures commonly used to create specific effects in different writing situations and the styles appropriate to them. The “striking ability to relate part of a text to its whole and vice versa” would require the textual metafunction to create the necessary organisation.

One would expect that with this thorough national regulation and these carefully specified writing objectives and assessment descriptors, students, under their teachers’ capable supervision, would soon begin to develop skilful writing strategies that meet the demands of the descriptors. But the more recent reports, articles and papers by educationalists (linguists and non-linguists) have continued to identify and tried to address problems in writing.

2.2.5 Comments from some recent examiners’ reports from New Zealand, Australia and CIE

Since this project is concerned with academic writing, the comments selected for discussion here involve those with a focus on writing skills rather than comments with regard to lack of knowledge of texts studied. Obviously, positive feedback about those who attained top grades was given in these reports but it is not presented here, as the point of this section is to identify students’ writing difficulties, according to the examiners’ reports. The summary of difficulties below is compiled from: New Zealand examiners’ assessment reports for NCEA Level 3 English, 2006, 2007 & 2008 (NZQA, 2007, 2008c & 2009b); English Advanced New South Wales 2007 & 2008 Notes from the Marking Centre (BOS, NSW,

2007b & 2008b); 2007 & 2008 Assessment Report for English VCE (VCAA, 2008b; 2009b), and, 2006 & 2007 Examiners' Reports for Literature in English CIE (CIE, 2007 & 2008; CIE 2008 Examiners' Report was still not available as of July 2009). Due to the "Terms and conditions of use" for these documents, large extracts could not be quoted (as has been done for the objectives and descriptors documents above); paraphrases and short quotes only are presented. (Examiners' reports were not publicly available from the UK QCA website or the Curriculum Council of Western Australia website at time of writing.)

There were four issues that emerged in all of the reports. These were that some candidates:

1. had difficulty moving beyond simple story re-telling, description of plot or listing of examples from texts
2. presented "inelegantly expressed" ideas (NZQA, 2007, p. 5), "variable language control" , "a quality of expression that compromised the ability to communicate complex ideas" (CIE, 2007, p. 12), even in high-scoring essays, expression was "not without its problems" (VCAA, 2008b, pp. 4 & 5)
3. failed to engage with the question or wording of the topic, failed to relate details to the question or lost sight of the main thrust
4. lacked structural direction in their writing, produced randomly structured writing, could not link ideas to form patterns and "should be aware of the importance of developing a coherently structured piece of prose" (VCAA, 2008b, p. 7)

Other frequently mentioned problems were that a number of students were "not confident [with] ... unpractised topics" (NZQA, 2007, p. 2) and therefore "rehashed answers to the previous year's questions" (CIE, 2007, p. 12) or "referred to previous years' topics" (VCAA, 2008b, p. 1) to suit a "rote learned" (NZQA, 2008c, p. 2) response or wrote about what they wanted the topic to be. This implies that the students did not feel that they could construct an essay on the spot as it were and/or were not confident of their own personal understanding. This is very likely the cause of another common complaint: candidates produced responses and language that were too "generic" (VCAA, 2008b, p. 9) or "over-general" (CIE, 2007, p. 16) with superficial understanding, simplistic observations and a lack of evidence of thought processing and development of ideas. And, they did not demonstrate the "personal engagement" (CIE, 2007, p. 12; BOS, NSW, 2008b, p. 20) and "consistent voice" (NSW, 2008b, p. 5) sought by examiners.

Finally, it was also suggested that some candidates had difficulty with formal writing that used analysis and evaluation in building and sustaining an argument. All of the above imply

that some students not only lacked the skills to attempt to write formally but also lacked an understanding of what academic writing is meant to be and do in this context. They revealed deficits in all three of the linguistic metafunctions designated in SFG: ideational, textual and interpersonal. The ideational limitation is shown in the inability to develop the topic beyond simplistic and generalised ideas, description or listing; the textual problems are suggested by the inability to structure their writing coherently and the interpersonal deficit is revealed in the inability to show personal engagement, a “consistent voice”, or engage with the given question rather than one prepared earlier. Clearly, for these students, the detailed objectives and assessment descriptors had not been particularly useful. Undoubtedly, their teachers had spent many hours assisting them but perhaps, ultimately, teachers did not have the information they needed to identify and address the reasons for such students’ difficulties. It is possible that with more in-depth linguistic information, teachers may be able to analyse and address such students’ limitations more specifically and successfully.

2.2.6 Papers and articles commentating on the teaching of academic writing post-National Curricula implementation

The national curricula were fully established in schools in the 1990s. They have been revised since then and some are under current amendment. In fact, it would seem that curriculum development and improvement is intended to be a continuous enterprise rather than a continual one. Nevertheless, academic writing has still attracted much commentary and discussion by those outside of governmental curriculum development.

In 1991, Sutcliffe reported that in-service teachers studying for a B.Ed in the UK saw the actual practice of teaching writing as “*relatively unproblematic*” and added that teachers responding to an earlier 1990 survey held a similar view. Both groups saw their role as giving opportunities to write, supporting writing and correcting grammar, spelling and punctuation (Sutcliffe, 1991, pp. 52-53). This was the case, despite a 1987/8 Standards in Education Report that had stated that teachers should separate composition from transcription as students were being expected to learn too much at once. Sutcliffe (1991, p. 53) found that “teachers were very concerned about helping young writers but confused

about: ... rationale ... the writing process ... composition and secretarial skills ... diagnostic assessment of children's writing."

According to Sutcliffe (1991), the writing activities based on the well-known work of Bereiter and Scardemalia in the 1980s were seen as a solution to this, where writing was approached as a kind of problem-solving activity. Students had to set goals, formulate ideas, plan, evaluate and revise. This was intended to make students aware of the various processes that were a part of the writing task but also, aware of their own thinking and learning: a kind of metacognitive exercise (Sutcliffe, 1991, pp. 56 - 57). The "writing games", which is what the activities are called in Sutcliffe's article, were meant both to educate teachers about the complex nature of writing, as well as help students learn the writing process.

Some states in Australia had fully adopted the genre approach to the teaching of writing by this time with texts having been produced for that purpose since the 1980s (Christie, 2004). But by the mid-1990s, some of the disadvantages of this approach were beginning to show as documented by Davis (1994) who presents the difficulty students had in moving from secondary to tertiary writing in Queensland (one of the States that had largely adopted the genre approach). He quotes students experiencing this shift:

"At high school they were basically just concerned with style – just as long as you stuck relatively to the topic ... But here ... they're more concerned with what you're saying than how you're saying it" (p. 6)

"In high school you never backed any points up, you just sort of made rash statements... Here you're allowed to make conclusions and sort of analyse things"
(p. 7)

[At university it is] "like learning to express myself more clearly and concisely so that other people can get it straight away" (p. 8)

This leads Davis to conclude that there is a:

divergence between theoretical bases, particularly in relation to genre, [which] leads to contradiction between high school and university versions of the "literate subject" [and] At least for some students, training for competence in specific genres can be intellectually limiting ... (pp. 5-7)

Nonetheless, in 1994, Ewen Holstein from New Zealand was sent over to visit both Britain and Australia to investigate the practices undertaken there so that decisions could be made and resource support offered to teachers in New Zealand with regard to the new 1994 *English in the New Zealand Curriculum* document. Three *Language Toolkits* were decided upon which would be a teaching resource for the curriculum. It was thought best to take an “eclectic approach” to grammar, using both traditional grammar, since teachers had some knowledge of that, and Hallidayan SFG and in terms of writing, it was decided to “make best use of the advantages of what is commonly described as the ‘genre approach’ while avoiding the pitfalls of genre teaching and learning becoming sterile and like a strait-jacket” (Holstein, 1994, p.11).

But it was Womack (1993) in the UK who was brave enough to ask the question which really needed to be answered before any decisions with regard to writing should have been made: “What are essays³ for?” It is only if we know the reason for undertaking academic writing that better strategies for teaching may be investigated. While this remains unclear, both teachers and students have to try for a little of everything in the hope that somehow students will learn what they need to write well. For instance, a “cultural heritage” approach would require a focus on research and wide reading of the literary canon. A “personal growth” focus implies that more creatively individualistic responses would be appropriate while the “adult needs” or “market-driven” approach suggests that genre and the practice of specific forms would be more helpful. So what is it to be?

In a concise yet highly informative paper, Womack (1993) traces the origin of the essay form in English education. He points out that it is the one remaining survivor of many forms that belong to classical education in rhetoric. It is a deliberate conflation of a formal piece termed a “theme”, which treated of a proposition in seven parts and the less formal “essay”, which meant “a sketch, a rough draft, a purely personal monologue making no claims to authority ... a marginal space” (p. 43). Knowing this, it is easy to see how the modern day essay occupies the middle ground of having to be somewhat formal in structure and yet to convey the personal views of the writer. It has:

neither a clear practical function (like a report ...) nor ... the conventions of literature (like a poem or a novel). Its judicious amateurism ... is the voice, not of someone who is *doing* anything, but precisely of a spectator. It is the practice of education as opposed to training; (p. 44)

Quite clearly, the current academic writing form required at senior secondary level in subject English, is not intended to be a practice run for writing reports (or any other functional piece) in later life nor is it training in set literary forms, as if students were all intending to become poets or novelists. It is, partly, a demand made upon students so that the examiner can have “a transparent window through which we can see the quality of the candidate’s mind” (Womack, 1993, p. 46). It is a genre in itself, purposely complex and requiring that the writer take up the challenge of “represent[ing] the unmediated presence of the thinking mind itself” (p. 47). By this means, the examiner can decide if the candidate has developed his/her thinking sufficiently to achieve the grade. “Writing well ... is the one thing needful for getting certificated in the subject; it’s both the necessary and the sufficient condition” (p. 42). This may sound officious and constraining, even old-fashioned, however, the fact is that “What [students] learn is arguably more powerfully determined *by what they write* than what we teach.” (p. 42, emphasis added), says Womack and “When I want to understand something which is verbally or conceptually difficult, I write about it, and what I write pretty much resembles an essay. In other words, I do believe, in practice, ... that the essay is ‘the real thing’” (p. 48).

The point of learning to write formally has another part, though: a more forward-looking one. In order to represent the thinking mind, the writer must have control not only of those thoughts and concepts that Womack writes about, but also of the language used to convey them. Once that control is achieved, then the student may use it to adapt more easily to other types of writing as the need arises in future contexts. The point of the exercise is the metacognitive awareness of what one is doing with one’s thinking and writing.

What is formal academic writing at senior secondary level for, then? It is to engender the two inseparable abilities of controlling one’s thinking and controlling one’s language. Somehow, educationalists appear to have always known this even if the knowledge has been implicit in some cases. The following selection of papers indicates that they have, some with knowledge of Linguistics and some without and therefore unwittingly, focused on linguistic features as they convey meaning, but, since most teachers in classrooms do not have a background in Linguistics, attempts to improve student writing have not been as effective as they might have been had all teachers had some knowledge of the concepts found in SFG.

Wyatt-Smith (1997), working in Queensland (who clearly does have knowledge of SFG) questions the use of this theory in the teaching of English and especially with regard to the development of writing evaluation “criteria that are tied systematically to key grammatical features” (p. 13) which represent specific patterns of choices in grammar identified by SFG in specific genres. It is not an outright rejection of SFG but rightly, she feels that such an approach would have to be justified to teachers in terms of its benefit to students (and teachers) and that teachers would need to know much more about it if they were to be held accountable for teaching from this basis. She also questions the lack of holistic teaching and assessment such a process would involve and in a later paper (Wyatt-Smith & Murphy, 2002, pp. 7-8) proposes a framework that addresses this. The framework comprises four aspects of writing: (1) discourse (social elements of writing: beliefs, values and attitudes); (2) genre (“purpose-related ... ways of using language to participate in a culture”); (3) register (field or contextual relevance of subject matter, tenor or writer-reader interpersonal roles, and mode or chosen medium for communicating) (4) textual features (grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, paragraphing and paralinguistic features). While this embraces some aspects of SFG and genre theory, it still has mainly the traditional terminology of writing instruction, suggested in aspect (4) textual features. The application of SFG to writing instruction proposed in this thesis has a more definite application of grammatical concepts from the theory.

In Melbourne, Victoria, in 1998, Christie and Soosai had begun introducing teachers to SFG in a very direct way through workshops and programmes whereby teachers who attended would take the knowledge they gained back to their classrooms and begin teaching students about the relevance of grammatical choices to different types of texts. It was an attempt to facilitate the teaching of KAL (Knowledge About Language) which was intended to be a part of the English curriculum and yet rarely seemed, to Christie, to arise at all due to the holistic approach to English taken in most classrooms: “teaching about language was ... largely conceived as an addendum to another enterprise, which was by implication held to be far more important” (Christie, 2004, p. 146). The programme continued until 2000 and two texts were produced in the process, *Language and Meaning 1* and 2. These were intended for Intermediate students and in fact, blended traditional and functional grammar types and included traditional compositional structures (sentence and paragraph structure) in a consideration of text types or genres, without a specific focus on

genre. But the project appears to have arrested at this level and not reached the senior secondary phase. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but it would seem that teachers themselves were not convinced that they needed the depth of grammatical detail they were being offered in order to teach writing effectively. Although such a response may be unfortunate, it is understandable with the heavy demands made on teachers' time. As an alternative, this thesis suggests that using the knowledge gained from SFG analyses of student writing, it is possible that some linguistic concepts and structures may be introduced into the teaching of academic writing, without an adoption of functional grammar as part of the syllabus for secondary teachers or students.

Myhill (2001a), in the UK, recognised the need (like Odell in 1980) for more deliberate teaching of writing and like Christie believed that linguistic knowledge could be instrumental in this. Also similarly to Christie (2004), she sees a polarisation among teachers of English: "the liberal left-wing creativity camp versus the conservative right-wing grammar group" (Myhill, 2001a, p. 16). The former are too worried about stifling the creativity of students while the latter tend to over-value grammatical knowledge rather than grammatical understanding. She sees this as unhelpful and offers instead an insightful comment:

At the heart of good writing are the dualities of creating and crafting. Perhaps in the past we have tended to view these as opposites ... The effective teaching of writing sets writing in a context, values the voice of the child *and* teaches explicitly how he or she can craft language creatively for effect, through looking closely at the linguistic features of texts. (pp. 15-16)

Although not explicitly mentioned, the thinking behind her views implies that functional grammar would be very useful, even essential, in the teaching of writing. She says:

By looking more analytically at what children write, we are better able to help them know how to write more powerfully. We are familiar, and comfortable, with the analysis of literary devices in texts, but we are often strangely silent about the *linguistic characteristics of texts* ... we need to develop and extend our ability as teachers to recognise and articulate the features of good writing, and to make connections for students between linguistic features and the effects they have on readers. (p. 16, emphasis added)

teachers might ... highlight the many ways in which sentence structure can support meaning ... varying the syntactical structure or the sentence length helps to shape the creative ideas. Writers have choices but they may have limited awareness of those choices and the effects they create. (p. 17)

After a decade of the new National Curriculum in the UK, Stannard (Director of the National Literacy Strategy at the time) stated that “the most significant area for improvement remains the teaching of writing” (Stannard, 1999, p. 57). In the same year the booklet *Improving Writing at key stages 3 and 4* was published, based on the findings of the “Technical Accuracy Project” which had been underway since 1996. Linguistic information is highlighted in this publication. Subsequently, writing was again addressed for Key Stages 3 and 4 both in text and electronic form by publications and an online forum for the QCA, which attempted to direct attention to grammatical and technical issues in writing (see Myhill, 2001b & 2004). More recently, Myhill (2008, p. 271) reports on an “ESRC-funded research study, which included a detailed linguistic analysis of a large corpus of writing from secondary English classrooms”. This particular paper reports on a study which uses more traditional grammatical analyses (sentence length, numbers of different types of clauses) but also, again not explicitly, uses some grammatical analyses that hint of an SFG approach, such as sentence openings and the idea that some syntactical patterning may achieve certain metafunctional effects. The research was undertaken on early secondary years (8 – 10) and looks at writing development and the differences in linguistic characteristics between strong and weaker writers, concluding that “developmental trajectories in mastery of the sentence in older school writers are more closely aligned to writing competence than to age.” (p. 284) She indicates that at this lower secondary stage, “weak writers may need focused support in managing complex ideas in long sentences” (p. 286) but that “able writers ... might benefit from discussion about the different ways to start a sentence” (pp. 286 – 287). This suggests that selecting sentence initial elements as an important factor to investigate for senior secondary writers, as this thesis does, is focussing in a key area.⁴

More than a decade after Davis (1994), discussed above, questioned the Australian approach in Queensland, Woods and Homer (2005) from the University of South Australia reported on the need to have open discussion about the transition from high school to tertiary writing, suggesting that the approach being taken there was clearly not effective either. When AATE (Australian Association for Teachers of English) released their Statements of Belief in 2007, Minos (2007) in Victoria, reflected on Statement 4, which reads: “We are committed to developing powerfully literate citizens who are able to ... participate effectively as citizens in the twenty-first century” (Minos, 2007, p. 28; Philp

[President AATE], 2007, p. 13) by questioning whether academic writing was a means of achieving this at all. She sympathised with her students' inability to see the relevance of it to their lives and their resultant lack of interest in engaging with the task. This sounds distinctly like the "reluctant writers" in New Zealand described by Hawthorne (2002).

Despite the new curricula and recommended frameworks, methodologies and resources, in 2002, Hawthorne reported on "reluctant writers" in New Zealand schools, who struggled with "language deficiencies", "lack of confidence in their own writing", "an inability ... to find a way in to the process" and "poor self-efficacy for writing tasks" (p. 40). The next year, it was reported by Limbrick and Ladbrook (2003, p. 30) that "specific literacy needs in mainstream classes" in New Zealand included "clarity of sentence structure" and "factual (transactional) writing". And in 2008(a), Meyer quotes Year 13 teachers of English in New Zealand who placed "creating and sustaining a clearly structured argument" and "stylistic issues" involving "language structures" on a list of the five most problematic areas in academic writing.

Hawthorne (2002, p. 39) mentions that American educationalists too, were experiencing "disengagement" among secondary students "from many of their academic tasks". And Smagorinsky, Augustine and O'Donnell-Allen (2007) report a case study of two high school senior students working on researched essays, experiencing difficulty with "phrasing the information in a formal or academic voice" (p. 64). What was of interest to them about this situation, was that the students were "members of the middle class" whom they expected to take more easily to formal writing:

Researchers ... have argued that school tasks privilege middle-class students whose home social languages map better onto school discourse than do those of students from linguistic or cultural minority groups ... we argue that even middle-class students lack the fluency with authoritative discourse assumed in many accounts of learners' experiences in school. (p. 70)

Christie had also noted in her research into writing across several different subjects, in secondary schools, that "many students write what their teachers often recognise is language closer to speech, and they regularly receive poor grades because of this." (2002b, p. 69)

It seems then that difficulties with academic writing are not specific to a nation or class or cultural group, or confined to a single subject, but need addressing in very many educational contexts. The Americans came late to the functional grammar turn and SFG was not received well by some Linguistic theorists, but, ironically, it has been championed there in some educational quarters. In 2004, Schleppegrell published *The Language of Schooling*, revitalising Christie's concept of "the hidden curriculum", which states that "teachers' expectations for language use are seldom explicit" and "language patterns themselves are seldom the focus of attention" yet these "present challenges to students" (p. 2). This means that "the challenges of schooling [are] as much linguistic as cognitive" and students need to acquire "a greater understanding of the linguistic resources available to construe new knowledge" (p. 17). However,

even teachers who would like to draw students' attention to different text types and the linguistic choices that make one text more powerful than another lack tools for incorporating such an emphasis into classroom instruction. (p. 17)

Her claims did not remain theoretical. Projects to experiment with SFG in the classroom were undertaken. Achugar, Schleppegrell and Oteíza (2007) document three professional development projects, which have used SFG and the resultant successes. They contend that "becoming conscious of the power of different ways of using language, requires conscious attention by teachers, and requires that teachers develop their own knowledge about language" (p. 11).

Some of the responses of teachers to the projects reveal the benefits of using SFG with students:

Teachers agreed that the focus on language, rather than taking students' attention away from "content", supports critical thinking ... as students are quick to recognize the linguistic "clues" in the text and the meanings they contribute. (p. 15)

"Once you give them the power to see and understand the patterns, they get them."
(p. 15)

these linguistic tools and strategies [were] ... "beneficial ... to help students go deeper. I truly see the analysis of linguistics/word choices as a vehicle for helping students produce better writing ..." (p. 18)

Teachers were introduced to the functional linguistics constructs *theme* and *rheme* and further elaboration of theme into *textual, interpersonal and experiential [ideational] themes* as different options available to the writer to use as points of departure for each clause as a text evolves. This was especially productive for helping teachers analyze the organization of meaning in students' writing ... Such analysis allowed students to work on topic development and clarification of ideas, structure their texts more clearly, and develop a metalinguistic awareness of grammar and textual resources. (p. 20)

These results sound as if they could go some way towards addressing the problems with academic writing that emerged in the examiners' reports presented earlier, especially the comments such as "go deeper", "topic development", "structure texts more clearly" and "recognize the linguistic 'clues' in the text and the meanings they contribute".

In Australia, SFG is also being put to use. Christie and Dreyfus (2007) used the concept of Theme⁵ to improve the textual organisation of a student's writing by mapping his text onto a genre template. His increased understanding of how to control discourse structure, after the exercise, led to an improvement in his writing grade (p. 245). Another study by Christie (2008), although it is based on narrative writing, points out that many of the linguistic characteristics identified through SFG as important for advanced literacy, are also relevant for other genres (for instance, complex nominal group structures, prepositional phrases and adverbial groups and the variation in choices of Theme). Significantly, she argues, "We need communities of teachers who understand the linguistic resources in which mature control of literacy is expressed" (p. 195) and in fact that it is "a failure of the secondary school" that "many children don't achieve adequate levels of literacy of the kind they need to be effective participants in the modern world." (p. 195)

When it was suggested to New Zealand teachers that SFG could offer some language structures to teach that would help students achieve variety, clarity and some rhetorical effects in their writing, they commented (Meyer, 2008a, p. 54):

"We don't have this information and we need it"

"I would find that kind of basic stuff helpful"

"We are constantly looking for ways of doing exactly that"

"Students often have the knowledge; they need the structures"

From this, it could be argued that there is some possibility of using elements of SFG to make the language of academic writing more accessible and transparent to students who appear to be becoming increasingly distanced from it, even those who, historically, teachers have expected to take to it more easily. It may help to assuage the disengagement experienced by many and achieve the “empowerment” the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (UK) recommend in their website advice to teachers “to provide technical linguistic terminology for the empowerment of students, to introduce methods of linguistic and textual analysis, thus ensuring that they develop fluency and cogency as writers” (QCA, 2007).

2.2.7 Academic writing in the New Zealand context

The above coverage of academic writing pedagogy at secondary level has gone both far back, historically, and wide, encompassing several nations. What remains in this chapter is to re-contextualise this study to New Zealand, where the data has been collected and the findings may be implemented to develop current academic writing teaching practices in the senior years of high school. To this end, those teaching practices are reviewed, as well as the most accessible resources available to teachers and students in New Zealand.

First, the common strategies used to teach academic writing in the Auckland schools where teachers were interviewed by the researcher, is presented, plus advice given in some writing guides which are easily available to students through their local libraries and bookshops and online. Thereafter, advice and assistance for teachers available online or on CD-ROM through asTTle⁶ (see TKI, 2009a) and in the Ministry of Education text for subject English, *Exploring Language* (1996, see TKI, 2009b), as well as in a more recent teaching resource book available to New Zealand teachers *Teaching Literacy Now* (Sloan, 2002) are presented. This brief, broad look at input and readily available resources is undertaken so that it becomes clear how the inclusion of SFG concepts identified in this research may fill a gap in the strategies described and thereby assist teachers and students.

From a series of interviews undertaken in late 2006 and 2007, Meyer (2008a) gives details of how 23 senior secondary teachers of English go about training their students in academic writing. What is given here is a summary of that information. Broadly, the process starts in earnest in Year 9 or 10. Students are given small literary research projects and simple formulaic approaches to writing an essay, using acronyms, such as SEE (Statement – Example – Evidence), or PEE (Point – Evidence – Explanation). In later years these are developed to demand slightly more of the writers. SEE becomes SEER (Statement – Example – Evidence – Relevance) or LEER (Lead – Evidence and Examples - Explanation and Elaboration – Relevance) (Meyer, 2008a, p. 50).

Students are encouraged to plan extensively by using graphic organisers: spider diagrams, mind maps and hierarchically arranged plans. To help them with translating their ideas into actual texts, academic vocabulary is given in the form of lists or classroom posters. These include textual devices to facilitate smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs. They may be quite specific, for example:

“linking to show cause and effect”: “therefore”, “resulting from this”, “consequently”;

“linking to extend a point”: “furthermore”, “in the same way”, “likewise” (p. 52).

Students are frequently taught to use topic sentences to start new paragraphs to ensure that they cover all the ideas they have thought of in their brainstorming session and do not become fixated on a specific point.

To add to this, many teachers use models of writing from previous years that have been graded as “Excellent” (NCEA) or “A” (other examination boards). Some are available on the NCEA website and, in fact, there are exemplars of essays graded at the different levels so that teachers and students may examine these in detail and distil the features that are distinctive of the merit-worthy writing. Along similar lines, teachers work through the examination descriptors for different grades and identify the key descriptors for excellence or A-grade writing.

There are teachers who write essays collectively in the classroom with students contributing ideas and ways of expressing them. These essays may then be critiqued without any one student being singled out for criticism. The intention is that students will

grasp the organisational practices required in producing a text and the revision that happens in the process of writing and will pursue similar practices individually when crafting their own texts.

Lastly, students are taught to read examination questions very carefully, noting the “instructional words”. Some are given definitions of these words, such as:

“Analyse”: “break up into parts”, “investigate”;

“Evaluate”: “assess and give your judgement about the merit, importance, or usefulness of something. Back up your judgement with evidence”;

“To what extent”: “consider how far something is true, or contributes to a final outcome ...” (Meyer, 2008a, p. 51).

Clearly, teachers go to great lengths to guide students along the road of academic writing and the guidance they give is mostly helpful; however; it could be enhanced by greater knowledge about academic writing, the kind of knowledge drawn upon in the design of this research project and the findings it has produced, some of which may actually contradict what may be taught by intuition.

In addition to help from teachers, students occasionally seek advice on academic writing from guidebooks available in their local libraries or bookshops. (These, or similar resources, of course, are likely to be available to students in the UK and Australia also.) Belying the character of these types of texts, they seem to stress brevity. (Three of the four considered here were between 200 and 300 pages, the fourth being *A Short Handbook and Style Sheet* of 58 pages.) Simplicity and sequential logic also feature and there is a call for the writer’s “voice” to emerge. Below are some of the words of advice quoted from such texts:

Table 2.2 Advice on good writing from a selection of guidebooks

Quality	Advice
Brevity	“Fondness for material you’ve gone to a lot of trouble to gather isn’t a good enough reason to include it if it’s not central” (Zinnesser, 2001, p. 273) “avoid all heavy, unreadable prose. Make your writing as light as your subject allows” (Greetham, 2001, p. 204) “Do not insult the reader with gratuitous information or irrelevant description.” (Pinney, 1977, p. 15)

Quality	Advice
Simplicity	“But the secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components.” (Zinnesser, 2001, p. 7) “There should be ... no unnecessary words or phrases that obscure the meaning of the sentence.” (Greetham, 2001, p. 215) “The trick to writing well? Write simply; write clearly. Eschew flowery language.” (Edgerton, 2003, p. 192) “Sentences loaded with words and phrases that do not have any genuine expressive function but are merely fillers or flourishes are properly said to be wordy.” (Pinney, 1977, p. 14)
Logical organisation	“All your clear and pleasing sentences will fall apart if you don’t keep remembering that writing is linear and sequential, that logic is the glue that holds it together” (Zinnesser, 2001, p. 265) “A carefully planned structure, which is clear, logical and relevant to the question, lends support to an argument” (Greetham, 2001, p. 141) “Paragraphs should also be coherent; that is they should organise related material into an appropriate order, appropriateness again being determined by the writer’s purpose.” (Pinney, 1977, p. 18)
‘Voice’	“Therefore, a fundamental rule is: be yourself” (Zinnesser, 2001, p. 20) “If you can identify more than 5 percent of the language you used as being essentially foreign to your normal usage, then you’re not employing your own personality on the page.” (Edgerton, 2003, p. 191) <i>“But you should never write anything that you cannot at least imagine yourself saying.”</i> (Pinney, 1977, p. 2)

In some of these books, there are suggestions of words, phrases or parts of speech that may help achieve the qualities advocated or that should be avoided but mostly, they are descriptive of so-called good writing and give some models, which is not more help really than the descriptors and models given to students by examination boards. In fact, the length of most of these texts makes them less useful to students than what is provided by the examination boards; the exception, of course, is the more concise, older text by Pinney (1977).

Naturally, it would be foolish to assume that classroom instruction and the local libraries and bookshops would be the only recourse to help with academic writing, for students anywhere in the world. Perhaps the first resource they would call on (after classroom instruction) would be the Internet. It would be an impossible task to review all available help on the Internet. A Google search for “academic writing skills” brings up 13 000 000

hits in 0.12 seconds and that is surely being added to as this is being written. The array of information available is overwhelming, and students may be understandably bewildered even regarding where to start.

Nevertheless, an examination of the first ten sites that popped up shows that few have more than descriptive information of a nature less specific to the actual task than that given in the examination descriptors or in the other resources presented in this coverage. Of these ten, there was only one with extensive details on possible sentence constructions to perform certain language functions. They were not the SFG functions but notions such as “describing” (various kinds), “reporting”, “defining”, “comparing”, “expressing degrees of certainty”, “taking a stance”, “arguing and discussing” (UEfAP, 2009). These are called “rhetorical functions” on this site and a considerable number of sentence starters are given. Under the heading “Arguing and discussing”, which is most relevant to this research project, there is a variety of structures such as: projection “Some people maintain that...”, “It can be argued that ...”; thematicised comment, “It is clear that ...”; the identifying equative structure, “One advantage of X is ...” and, naturally, the ubiquitous Adjunct as textual discourse marker, “Secondly, ...”, “Furthermore ...” (UEfAP, 2009). However, the structures are not grammatically or metafunctionally named, categorised or explained, which would make it more difficult for students to generate new ones of their own, nor are there any suggestions about where it is most appropriate to use them within an essay or within a paragraph.

Much of the information available on nine⁷ of these top ten sites (and certainly many more) could be of great value to student writers but without some direction in the selection and use of it by a teacher, it would probably take considerable time to assimilate the directions and suggestions to the point where they had some positive impact on the student’s writing. And, of course, there would be no feedback, such as students receive from their teachers.

On that point, of the essential role of a teacher, we turn now to what is available to teachers aside from the national curricular objectives and descriptors of examination board requirements for top grades, reviewed above. In New Zealand, there are the asTTle matrices of Progress Indicators in literacy and numeracy. These do not as yet extend to Level 8 (Year 13, which is where the level of writing examined in this project lies) but they

do extend to Level 6 (Year 11) and this gives an idea of the lines along which they are developing. The Indicators describe surface and deep features for different types of writing. For academic argumentative / persuasive writing, surface features include spelling, punctuation, grammar and layout for lower levels but by Level 6, these appear to be reduced to one general rubric, which is likely to remain for Level 8 once the package is fully developed (perhaps with the exclusion of the word “intrusive”):

Uses the conventions of grammar (e.g. correctly formed sentences, consistent tense and pronouns, subject-verb agreement, correct propositions), spelling, and punctuation with few intrusive errors. (TKI, 2009a)

The deep features include the rubrics in Table 2.3, below:

Table 2.3 Level 6 asTTle Progress Indicators for transactional writing (explanation and argument) (TKI, 2009a)

Audience / Purpose	Impact Explains a selected phenomenon, occurrence, or process/conveys an opinion, clearly and logically. Targets the audience through appropriate stylistic and language selections, including analogy, similes or metaphors.
Content / Ideas	Ideas (<i>Explanation</i>) Supports writing with a range of pertinent, detailed, precisely expressed ideas, data, and reasons and links these logically. May link a main explanation to a subsidiary one. (<i>Argument</i>) Clearly and consistently maintains a point of view. Supports main ideas convincingly through elaboration, evidence, and links to other ideas.
Structure / Organisation	Structure Structures material appropriately for form and purpose. Links main and supporting ideas within and between paragraphs, using a range of connectives. Conveys a sense of coherence. Sentences Uses a variety of structures with some impact.
Language	Vocabulary Selects appropriate vocabulary with increasing control. Language features (<i>Explanation</i>) Uses a wide range of explanatory language features with control and intent. Might include consistent use of verbs to denote specific actions; the present tense; comparisons; and the passive voice. Note that past or future tenses may be appropriate, depending on the nature of the explanation. (<i>Argument</i>) Uses a wide range of persuasive language features with control and intent. Might include emotive words, rhetorical questions, imperatives, repetition, the passive voice pronouns denoting inclusion, data and researched evidence.

Key words in the descriptors (such as “analogy”, “connectives”, “passive voice” and “imperatives”) link to a glossary of definitions and examples and each category has a link

to exemplars of student writing which are tagged with labels directing attention to instances of some of the features. This is not notably different from what is given by the examination boards in the form of descriptors and models, apart from the glossary and perhaps more detail in the exemplars.

Exploring Language (1996), is the text with which teachers of English are expected to familiarise themselves before and during their service in New Zealand schools. It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that Gordon (2005) comments that most teachers know of its existence but not much of its contents. Nevertheless, an outline of those contents is pertinent to this study. Available as hardcopy or online, this resource notes in its introductory phase that New Zealand students are expected to write in Standard English, as a requirement of the curriculum. It then goes on to address various aspects of the English curriculum, reading, speaking and writing, as well as visual language. Only the writing component will be considered here and all quotes will be taken from the online version, *Exploring-Language* (TKI, 2009b).

On the onscreen page entitled “Speaking and Writing”⁸, the resource explains the difference between spoken and written language and indicates that the two have different communicative purposes and contexts. It points out that written language is mostly pre-planned and structured and uses language structures which allow a more condensed presentation of information. Specific characteristics of written language given are that it has as its basic unit the sentence, it avoids repetition, is less likely to be chronological in organisation and differs in syntax, mainly by being more complex and compact.

Next, but on the same page, the resource explains the different communicative context of speaking and writing, identifying the fact that writers

do not usually write with their readers present, cannot assume a shared environment with their readers, have to create and sustain their own belief in what they are doing, use graphic cues such as punctuation, paragraphing, bold print, and diagrams to help make their meaning clear, take time to think and rethink as they write, often revising and editing their work, know that the reader will not see any rephrasings and alterations they make to the text in the process of writing (“Speaking and Writing”)

These pointers are given with a view to reminding the teacher that written language is difficult to acquire since it is less natural than spoken and that good models of written language should be presented to help students gain familiarity with the skill. The specific challenges mentioned are: the need “to ‘think through’ what they want to write”, understanding that “writing is more explicit than speech”, acquiring the “new syntactic, semantic, and textual unit - the sentence – [which] requires planning, and a decision ... as to which is to be the main clause and what will be its supporting structures” (“Speaking and Writing”).

The next onscreen page of *Exploring Language*, “Written Language”, begins by quoting one of the objectives from the New Zealand curriculum: “Students should, using appropriate terminology, describe, discuss, analyse, and evaluate the way language features, structures, and conventions of a wide range of texts suit the topic, purpose, and audience, and apply these understandings”. This page points out that:

We vary our written language, in numerous ways, yet we often take for granted our implicit understanding of how we achieve these variations ... When teachers understand how and why texts vary, they can guide students towards making explicit their unconscious, implicit understandings of how texts work. (“Written Language”)

With this understanding then, teachers should be able to help students attain the curriculum objective stated initially.

Presumably, with a view to making explicit the unconscious understandings, the next onscreen page on writing, entitled “Pattern of Text: Genre”, defines “genre” as “the range of processes (such as explaining, instructing, recounting, describing, arguing, and narrating) used to produce texts that reflect the purpose and the intended audience” and states that “texts are structured in different ways to achieve their purposes”. The purposes of a recount and of argument are described. Since the latter is relevant to this study, it is important to note that the resource states:

The purpose of an argument ... is to persuade the reader to agree with a point of view. Arguments often begin with a statement of position and some background information about the issue. There is usually a logical sequence to an argument, with points being raised and supported by evidence and finishing with a summing up of the position. The resulting text can often be linguistically identified by the use of emotive words, verbs in the timeless present tense, and connectives associated with reason such as so, because of, first, therefore (“Pattern of Text: Genre”)

Concluding the discussion of structure, is the following statement:

The structure of texts is so much part of the whole that it usually goes unnoticed by the reader. Sometimes this inherent internal structure is referred to as "global coherence", and it is only when it breaks down, or changes in some way, that we become aware of the structure itself. ("Pattern of Text: Genre")

Thereafter the page, "Pattern of Text: Genre" concludes with brief explanatory comments on the SFG concepts of "field" ("the writer's relationship to the subject matter"), "tenor" ("the relationship between the writer and the reader"), "mode" ("the means of communication") and "register" ("specialised vocabulary associated with specific situations").

The next onscreen page, "Looking at Written Language: A Framework", opens by saying, "Teachers do not normally have any reason to classify their students' writing in terms of text structure and the language features used, and we are not suggesting they should do so." Nevertheless, it goes on to present "a useful framework for looking at students' writing in terms of their choices (both conscious and unconscious) about the structure and language that suit their purpose and intended meaning." The "framework" is actually a list of questions with advice at the end:

What is the writer's goal?

How is the text structured? What specific language features show this structure?

What is the text about?

What kinds of action or process are there?

Are the verbs concerned with:

actions?

ways of behaving?

emotions?

processes of communication?

describing things?

What tenses are used?

What is the relationship between the reader and writer? How is this relationship shown?

Does the text read as a coherent whole? Has the writer achieved coherence by:

linking clauses and sentences?

vocabulary?

references forwards and backwards?

When thinking about these questions, consider the range of choices that writers can make about the presentation and layout, the structuring of the text, the language features, and the vocabulary. ("Looking at Written Language: A Framework")

Following the framework are two pieces of writing, a personal letter by a younger student

and a science report by a senior student, to which the teachers can apply the framework. Very brief comment on how each text meets some genre requirements is given.

The final onscreen page with a writing connection (although it includes reading) is entitled, “Ideas for the Classroom: Exploring Written Language”. As is suggested by the title, it gives possible activities for reading and writing such as exploring features of various text types (reading) and then using them as models to produce a similar text type (writing). At the bottom of this page there is a list, the purpose of which is not stated but presumably telling the teacher that some terminology is required for the activities and it (indirectly) refers to the Grammar Toolbox for definitions of the terms needed.

This Grammar Toolbox is not intended for students according to its introductory page:

This section provides a guide to understanding the internal structure of sentences and words, and the related terminology. The main purpose is to provide a useful reference for teachers. It is important that they have a secure knowledge of the structure of English so that they can understand and describe the language they and their students use and develop. This book has not been written for use as a classroom text but rather for teachers to draw on as they need. (“The Grammar Toolbox: Introduction”)

Although it claims to be eclectic in its approach to grammatical information, the toolbox draws largely on traditional grammar and states that this is because teachers are most likely to be familiar with traditional grammatical terms. There are pages on the traditional word classes, sentence types, phrases and so on. Under the page called “Sentence”, there is a comment on “hedging” under the heading of “Tag questions” and their purpose. Unfortunately, this reference does not refer to any other pages on word classes that may be involved in hedging. Use of SFG concepts is limited and explanation is not especially detailed.

Overall, *Exploring Language* is perfectly readable and undoubtedly useful as a guide for teachers but its somewhat limited treatment of academic writing, in particular, is unlikely to provide teachers with the “secure knowledge of the structure of English so that they can understand and describe the language they and their students use and develop” (“The Grammar Toolbox: Introduction”). And, if Gordon (2005) is correct that teachers of English are not expected to have a full knowledge of it before they begin teaching and many are entirely unfamiliar with its contents, then it is likely that any benefit it may have

had would be lost. It is telling that in the interview study conducted and reported by Meyer (2008a), none of the teachers mentioned using this text.

Finally, to round off what is broadly available, the most substantial resource found in the Kohia Teachers' Centre Bookshop on the University of Auckland teacher training campus is considered. Peter Sloan's advice on teaching English in the New Zealand context is (not freely) available in a manual called *Teaching Literacy Now Book 2: Improving Language Teaching in Intermediate and Secondary schools* (2002). His strategies for teaching academic writing are outlined below, concentrating on senior secondary level.

"General Factors in the Teaching of Reading and Writing in Upper Grades" are given in chapter 3 with a "coherent, small set of strategies that will suit most subject area teaching situations" (Sloan, 2002, p. 19). Those relevant to secondary writing would be:

The provision of a wide range of acceptable Text-types and related forms as a guide to effective writing in both composition and layout dimensions

Opportunities for writing all the Text-types and the major sub-forms or text, which relate to each type

Writing opportunities related to real life goals and needs

Constant evaluation and periodic recording of each student's ... writing performances

(Sloan, 2002, p. 19)

Modelling is then more fully discussed with nothing more added than what has already been mentioned in current teacher practices reported above, except the suggestion that teachers could produce a piece of writing for the class to improve upon.

Sloan's next chapter describes six "Text-types", namely, Recount, Report, Procedure, Explanation, Exposition and Narrative. "Related forms" or sub-types for each Text-type are listed as examples (Sloan, 2002, p. 26). Unfortunately the terminology used here does not accord with that in *Exploring Language*; for instance, Sloan's "Text-types" are given names some of which more or less align with what *Exploring Language* describes as a range of "genre[s]" and lists in process form: explaining, instructing, recounting, describing, arguing, and narrating (*Exploring Language*, "Patterns of Text: Genre"). In Sloan's taxonomy, "genre" refers to instances of the "related forms" mentioned above:

Text-type: Narrative; Related form: novel; Genre: Romance fiction. This would set up some confusion for teachers as to which they should use in the classroom since students are not particularly tolerant of such wide ambiguities.

Nonetheless, Sloan's resource sets out definitions, frameworks and annotated examples of each "Text-type". The type most relevant to the data in this project would be "Exposition". The definition given is: "The critical evaluation of ideas involving argument, persuasion, debate and reactions" (Sloan, 2002, p. 32). The framework is described as having five parts:

1. title (A brief statement of the main argument)
2. introductory thesis (Overview of the topic. Statement of the basic position taken with regard to the topic)
3. the set of arguments and or assertions (Arguments for and against supported by logic, data and/or examples)
4. conclusions (Evaluation, restatement of the position and redefining of the argument/s)
5. the summary comment (Concise commentary or reflection)

(Sloan, 2002, p. 32)

This is a somewhat unusual structure with an idiosyncratic initial section called "Title" before the introduction and separate sections for conclusion(s) and summary comment, which would also be rather unusual. In comparison to the broader sections of introduction, body and conclusion, commonly used in academic writing, Sloan's recommended structure may risk repetition at both ends of the piece of writing.

Two exemplar texts are provided with annotations for this Text-type. Included are discourse structure commentary such as "Generally the 'for' argument is advanced first and the *against* argument last" (Sloan, 2002, p. 32) and some examples of "*causal* discourse markers such as *because, if, therefore, consequently, moreover* ... as paragraph leads", suggesting that the latter are specific to the Text-type (Sloan, 2002, p. 32).

This chapter concludes with a section on discourse markers, which are grouped into five categories with examples: conjunctive, additive, temporal, adversative and causal. Their role as providing cohesion in text is stressed and means of cohesion are listed as: "anaphora", "cataphora", "exophora", [sustained] "metaphor", "substitution" and

“pronominal” (Sloan, 2002, pp. 35 -36).

Sloan’s resource is undeniably thorough although perhaps a little recursive as he later returns to the teaching strategy of modelling and outlines a four-phase model, which may be applied step by step in teaching. He also gives detailed recommendations for consultations, conferencing and feedback on completed texts. There is a list of 18 “Writing Problems”, which will not be reproduced here as they could be grouped and reduced to the same list of criticisms of students’ writing from the examiner’s reports (see section 2.2.5, above).

With some effort, of course, students and teachers could look further afield than the resources outlined in this section and find advice that is more descriptively detailed but they are unlikely to make excursions into SFG or be able to apply the theoretical concepts it entails to their or their students’ writing in the highly specific way that this is undertaken in this project. In other words, this research taps into linguistic theoretical material not readily accessible to teachers or students and applies it to the context where it is relevant and may address some clearly identified problems.

2.2.8 Conclusion to Literature Review Part I

Concern over an apparent decline in students’ ability to produce academic writing to an acceptable standard has existed for some time, at least since the 1980s, according to research presented in this chapter. Attempts to address this by educators in subject English have been both philosophical and pragmatic, but neither their efforts, nor the educational authorities’ moves to regulate educational curricula at national levels, have fully addressed difficulties related to student writing. This is evident from the fact that articles and books such as those discussed in this chapter still appear regularly on this issue and recent examiners’ reports highlight some serious flaws. It has been suggested in this chapter that SFG may have a role to play in giving teachers more insight into academic writing and how to teach it more effectively. The next chapter of this Literature Review (Part II, chapter 3) outlines aspects of SFG theoretical concepts that may be useful for this purpose, thus

bridging the gap between theory and practice and responding to a current pedagogical limitation.

¹ As a reasonable sample and to avoid overstatement, only three of the eight states/territories in Australia have been included. They cover the central eastern, west and central southern areas.

² See Appendix D for details on how these six factors have been distilled from the given Tables.

³ By “essays” Womack is referring to the academic writing commonly undertaken in subject English at senior secondary level.

⁴ Christie and Derewianka (2008) describe Myhill’s research in this project as “one of the most significant investigations to date into development into adolescent writing” (p. 3). They particularly point out that Myhill “finds that more successful writers pay greater attention to the shaping of the text ... displaying flexibility in creating the opening of sentences in various ways to guide the reader.” (p. 3). See Meyer (2005a, 2007, 2008b & 2008c) for research into the key role of Theme and sentence initial elements in senior secondary argumentative writing.

⁵ This was an implementation of a developed form of Theme Progression, consisting of Macro-Theme and Hyper-Themes. See chapter 3, section 3.2.5 for a fuller coverage.

⁶ asTTle refers to “Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning”, which are being developed by the University of Auckland Services for New Zealand teachers to assess literacy and numeracy.

⁷ One of the ten sites merely provided book reviews on writing topics and styles and links to where one could purchase the texts.

⁸ Since the online version has no page numbers, the location of the paraphrased information and quotations are identified by the onscreen “page title”. These are easy to locate by navigation titles on the left hand margin of the document when on screen.

Chapter 3: LITERATURE REVIEW (Part II)

3.1 Introduction to Literature Review Part II: Theoretical Background

3.2 The concept of Theme in Systemic Functional Grammar and related research

3.3 Summation and General Conclusion to Literature Review

3.4 Research-based Rationale for the Study

3.5 Research Questions

3.1 Introduction to Literature Review Part II: Theoretical Background

The previous chapter established that there is a need in secondary education to address the area of academic writing and that Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) may offer some useful ways of doing this. This chapter of the Literature Review presents the concept of Theme in SFG, highlighting its development and critical application in research papers relevant to this study of the role of sentence initial elements in academic writing; the concept of linguistic metafunctions is also presented, within this context (3.2). There is brief coverage of some models of Argumentation and some Psycholinguistic studies that help validate the focus on sentence initial elements from a rhetorical perspective and a cognitive processing perspective, respectively. Following these are a summation and the conclusion to the Literature Review (3.3). The rationale for the study based on previous research (3.4) and the research questions (3.5) complete this chapter in anticipation of the Methodology, chapter 4.

3.2 The concept of Theme in Systemic Functional Grammar and related research

3.2.1 Introduction

Systemic Functional Grammar was chosen as the theoretical model most appropriate for this study because it allows an integrated investigation of writing at grammatical, metafunctional and discoursal levels. This means that the conceptual basis of this thesis, “unilateral conversations”, may be explored in terms of how that conversation is achieved grammatically, how it manifests in the linguistic metafunctions (ideational, textual and interpersonal) and how it is distributed in the texts under consideration. These three levels of investigation lead directly to the analytical method described in the next chapter. Since a theoretical model is only as successful as the insights it permits into the phenomenon to which it is applied, other researchers’ criticisms and applications of various aspects of SFG that are relevant to this research are presented. The SFG concept of Theme (on which the unit, “sentence initial elements” is based) is one such aspect. Two others are: the effect of there being more than one metafunction within a single sentence initial element and the variety of ways in which the interpersonal metafunction is realised in academic writing. The tangentially connected disciplines of Argumentation and Psycholinguistics broaden the basis for the validity of regarding sentence initial elements as an important factor in conducting the proposed unilateral conversation, but SFG remains the central source of theoretical input.

3.2.2 The development of the concept of Theme

The idea that the order of words in a sentence and especially those placed initially, is significant, is an ancient one, evident in the art of rhetoric practised almost as far back as written history records. In a less distant century, French-speaking academic Weil, in 1844, used the term “point of departure” to divide the initial part of a sentence from “another part of the discourse which forms the statement” in a paper comparing word order in ancient and modern languages (cited in Alvin, 2000b, p.2). But, even here, at its relatively modern inception, “point of departure” is ambiguously and somewhat vaguely qualified as “an

initial *notion* ... which forms, *as it were*, the ground upon which the two intelligences meet” (Weil, cited in Alvin, 2000b, p. 2, emphases added).¹

This was not helped by the fact that in the early twentieth century Czechoslovakian academic, Mathesius described a linguistic concept of “theme” using three (Czechoslovakian) words (translated by Daneš, 1964 and cited in Firbas, 1987, p. 140) meaning: “point of departure”, “theme” and “basis, foundation” but Mathesius also “explicitly stated that the point of departure was not necessarily always identical with the theme” (Firbas, 1987, p. 140). Since then, the term, “theme”, has caused considerable controversy in the field of Functional Linguistics, largely owing to its use in both a metaphorical and literal sense and because it is almost invariably, yet rather indeterminately, qualified as, “the point of departure of a sentence”.

Mathesius’s 1939 definition of “theme” (translated by Firbas in 1964) as “that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation and from which the speaker proceeds” (cited in Fries, 1981, p. 1) potentially comprises two elements, which may be kept separate or merged, in Fries’ opinion. These elements are: (1) “information which is known” and (2) “information from which the speaker proceeds” (Fries, 1981, p. 1).

Merging these implies a more metaphorical interpretation of the word “proceeds” and focuses on the fact that the “theme” comprises the elements of the sentence which express how the sentence relates to the information already available in the context, either verbally or non-verbally (Fries, 1981, p.1). It includes the “feature of what the sentence is to be ‘about’, or ‘aboutness’ for short”, which Firbas regards as “an essential function of the theme” (Firbas, 1987, p. 140). It appears that the Prague School of Linguistics (in which Firbas worked) preferred this metaphorical sense of “point of departure”. It led to “theme” (which may or may not be initial) being defined as the element of a sentence which has the least “communicative dynamism” or “contributes least to the further development of the communication within the sentence” (Firbas, 1987, p. 138). Since this school’s Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP) approach has as its purpose, the study of the “flow of communication” with respect to verbal and situational contexts and communicative purpose, (or what has come to be called “information management”, Lovejoy, 1998, p. 4)

the definition of “theme” used is obviously felicitous, as is their concept of “given” and “new” information, adopted in SFG. “Given” information is associated with, but not limited to, initial (thematic) placement and “new” information is associated with rhematic placement (later in the sentence).

Alternative to the merging approach, Fries (1981, p. 2) writes of the “separating approach” espoused by systemic linguistics such as Halliday’s. Here the two elements of Mathesius’s definition are kept distinct. “Theme”² could be seen as a more literal interpretation of “point of departure” because it is regarded as a structural element, which is literally “the point of departure of the clause as message” (that is, the first element) while Rheme consists of the remaining elements. Conceptually separate from this is the more metaphorical idea of “the point of departure” represented in the same way as FSP as “given” in a “given and new” relationship where “given” is dissociated from Theme but it is recognised that the two may, and often do, coincide.

In comparison, theorists such as Huddleston (1988) (cited in Martin, 1992)³ have used the concept of “Topic” as in the complementary pair “Topic and Comment” (where the former refers to what the sentence is “about”, the “theme”, and the “Comment” refers to what is being said about it). This terminology may spring from nineteenth century psychology theorist William James’ statement, “there is some *topic or subject* about which all the members of the thought revolve” (Chafe, 1994, p. 120, emphasis added) but it definitely echoes the idea of “aboutness” (Firbas, 1987, p. 1) entailed in Mathesius’s concept of “theme” in FSP. However, “The label ‘Topic’ usually refers to only one particular kind of sentence Theme, ‘the topical Theme’” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 65) which limits its usefulness to an ideational level of analysis. (The ideational metafunction translates into the topical Theme in Theme / Rheme analysis; see more later). Evidently, the concept needed further development if it were to be useful in application. It is Halliday’s version of Theme that is pursued from this point as it entails both a literal and metaphorical interpretation of the concept as well as metafunctional analysis beyond the ideational / topical Theme.

3.2.3 Early criticism of Theme

In 1985, when Halliday defined Theme as “the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned” (cited in Fries, 1995, p. 318), practitioners argued that this definition was not felicitous. It made for a very elegant analysis if the Theme and the grammatical Subject of the sentence were always identical and always occurred initially in the sentence, as is the typical or unmarked case in declarative sentences. However, commonly, other elements occur initially, such as: Adjuncts or clauses having a purely textual or an interpersonal role, or elements that substitute for the topic or have subordinate topical roles (different from the Subject), for example, structures such as “empty it”⁴, cleft-type sentences⁵, existential-There sentences⁶ and initial circumstantial clauses. When this is the case, some researchers (Alvin, 2000a; Downing, 1991; Huddleston, 1988 & 1991 [see Martin, 1992]; S. Thompson, 1985) suggested that it became inaccurate to describe the Theme as being “the point of departure” in a metaphorical or a literal sense, since, firstly, the Theme would exclude the grammatical Subject of the sentence and was, therefore, not really what the sentence was “concerned with” and secondly, in some cases the Theme may actually stand in predicate position, (the label “Theme predication” is used for cleft sentences in SFG), meaning that it was not initial at all. This led Downing (1991) to propose that “Theme and topic are ... distinct categories” (p. 119) and after her analysis of the different realisations of Theme, to conclude that:

the point of departure, realised by the initial element, is not necessarily “what the clause is about”. In fact, unless the point of departure is a participant or a process, it almost certainly is not what the message is about. (p. 141)

Although some researchers, including those mentioned above, see both of these problems as theoretical flaws, reference to the further developments in SFG shows that they may be answered. The most recently revised version of SFG theory defines Theme as “the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 64). Clearly, the idea of what the clause is “about” or “concerned with” has diminished and the role of the Theme as an organisational or orientation element has been augmented. Below is a fuller explanation of the current concept of Theme and how it fits into the theory of SFG.

3.2.4 The current concept of Theme within SFG

Halliday's SFG takes as its unit of analysis the clause, which makes it essentially a grammatical form of analysis, but it is recognised that grammar is only one level of analysis and language can equally be considered at finer levels such as phonology and morphology and larger, discoursal levels. The latter are in some respects, such as textual cohesion and coherence, open to grammatical analyses but contention exists as to the extent of the validity of this (Paltridge, 1994). In addition, SFG recognises that the clause is essentially a grammaticalisation of the metafunctions of language, which, as mentioned, are formulated as textual, ideational (experiential and logical) and interpersonal. The clause, therefore, is analysed in three ways, which represent these metafunctions, respectively: (1) as a "message" (textual metafunction), (2) as a "representation" of experience (ideational metafunction, which translates into the topical Theme when the clause is analysed as a message), and (3) as an "exchange" between interlocutors (interpersonal metafunction).

As an "exchange", the clause is partitioned into Mood (consisting of the subject, a nominal group; and a finite operator, a verbal group) and Residue (the remainder of the sentence). The Mood determines the interpersonal function of the clause because the grammatical Subject is responsible for giving the exchange validity as a communicative entity. Internal thought is considered, in Vygotskian theory (1962), to be subjectless, that is, we think in predicates as there is no need to identify to ourselves the subject about which we are thinking, but, to give a sentence validity as an exchange between interlocutors, a Subject must necessarily be identified. The verbal group locates the exchange in time (tense) and determines its likelihood, desirability and polarity (negative or affirmative), from the speaker's / writer's perspective, by means of modal operators which function as part of the verbal group (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 115 - 117).

As a "representation", the clause consists of Participants (consisting of nominal group/s), material, mental or relational Processes (a verbal group) and, optionally, Circumstances (adverbial group/s). It is easy to see how this represents the ideational (experiential and logical) metafunction of a clause as it reflects the way in which humans organise their experience of the world as consisting of people or things, who or which cause events to

happen, in certain circumstances. This metafunction entails the system of transitivity which represents the “flow of events” inherent in living and represented in language – hence the clause as a “representation” of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 170, 174 - 175). (This becomes the topical Theme in text analysis, as the topic represents the ideational / experiential matter of the clause.)

Finally, and key to this research since it focuses on sentence initial elements, when considered as a “message”, the clause is structurally partitioned into Theme and Rheme. This partitioning may equally be applied to individual clauses as to whole sentences. In both cases:

The Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context. The remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed, is called in Prague school terminology the Rheme; In ... English ... the *theme is indicated by position in the clause* We signal that an item has thematic status *by putting it first*.

(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 64, emphases added)

This (third edition) revised definition of Theme excludes the descriptions, “that with which the clause is concerned” and “what is being talked about”, which appeared in the first (1985) edition of Halliday’s *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (cited in Fries, 1995b, p. 318) and had caused contention regarding the definition and role of sentence Theme.

According to SFG, in the unmarked scenario, in declarative sentences, the Theme consists of the natural grammatical Subject of the sentence, performing the ideational linguistic metafunction (an experiential element called topical Theme). However, it is possible for grammatical elements to precede the topical Theme/Subject in written text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 79). Such elements may supply additional experiential information (thus producing a marked topical Theme); they may arrange information explicitly by connecting parts of the text, such as other sentences, paragraphs or even arguments so as to make the writer’s reasoning easy to follow (a textual Theme) and finally they may enact the function of writer-reader interaction (an interpersonal Theme), such as writer evaluation of information (Bloor & Bloor, 2004, pp. 283 - 289). Thus, Theme may include elements that perform two or even all three metafunctions. When a clause or sentence includes textual or interpersonal elements before the topical Theme element, it is called a “multiple Theme” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 81).

Furthermore, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 73) have described, grammatically, the cline of most to least likely sentence initial elements in sentences in the declarative mood. Most likely to occupy Theme position is a nominal group, which would be the natural grammatical Subject if the Theme were unmarked. Second most likely to occupy thematic position is an Adjunct, “a grammatically non-obligatory element without the potential to be Subject” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 123). Adjuncts may be circumstantial elements (ideational/experiential metafunction, marked topical Theme) although they frequently perform both textual and interpersonal metafunctions (and are called, respectively, Conjunctive and Modal Adjuncts in SFG). Least likely is the initial placement of the object or Complement, directly in front of the Subject.

With the revised SFG theoretical concepts more fully established and explicated here, it is helpful at this point to return to the practitioners’ criticisms mentioned earlier in order to ascertain whether they are still valid. The first criticism was that the concept of Theme is only elegant (and useful) if the sentence begins with the grammatical Subject, otherwise, the initial element cannot be said to be what the clause or sentence is about. The second was that many sentences begin with grammatical items that cause the Subject not to be in initial position and in fact may cause it to occupy predicate position in the initial clause of a bi-clausal construction.

3.2.5 Some answers to the criticism of Theme

To answer the second criticism first, in bi-clausal cleft sentences, the initial “It” or the “What” - nominalisation, in pseudo-clefts (called thematic equatives, in SFG) is taken to be the Theme of the clause because they are, as pronouns or nominal elements, representative of the topical Theme. As the grammatical Subject of the clause, they constitute an ideational element (necessary, by definition, to “ground” the clause, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 58 & 66), and, they occur initially. In terms of the whole sentence, the entire main clause of an “it-cleft” or the whole nominal group in the case of “What” pseudo-clefts, is thematic. For example:

Agnate:	<u>Theme:</u>	<u>The cleft sentence is problematic.</u>
<i>Cleft (Theme predication)</i>	<u>Clausal Theme:</u>	<i>It is the cleft sentence that is problematic.</i> <i>“It” (pronominal substitute for notional subject: “the cleft sentence”)</i>
	<u>Sentence Theme:</u>	<i>“It is the cleft sentence...” (notional subject predicated in initial clause of superordinate sentence)</i>
<i>Pseudo-cleft (Thematic equative)</i>	<u>Clausal Theme:</u>	What is problematic is the cleft sentence. “What is problematic...” elements grouped to form a nominalisation which is
	<u>Sentence Theme:</u>	“What is problematic...” a single clause constituent, equated with the Rheme

At both levels, clefts and pseudo-clefts serve a function of identification (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 69) and can be seen as a thematic resource that emphasises strongly a topical element of the sentence that may not have received weighting had the resource not been used. The point is to place the desired topical Theme in a prominent position as predicate of an initial clause or creating a nominalisation, using “what”, to represent the notional topic which itself then appears at the end of the clause. In terms of the information structure of the clause, this position makes it “new” (which is usually rhematic) instead of “given” (the usual content of Theme) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 89; Lovejoy, 1998). Hence, it is a marked grammatical option. The same would be true for the There-cleft sentence construction identified and analysed by Collins (1992) and Alvin (2000a). Therefore, as sentence initial elements, cleft-type constructions are specifically selected or marked.

Another element that would fall under the second objection is the (non-cleft) existential-There construction that has a textual thematic function of presentation but is considered unmarked topical Theme in SFG because it conflates with the grammatical Subject and “it serves to indicate the feature of existence” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 257). Alvin (2000a) challenges this position and suggests a different means for determining the Theme/Rheme boundary, which is based upon partitioning the sentence at the point at

which possible rhematic development is restricted in terms of what the Rheme could acceptably contain. This is called the Acceptable Message Development principle (AMD) and seems reasonable, as, if the Theme is to orient the reader as to the accurate interpretation of the remainder of the sentence, it must contain some element that restricts possible rhematic content. “There” alone or even “There + be-verb” does not restrict rhematic content and thereby guide the reader in any sense. Alvin’s analysis is an insightful one, however, it is not applied in the present research as once the AMD boundary is reached by Alvin’s analysis, the elements of the sentence considered thematic may extend beyond the main verb. According to the definition of “sentence initial elements” used in this project, these could not be counted as initial. Thus, in accordance with SFG, Existential-There was considered unmarked as it is the obligatory initial element of existential sentences.

A similar situation exists for “empty it”. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) regard the sentence initial “It” as Theme since it represents the notional subject. On Kaltenböck’s (2003) *Types of it - scale of gradience*, “it” always refers to something, be that unspecified as in prop-it (e.g. “It’s late.”), extra-posed as in “anticipatory it” (e.g. “It is surprising that he went.”) or deferred as in “referring it” (e.g. “It’s a surprise, his going.”). However, following Thompson (2004), in the case of the extra-posed clause, it is more useful to consider the whole initial clause as thematic as “it set[s] up the starting point of the message the speaker’s own comment” (p. 152). These are examples of “thematicised comment” in SFG and perform the interpersonal metafunction. Hewings and Hewings (2001) report on the use of these in academic writing by published writers in sciences, social sciences and humanities and by student writers in Geography. They identify four rhetorical motivations for their use: hedging, attitude marking, emphasis and attribution. For example (Hewings & Hewings, 2001, p. 202):

- ‘It seems improbable that ...’ (hedging)
- ‘It is of interest to note that ...’ (attitudinal)
- ‘It is safe to assume that ...’ (emphatic)
- ‘It has been proposed that ...’ (attribution)

The study found disciplinary variation; for instance, published writers in History and Astrophysics/Astronomy make greater use of extra-posed it-clauses as hedges than writers

in Environmental Sciences and Business Administration, probably due to the former working with data that requires more interpretation. Student writers make greater use of them to impersonalise their claims than published writers, probably due to lower academic status. First year students used more extra-posed *it*-clauses as hedges while third year students used them more as emphatics, suggesting their increasing confidence as participants in the academic world. Notwithstanding these differences, the *it*-clause as thematicised comment (or impersonal projection) is clearly a useful structure in academic writing for the purpose of “reader-writer negotiation” (Hewings & Hewings, 2001, p. 213). It allows claims to be attributed to someone else, impersonalised or evaluated, before they are even stated. For this reason, this structure was categorised as having an interpersonal function in the present research. As in the case of cleft sentences, the entire initial clause is a thematic element at sentence level but instead of emphasising the topic of the proposition, the clause serves to orient the reader with regard to the writer’s stance towards the proposition that follows.

To answer the second objection then, in the above cases, the Subject is indeed represented by an element in initial position, even if it is a part of a larger structure, which may have a function other than the ideational. However, to return to the first objection, what happens when the first ideational element is not an element that is or represents the Subject but a circumstantial Adjunct or clause? Although SFG stipulates that the Theme extends into the clause until the first element that grounds the sentence in the ideational sense (that is, supplies a topical Theme), the theory does not stipulate that that element is necessarily the grammatical Subject. S. Thompson (1985) (although she questions the Hallidayan definition of Theme) elucidates this well in her study comparing the metafunction of “initial purpose subordinate clauses” as opposed to “final purpose sub-ordinate clauses”. She shows that the initial placement of such clauses performs both a topical Theme role (by its circumstantial / ideational content) as well as a textual metafunction which extends over the remainder of the clause or even several clauses by setting up a “chain of expectation” (S. Thompson, 1985, p. 61) whereas final placement limits the scope of the purpose clause to its immediate environment.

In this case, the SFG definition of Theme functions perfectly well as the initial purpose clause performs the required ideational metafunction as a topical Theme element (albeit not the Subject of the sentence) and performs a textual function in the clause by its placement as a marked Theme, thus “orienting the clause within its context”. Thus, the “point of departure” aspect of Theme in SFG is not necessarily to do with the Subject or natural (unmarked) topic of the sentence, but may be to do with orientation towards the subject matter, by means of the use, in the case of initial purpose subordinate clauses, of the marked topical Theme which is an ideational element other than the Subject itself. The ability of SFG to answer these criticisms is largely due to the newer definition of Theme in Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), given above (section 3.2.4), which highlights the orienting role of Theme in its textual function of organising the clause as a message and excludes the rather ambiguous idea that it is what the clause is “about” as far as that is connected to the grammatical Subject of the clause.

Interestingly, contrary to S. Thompson’s (1985) above claims and Downing (1991) who also argued that fronted adverbials set up large discourse spans while in medial or final position they are limited in scope, Crompton (2006) has more recently argued that adverbials in initial position do not have any greater potential for textual organisation than those that are non-initial. He examined 40 texts of around 500 words each, drawn from an American English composition course and a collection of UK broadsheet newspaper editorials, all according to Crompton, “non-technical, formal and persuasive” (p. 254). He found that only “a little over a quarter ... of all the initial adverbials found here had supra-sentential scope” while “a little over a third ... for noninitial adverbials” did have such scope (p. 271). Thus, he concludes that there is no special relationship between establishing or, in fact, cancelling discourse scope associated with initial adverbials. However, since Downing’s sample consisted of quite diverse text types (narratives, procedural and academic) and S. Thompson’s sample was mainly from a single, non-fiction historical text, the comparisons to Crompton’s study are hardly valid. The area seems open for exploration in terms of whether the function of initial adverbials may be related to text type, discipline or merely individual writer style.

Quite clearly then, currently, “topic” as in such theoretical concepts as “topic and comment” (where the topic is essentially the Subject of the sentence or what the sentence is about) and “Theme” as in the SFG theoretical concepts of “Theme and Rheme” are not synonymous. In fact Fries had pointed out as early as 1981 and again in 1995b (p. 319), that “information which is perceived to constitute the point of a text ... is regularly found within the Rhemes ... not ... in the Themes” and instead, “the experiential content of Themes correlates with what is perceived to be the ‘method of development of a text’”, rather than what the clause is about.

The study of “methods of development” in generic texts was taken up by, among others, Fries (1981, 1995a & b), Francis (1989) and Vande Kopple (1991), based on Daneš’s three “patterns of theme - rheme progression” (cited in Fries, 1981). In the first, the Rheme of a sentence becomes the Theme of the next which then has a new Rheme, which in turn becomes the Theme of the next sentence, and so on. Fries (1981) associated this pattern with “scholarly articles ... [containing] complex arguments in which each successive idea is an expansion of and dependent upon an idea in a previous sentence” (p. 9). The second pattern consisted of a single Theme being repeated in successive sentences, each time with a different Rheme. Fries associated this with narrative texts because “narratives tend to relate a sequence of events, each event involving a common character or set of characters ... [thus] one tends to have sequences of clauses, each having the same type of theme as the previous one” (1981, p. 9). An obvious chink in this argument is that “having the same type of theme” is not the same as having the same Theme. In this 1981 paper Fries admits to not having found any instances of Daneš’s third pattern, which involved an overarching Theme with subordinate Themes, each having its own, different Rheme.

Francis (1989) pointed out that the texts used for such claims were carefully selected for the purpose and decided to examine randomly selected texts from newspapers (including editorials, letters to the editor and news reports) to see if the Themes in these did indeed reflect the Theme Progression suggested for the genres to which they belonged, by Martin, another theorist in the field. It was found that “enormous complexity and variety” even within genres (Francis, 1989, p. 214) probably made it over ambitious to ascertain universal

patterns of Theme Progression and that more needed to be known about Rheme before any claims could be made (p. 216).

Again it was Crompton (2004) who revisited and re-evaluated this research. First he pointed out that neither of the terms Thematic Progression (TP) or Method of Development (MOD) had been satisfactorily defined, nor had their relationship been made clear (p. 216). He examined 80 instances of short argumentative prose and concluded that:

TP/MOD is not **sufficient** to account for many actual Thematic selections in argumentative **genres**, that TP/MOD **patterning** is present in only a small minority of text-segments, that the levels of such patterning are not unique to Thematic phenomena, and that perceptions of rhetorical competence or **quality** are only seldom associated with conformity to the kind of TP/MOD patterning proposed as ideal for argumentative text. (Crompton, 2004, p. 244)

Crompton concedes that his study only considers argumentative prose and that other genres, for instance, news broadcasts and narratives for children may indeed follow identifiable Theme Progressions and use more fixed Methods of Development but states that “It seems clear that in [argumentative prose] thematic content is more complex and dynamic.” (Crompton, 2004, p. 244)

Notwithstanding this dismissal, the concept of Theme Progression has been put to use more recently and in a more developed manner in a study by Christie and Dreyfus (2007). Two students’ literary essays were examined as examples of secondary school texts in what they call the “response genre” of “thematic interpretations” (p. 235). The students’ teacher regarded one essay as more successful than the other. Tracing the presence within the successful text of what they term “Macro-Theme” (overarching Theme, related to concepts within the topic and forward looking in the text to what is to be discussed) and several “Hyper-Themes” (ideas relating back to the Macro-Theme but also pointing forward to the content of the paragraph they start) (pp. 239 - 241), Christie and Dreyfus were able to show how these produced a strong sense of organisation that was rewarded by the teacher in that student’s writing. In the other student’s work, a clear Macro-Theme was not established, making it difficult to develop a relevant series of Hyper-Themes and causing the writer to drift into information which was not explicitly shown to be relevant (pp. 243 - 244). This student’s essay had been graded poorly.

Although Crompton (2004) suggests that, to him, it seems that it “would be correct to look outside Theme ... to discover the principles by which discourse is developed and structured” (p. 245), the rather convincing study by Christie and Dreyfus (2007) suggests the area is still open for further investigation.

Leaving aside the idea of tracing patterns within successive Themes, Iddings (2008) investigated the percentage of different types of Theme (topical, textual and interpersonal) within two papers from very different disciplines: English Humanities and Biochemistry. He found that the writers (both professors in their fields) used the identical percentage of textual Themes (26%) in their papers but differed in the use of interpersonal Themes (English, 7%; Biochemistry 1%) and differed vastly in their use of marked and unmarked topical Themes: English using 6% marked and 94% unmarked, Biochemistry 21% marked and 79% unmarked). It would have been fascinating to compare the writing produced by the English Humanities writer in Iddings’ study to that produced by the skilled senior secondary writers in this research (also in subject English), but unfortunately, the percentages obtained in Iddings’ study could not be compared to those in this research as he used the clause as the unit of analysis while this study uses the sentence.⁷ Furthermore, since only two texts were analysed in Iddings’ study, generalisations from his work would not be valid but the possibility of expanding it seems potentially fruitful.

The research undertaken for this thesis also investigates the extent of the use of particular metafunctions but within the broader concept of “sentence initial elements”⁸ (rather than Theme). In addition, it takes account of the grammatical structures present in initial position, combining this with the metafunctional analysis, and, it also notes the sentence location within the text. SFG provides the necessary basis for investigating the different grammatical elements that may be used in sentence initial position and the communicative metafunctions of those elements wherever they are located.

3.2.6 Further recent developments regarding the role of sentence initial elements and the interpersonal metafunction

Another aspect that has been critically explored by researchers using SFG theory is the possible dual metafunctional nature of sentence initial elements. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) separate the ideational metafunction into experiential and logical aspects with the latter accounting for “language as the expression of certain very general logical relations” (p. 310) but appear to maintain an analytical process whereby words or “word groups” are assigned a single metafunction within the clause. The functional studies of initially placed adverbials by S. Thompson (1985) and Downing (1991), mentioned earlier in this review, claimed, respectively, that such elements fulfilled a textual function by setting up “chains of expectation” or “discourse spans”. Of course, containing ideational elements, such adverbials also become a topical Theme. Thus, “While *final* purpose clauses serve at the Topical level, *initial* purpose clauses operate simultaneously at the Topical and at the Textual level” (S.Thompson, p. 61, emphases added). The effect of dual functioning was brought about entirely by initial placement of the clause in the context of the whole sentence.

Additionally, Winter and Hoey’s notion of “clause relations” (Winter, 1994) which “represent a kind of dialogue, or interaction, between the writer and reader” (Thompson and Zhou, 2000, p.121), led them to elucidate the role of an initially positioned conjunct such as “But”. They demonstrated that such elements perform a grammatico-logical function (a textual function within the ideational according to SFG) but also have an interpersonal function of “tell[ing] the reader that what follows is not what he or she expects to find” (p. 121). This makes their metafunctional value a dual one.

In complementary fashion, Thompson and Zhou (2000) argue that some interpersonal sentence initial elements that are part of the Theme may also have a dual function arising from their conveying opinion or authorial evaluation, at a semantic level but also having the function of establishing clause relations by creating “evaluative coherence” (p. 123). They point out that coherence – usually seen as the logical connection between propositions of a text achieved by the cohesive textual signals of repetition and conjunction – may also be achieved by “certain types of cohesive resources [which] involve interpersonal rather than

ideational meaning” (p. 123). Halliday, they say, had recognised this but not explored the implication that “explicit evaluation in a text functions to create texture and structure.” (p. 123).

Thompson and Zhou (2000) examine “disjuncts” (a subset of Adjuncts) such as “Obviously”, “Admittedly”, “Certainly” and “Plainly”, frequently placed initially, which serve an evaluative function, categorised as Modal Adjuncts with an interpersonal metafunction, in SFG. They argue that these elements may also create an inter-sentential logical clause relation of concession, in line with the subordinating conjunction “although”, categorised as operating within the ideational metafunction but as an intra-sentential textual device in SFG (p. 126). Disjuncts do this when placed initially in one proposition, which is then followed by another proposition, which is not the expected outcome of the first. An example they give is:

Certainly, the middle classes have come off distinctly better under the Tories.

Yet a repetition of 1921 or 1931 is unthinkable even now;

(p. 125, underlining added)

Here, they say, “both propositions are presented as valid, but the second is presented as in some way more valid than the first” (p. 126). As in the intra-sentential relation created by “although” where “the informationally subordinate role of the conceded proposition [is] reflected by its grammatical dependence” (p. 126), so with the disjunct placed initially in the first of two grammatically independent propositions, “the impression given is ... that the first proposition is conceded, whereas the second is asserted” (p. 126). Thus, added to the interpersonal value of the disjunct, is the textual cohesive function of inter-sentential coherence created by evaluation or ranking of one proposition as more valid than another, based on the clause relation of concession.

Thompson and Zhou (2000) perform a similar analysis based on the clause relation of “expectancy” (either fulfilled or denied), manifested in disjuncts such as “Un/Fortunately”, “Curiously” and “Surprisingly” and the “alternate” clause relation apparent in “Maybe Maybe” and “Perhaps Perhaps”. These are all frequently used initially. The point Thompson and Zhou are making is that these disjuncts “can signal the relation with no support from a conjunct and their removal would often result in a sense of incoherence” (p.

131). They, in fact, go further, to say that “disjuncts do not simply serve two functions – interpersonal and textual: the textual function derives directly from the interpersonal function ... disjuncts appear to be cohesive signals because of the interpersonal meaning they express” (p. 140).

Under analysis, disjuncts such as these could be counted as serving a dual function (textual and interpersonal) even though the textual function may indeed arise directly from their interpersonal meaning. Thompson and Zhou (2000) acknowledge that there are also disjuncts that serve only an interpersonal function, such as “Significantly” and “Naturally” but they argue that the role of disjuncts that create textual cohesion cannot be overlooked since:

they can often signal the presence of complex relations which could not be adequately captured by a conjunct [thus] ... expert writers may aim at a balance between telling the reader where to go next (by means of conjuncts...) and asking for the reader’s co-operation in working out the line of development (by means of disjuncts ...) in order to produce a text that feels purposeful but not overly directive. (p. 141)

Thompson (2005) pursues his investigation into the textual and interpersonal metafunctions of conjunctive items in a paper that considers the uses of “external” and “internal” conjunction in text. The former refers to elements that fulfil an experiential/logical function in connecting clauses by foregrounding subject-matter based connections, while the latter, “internal” conjunction has been used to refer to elements that fulfil a discoursal organisational function. In his text analysis, Thompson reveals that the category of internal conjunction needs to be divided into two; thus he proposes a “three-dimensional view of conjunction” (p. 775), in keeping with the three linguistic metafunctions of SFG: external conjunction serves an experiential / logical (ideational) metafunction, and internal, both the textual and interpersonal metafunctions.

Internal conjunction, he argues, includes elements that “connect steps in an unfolding argument” [textual], “connect moves in an unfolding argument” [interpersonal] and “frames a proposition in terms of attitude or speech act” [interpersonal] (Thompson, 2005, p. 775). Thus textual internal conjunction explicitly contributes to the progression of the discourse, while interpersonal actually enacts the developing relationship between writer and reader. Thompson is able to develop this complex understanding of conjunction

because he approaches the phenomenon not from the traditional grammatical perspective of two forms of conjunction (structural: by way of clause complexes, and non-structural: by way of cohesive devices such as lexical repetition or substitution) but, instead, he approaches conjunction by means of the concept of clause relations whereby the aim is “to identify a set of semantic relations that potentially includes all the possible ways in which two stretches of text may be connected” (p. 756).

The set of conjunctive relations he envisages may be achieved by overt means such as conjunctions and conjunctive Adjuncts, or, lexical means such as comparison, and structural means such as parallelism, as well as non-explicit means, which includes some cases of structures known as thematicised comment in SFG: “It is also not true that...” and projection: “I contend that ...”; “We would claim that ...” (Thompson, 2005, p. 773), as well as the disjuncts, which in themselves establish discoursal coherence, as discussed earlier. Thus, internal conjunction gives rise to relations that are not only “textual (discourse-organising function) ... [but also] dialogic, negotiating relationships” (p. 775). He acknowledges that the semantic aspect of such analyses allows for interpretative differences (p. 776) but argues that linguistics has been too strongly oriented towards analyses based on the experiential / ideational metafunction and needs to recognise the central role of interpersonal meaning (p. 787). Although Thompson’s argument is a strong one, since his view is very much interpretive, the methodology decided on for this research project, in keeping with SFG, categorises structures such as the above (projection and thematicised comment) as interpersonal only, not textual, unless textual elements of an overt (lexical) nature are contained within them.

The complexity of the role of different kinds of grammatical elements in initial position (of which the disjuncts and other structures discussed above are only some) is a feature that is open to further exploration. “Few of the studies of conjunction that include reference to ‘internal’ conjunction attempt to place all the variants within an overall model” (Thompson, 2005, p. 767). This situation has resulted in functional grammatical theory other than SFG being consulted for the final analysis of Adjuncts in the present research. Jackson’s (1990) categorisation of Adjuncts into circumstantial Adjuncts, Subjuncts, Disjuncts and Conjuncts was flexible enough to allow for the recognition that these may serve more than

one metafunction simultaneously, whereas the categorisation of Adjuncts in SFG as Modal or Conjunctive is based on a single metafunction. Specific details of Jackson's Adjunct classification and its application to the data are more appropriately given in the Methodology chapter (section 4.6.1.4).

The fact that the elements presented above may enact "dialogic, negotiating relationships" (Thompson, 2005, p. 775) and thereby "construct a dialogue" (Thompson & Zhou, 2000, p. 122) or, as it is coined in this thesis, a "unilateral conversation" between writer and reader, while still functioning at an experiential grammatical-logical level, suggests that their source is a higher level of cognitive functioning on the part of the writer than elements which serve a single and/or more material function only. This accounts for their use by skilled writers who may construe knowledge as both objective yet personal, simultaneously, because both the logical textual relation and the writers' attitude towards the information is communicated to the reader in a single (and often sentence initial) element.

On the topic of the writer's interaction with the reader (essentially, the interpersonal metafunction) it is important to mention the studies that confirm this dialogical nature of academic writing. Hyland (2001, p. 549) analyses the extent and distribution of dialogic interactions between writer and reader, in published academic research articles, to prove his point that,

Increasingly, academic writing is coming to be viewed as a persuasive endeavor that owes as much to a writer's development of an appropriate relationship with his or her readers as the demonstration of absolute truth, empirical evidence, or flawless logic. A substantial literature is beginning to show how various linguistic features contribute to this relationship as writers shape their texts to the expectations of their audiences ...

His paper sets out ten "reader engagement features" that he describes as "explicit features of reader orientation", "introducing them [readers] as real players in the discourse" (p. 552). These include such dialogic items as "questions, both real and rhetorical; inclusive first person, indefinite and second person pronouns and items referring to readers; directives, including imperatives and obligation modals ... references to shared knowledge; and asides addressed to the reader" (p. 553). A frequency count of the features in 240 academic articles from a wide variety of disciplines, leads Hyland to conclude that "academic writing

is not the impersonal prose it is often depicted to be” (p. 554) and “academic writers seek to bring readers into their text as participants in an unfolding dialogue” (p. 571).

Although the structures examined in Hyland’s paper are not necessarily sentence initial, it is interesting to note, how many are placed initially or are within initial elements. Some examples from his paper are: “As we can see, their ...” (inclusive first person); “The obviously correct relation ...” (reference to shared knowledge); “And – as I believe many TESOL professionals will readily acknowledge - ...” (aside addressed to reader) (p. 553, underlining added).

Citing Hyland’s work, which is corpus based, Harwood (2007) complements it with a qualitative study in which he interviews five academic writers and discusses with them their own and the other writers’ use of personal pronouns in their published articles. One interviewee comments, with regard to another’s writing, that “sometimes [he is] having *a conversation* with his readers, or he is inviting them to join him in his opinions” (p. 32, emphasis added).

Thompson (2001) also examines this dialogic quality created in professional writing by distinguishing “interactive resources [which] help to guide the reader through the text” from “interactional resources [which] involve the reader collaboratively in the development of the text” (p. 58) and “bring the underlying dialogue to the surface” (p. 59). The idea is that the writer actually enacts the role of the reader by anticipating his/her responses to the text and explicitly addresses these by affirming or re-directing the reader’s thinking through grammatically marked constructions such as commands, questions and through statements deliberately offered for contradiction. He reports on a study in which he has examined each of the writers’ propositions and allocated them a “source”: writer, reader (figuratively speaking, of course) or other. He suggests that the patterns and structures which he identifies are important enough to include in training novice writers of academic text: “to improve their proficiency as writers [they] can benefit from explicit attention to the ways in which interaction can be performed in text” (p. 59). Some of the structures he mentions are potentially, even commonly, sentence initial; for instance, the modal disjuncts, “certainly”,

“of course” and the interpersonal metaphor of the impersonal projection, “it might be argued...” (p. 64).

Charles (2006, p. 493) claims, “It is now generally accepted that written academic discourse makes a rhetorical appeal to the reader, seeking to persuade them to accept the writer’s viewpoint rather than simply stating neutral facts”. This researcher has traced the construction of stance in academic discourse, across disciplines, using a corpus-based study of finite reporting clauses with “that-clause” complementation (or projection, in SFG terms). These are almost invariably initially placed and include both attribution (referring to others’ work) and self-averral (referring to one’s own research). The former include propositions attributed to both humans and entities: “The Secretary-General pointed out ...” and “The EDX results showed that ...” (p. 498). The latter includes such instances as “averral with no attribution”: “It was noted that the creep strength curve ...”; “averral with emphasis”: “I contend that this response ...”; and “hidden averral”: “These micrographs show that ...” (pp. 499 - 507, underlining added). All of these initial clauses act as dialogic elements in a kind of conversation between writer and reader, giving persuasive backing to the clause to follow, which, semantically speaking is the main proposition.

She concludes that “reporting clauses are used to take a stance in academic writing ... and stance can be linked systematically to grammatical and semantic patterns of use.” (p. 517). Indeed, she says, “the expression of stance [even] in the natural sciences may be more extensive than is frequently supposed” (p. 518). Taking a stance is a way of entering into an argument, which in academic writing, must be conducted in the absence of the interlocutor, and therefore the interlocutor and his/her responses and counter arguments must be constructed in the mind of the writer and expressed in the writing of the text itself. The reader then, enters into the argument vicariously, as it were, by means of the writer’s construction of his/her role.

But it is not only interpersonally motivated initial clauses or Adjunct-type structures that perform the function of persuading. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) point out in their “note on interpersonal and textual contributions” (p. 328) that within nominal groups

themselves (which are primarily ideational in function) interpersonal meanings are also embodied in:

- (a) the person system, both as pronouns (person as Thing, e.g. *she, you*) and as possessive determiners (person as Deictic, e.g. *her, your*);
- (b) the attitudinal type of Epithet, e.g. *splendid* ...
- (c) connotative meanings of lexical items functioning in the group

From within Functional Discourse Grammar studies, Van de Velde (2007) draws attention to an even wider variety of elements that contribute a significant amount of interpersonal modification within the English noun phrase itself. He examines a number of adjectival, adverbial and appositional structures, a form of nominalisation called “transparent free relatives” and what he describes as “fairly unfamiliar interpersonal modifiers, which take the form of a **conjunction depending on an adjective**” (pp. 222 - 223). Some examples of adjectival and adverbial elements from Van de Velde’s paper are: “the *alleged* father of her baby” (p. 218), “an *appallingly* silly movie” (p. 217); “Geller’s photos of *supposedly* a UFO ...” (p. 209). (Van de Velde points out that the latter example is somewhat unusual as “supposedly” is an adverb that usually operates at clausal level.) Examples of appositional structures with an interpersonal function, expressing speaker deprecation, or appreciation, respectively are: “Cheney, *the idiot*, ...” (p. 214) and “So Chris Louis, *presumably the son of John Louis*, ...” (p. 215).

Transparent free relatives are “wh” nominalisations in SFG, in which an element of the nominalisation fulfills an interpersonal function, such as “what I believe to have been a cold” (p. 212, underlining added); “what was reported to be a tornado” (p. 212, underlining added) and “what Douglas Hofstadter calls a strange loop” (p. 211, underlining added). Van de Velde distinguishes transparent free relatives by their form: the verb takes its number from the “content kernel” of the nominalisation (“cold”, “tornado” and “loop” in the above examples) instead of from the “what” and the nominalisation may be indefinite and may refer to humans. In contrast, “ordinary free relatives” take their number from the “what” and the verb is therefore singular, they are definite in nature and (due to the pronoun “what”) do not normally refer to humans. For example:

Ordinary free relative: What you ordered was delivered a minute ago.

Transparent free relative: What seemed to be separable facilities were combined into one patch. (p. 211, underlining added)

The final structure Van de Velde (2007) examines within the noun phrase, with an interpersonal function, is the “conjunction depending on an adjective” or “conjunctive modification of adjectives” (p. 220). This involves conjunctive justificatory and concessive forms such as (respectively):

The most significant, *because most enduring* news about the European Community last week ... (p. 220)

An outmoded treatment with serious *though* small risks (p. 221)

In each of these instances, the nominal group in question contains an element or elements, which clearly convey/s the writer’s attitude towards the information, be that questioning, criticising, justifying or conceding. Obviously, noun phrases, or as they are called in SFG, nominal groups, do not occur only in sentence initial position, but, since they are the grammatically unmarked initial element in declarative sentences (Bloor & Bloor, 2004, p. 178; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 67 & p. 73; Rose & Purkis, 1986, p. 83) they are frequently an initial element available for interpersonal metafunctional marking in academic writing. This results in a situation where a nominal group, which is not a grammatically marked element in initial position, may well serve an interpersonal metafunction in addition to its ideational metafunction (as topical Theme) and, therefore, be marked in a metafunctional sense.

Derewianka (2007) has used Martin and White’s Appraisal theory to trace the development of interpersonal meanings in adolescent writing in History. Appraisal theory does not focus on sentence initial elements but looks at all interpersonal elements of a sentence, categorising them into three systems of Attitude (emotion / affect, appreciation of things and judgement of behaviour), Graduation (intensifiers and downtoners) and Engagement (monoglossic writing which largely ignores the reader or assumes concurrence of opinion with the writer, or, heteroglossic writing which engages the reader to a lesser or greater extent by either strongly rejecting or supporting a position, or, hedging and attributing assertions, respectively). Derewianka (2007) analysed four texts (or parts thereof) ranging from early secondary to early tertiary writing, pointing out the different appraisal skills in

each. Since there were two variables in the research, age (maturation) and genre type (the younger writers were given more monoglossic-type writing tasks), the change in the writers' use of Appraisal techniques could not be attributed to either one specifically. But the study definitely does show that the nature of tasks given to late secondary and early tertiary students demands that they develop more sophisticated skills in the use of interpersonal elements in their writing. They need to "rely more heavily on Appreciation ... rather than the more personal Affect and Judgement" (Derewianka, 2007, p. 161); they need to use Graduation more "strategically to further the argumentation" (p. 162) in answer to the requirement of critical responses at upper levels; and, they need to "become much more conscious of the need to negotiate meanings with the reader" (p. 162), ultimately recognising that academic writing is a matter of playing a part within a wide readership rather than making objective statements.

Also using Appraisal theory, Swain (2007) showed how first-year undergraduate students in a writing skills course "come across as rather weak, in terms of stance" (p. 174) when they wrote in a monoglossic or factual way and confined their stance or appraisal markers (interpersonal metafunction) to the conclusion. In contrast, those who "chose to engage with the topic and the view surrounding it whilst presenting the arguments" (in other words, all the way through the essay) had "greater credibility" (p. 174). Swain (2007) hails Appraisal theory as a "major development" (p. 168) and suggests that it may have a strong role to play in pedagogy, "encouraging apprentice writers to see their discussion writing less as extensions of their individual selves ... and more as careful management of voices participating in a dialogic space" (p. 180).

The next section of this literature review brings a new angle on this idea of a dialogue between writer and readership from the field of Argumentation, which is followed through in the Discussion chapter of the thesis. The findings of this research project, in part, have the potential to contribute to the "substantial literature beginning to show how various linguistic features contribute to this [writer/reader] relationship" referred to by Hyland (2001, p. 549), by specifically noting those linguistic features that are initially positioned and their metafunctions, one of which is the interpersonal, the linguistic manifestation of

the relationship between reader and writer. But, it argues that the dialogic nature may be somewhat illusory as the conversation is largely a unilateral one.

The range of grammatical elements recognised as thematic resources in SFG and the insight into how these enact the three metafunctions has underpinned much of the research presented here although the growing interest in the interpersonal metafunction has been acknowledged and this is not limited to initial elements only. Nevertheless, initial elements, with their orienting function together with the inclusion of literal and metaphorical dimensions in the Hallidayan notion of Theme, as a point of departure, makes this aspect of SFG the most appropriate for investigating the “unilateral conversation” proposed in this thesis. Examining initial elements facilitates a broad picture of how the orienting process is undertaken in the writing examined for this research. In the literal sense, the sentence initial elements gain their prominence because they constitute the Theme (although extending beyond), but in a more metaphorical sense, these elements have a significant role because they have the function of orienting the hearer or reader towards the ensuing message, in different ways, according to their metafunctional value. This research extends, when necessary, to elements slightly beyond the strict definition of Theme (but which could still be considered initial) because it seems that such elements are also involved in the orienting process. Details of this and the definition of “sentence initial elements” are given in the next chapter, Methodology.

3.2.7 Models of Argumentation validating the rhetorical significance of sentence initial position and unilateral nature of the argumentative dialogue

As has been discussed above, the use of interpersonal markers by academic writers with a view to creating a dialogue with the reader within which they can take up a position or “stance” through disciplinary argument is a subject of substantial investigation in Linguistics. Taking a stance is the initial step in formal Argumentation and, as mentioned in chapter 2 with regard to the educational context, argument is one of two fundamental “modes of thought” (Bruner, 1986, p. 11). For this reason, it seems appropriate to review, at least briefly, material at the interface of Linguistics, the abstract cognitive phenomenon of Argument and educational matters. Theoretical models of Argumentation used in educational practice generally acknowledge the role of language in effective argument. The “Main Path - Faulty Path – Return Path” composition model of Kaufer and Geisler (1991), the Mitchell-Riddle “SINCE-THEN-BECAUSE” model (Riddle, 2000), further reviewed by Blair (2003) and Andrews (2005), and the model of van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Henkemans (2002), all identify linguistic cues which may be used to represent standpoints, different types of formal Argument and processes of Argument. They also all point out the dialogical nature of written argument. But it may be that they have some further insight to add.

Kaufer and Geisler (1991, pp. 115 - 118) represent written Argument in composition diagrammatically by a “main path” (the writer’s “constructive line of reasoning”, represented by a straight horizontal line moving left to right), “faulty paths” (“indispensable points of contrast” acknowledged but judged “fallacious”, represented by downward curved lines coming off the main path tangentially) and “return paths” (“reasons for exiting a faulty path”, represented by upward lines looping back from faulty paths to main path).

They point out that certain linguistic clues tell the reader whether he/she is on a main path or a faulty path. For instance, the author may use positive evaluative language for main path ideas but negative evaluative language, such as “parody”, “direct attack” or “subtle distancing” (pp. 115 - 116) for faulty paths. These evaluative terms often come in the form of adverbial disjuncts (Modal Adjuncts in SFG) which are “usually positioned initially or

very early in the sentence” (Jackson 1990, p. 154), or adjectives within the initial Subject group. However,

As authors become more subtle or scholarly ... their discourse for characterising faulty paths and their discourse for returning from them grows increasingly distinct. They devote full sentences and paragraphs to characterising the path before *overtly* indicating their reasons for leaving it.

(Kaufer & Geisler, 1991, p. 118, emphasis added).

The latter theorists argue that “experienced readers ... can pick out the absence of empathy in an author’s characterization long before they need to be told in so many words of this distance.” (p. 117). This may well be the case but that lack of empathy (which presumably means that the writer is distancing him/herself from the information being presented) must arise from somewhere and since the reader has nothing but the words to pick it out of, the subtle way in which it is communicated must, on close examination of the text, be recoverable.

This observation from Argumentation presents a challenge to Linguistics. Is it possible to separate the linguistic devices that convey interpersonal meaning “in so many words” from those that covertly “characterise” a piece of text? This knowledge would enable greater sophistication in the teaching of argumentative academic writing. Kaufer and Geisler (1991) conclude by saying that “our instruction in written argument can be no more sophisticated than our theories for expressing it” (p. 120), hence the importance of understanding how argument is enacted in writing and what linguistic resources are required to argue successfully.

The importance of Argumentation⁹ in learning and education is also a focus of Andrews’ (2005) approach. He maps his model of the process of thought involved in Argumentation onto Vygotsky’s model of intellectual development by means of concept formation. The latter begins with “heaps” or “unconnected elements” being drawn together into a “complex” by a “unifying idea”, to form a “collection” with “thematic identity”. This first emerges as a “pseudo concept” or “empty formal argument” and, finally becomes a “concept” or “fully fledged argument” (first and second in each pair respectively, are Vygotskian and Andrews’ terms, cited in Andrews, 2005, p. 117 - 118). The thematically

identified ideas must be connected both to one another and within a logical chain or system before they become “fully-fledged argument” (p. 119).

Andrews describes argumentation, echoing Bruner (1986) quoted above, as “a mode of thinking”, “so closely connected to the operation of the mind, to social interaction, to politics ... and the exploration and resolution of difference or controversies” and “in which, rationality is the overriding semantic” (Andrews, 2005, p. 108). His interest is in the applications of Argumentation in political, disciplinary and educational settings (p. 112). He does not offer a linguistic side to his model but his use of Vygotskian theory, in which intellectual development has a linguistic basis, reveals that linguistic resources are key to learning to argue.

In addition, Andrews’ model is an attempt to stand in the middle ground between two opposite approaches to the field of Argumentation in education. The first is based on propositional logic, which he finds too “sealed off from the world and operating behind ... fabricated and made-up sentences ...[trying] to make verbal language do the job of mathematical language” (pp. 110 - 111) and the other is based on rhetoric, which he finds too dependent on “the art of persuasion”, bordering on “rhetoric manuals” (p. 111). In contrast, he says, to occupy the middle ground may be a compromise, but it is a necessary one in order to be relevant to education. Being applied in this sense, Andrews admits that his position tends more towards the rhetorical end of the spectrum (p. 112) and in connection with this, he presents, among others, the Mitchell-Riddle model of argument, which is based on “the everyday language terms SINCE, THEN, BECAUSE” (p. 116).

This model is helpful because “it can serve not only as an analytical tool for assessing the structure, nature and quality of arguments, but it can also serve as a generative tool for the planning and composing of arguments” (Andrews, 2005, p. 116). Both the syntactic conjunctive role of these words (in fact, in the case of “since” and “then” they may be simply temporal or propositional) and their usefulness in designating whole portions of text as having a SINCE-function or a BECAUSE-function is recognised. This clearly demonstrates the inescapable link between the linguistic concept of metafunction and Argumentation structures. Just as elements of a sentence are logically connected by their

external conjunction contained in their clause relations, so whole texts have a similar kind of structure, which must also emerge from the words, and the placement of the words. In written texts, there is nothing else for it to exist in. As the external clause relations orient the reader as to how the sentence is to be read, “sentence relations” and “paragraph relations” (or recalling Thompson, 2005, “internal conjunction”) orient the reader within the discourse. They are then, by definition, thematic. And, if thematic, they should, therefore, be sentence initial and paragraph initial. Hence the interest in the present research is not only in sentence initial structures but in their placement within the discourse as introduction initial, medial or terminal, paragraph initial, medial, terminal (within the body of the essay) or conclusion initial, medial, terminal.

Riddle (2000), in discussing his SINCE-THEN-BECAUSE model, indicates that these particular markers may not be literally present in the argumentative text. There may be others substituted or without the use of connectives at all, “the kind of cognitive connectedness found in argumentation [enables it to work] as an off-the-shelf device for collaborative joined-up thinking ... in normal exchanges between speaker/writer and audience, and most effectively where the substance of the discourse is shared” (pp. 57 - 58). How the substance comes to be shared is not elaborated upon by Riddle but it must be by more than disciplinary familiarity or academics from different disciplines would not be able to read each other’s work or understand each other’s arguments at all and this is plainly not the case. It is another challenge to Linguistics to investigate this “cognitive connectedness” phenomenon and try to specify it.

Perhaps, in line with Thompson’s (2005) paper presented above, it is “non-explicit” markers of conjunction, which largely appear to fulfil the interpersonal metafunction of language that also covertly facilitate the textual connectedness that Riddle describes as “collaborative ... thinking”, “normal exchanges” and the so-called sharing of the “substance of the discourse” that characterise argumentative academic texts. Hence the significance of interpersonal elements, especially when they are in the orienting (thematic or initial) position in a sentence or paragraph, in giving the reader a perspective on the information that in itself is organisational.

Corroboration of this may be found in the work of van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Henkemans (2002). They identify a variety of common sentence openings that serve to represent the formal structures of argumentation yet quite clearly in some cases, are also interpersonal. “It simply isn’t true that ...” and “All things considered ...” identify standpoints within an argument (van Eemeren et al. 2002, p. 10); “Needless to say ...” and “Quite apart from ...” are indicators of multiple argument structure; “As well as the fact that ...” and “Not only...but also...” convey co-ordinate argument structure and “In view of ...” and “Since ...” point to sub-ordinate argument structure (van Eemeren et al. 2002, p. 73). Such sentence initial linguistic cues associated with argument may be identified in, and appear to make a significant contribution to, academic writing, by creating an exchange between writer and reader that not only guides the reader through the text but does so in a way that upholds the writer’s perspective of the material presented. As Kaufer and Geisler (1991, p. 117) point out, “argument is not a chorus of perspectives. Rather it is a tightly sequenced set of directions controlled from the author’s perspective.” The terms of description used here obviously have wide potential for Linguistics studies and deep implications for educational practice.

Blair (2003, p. 94) states that “If dialectic is understood broadly as question-and-answer interchanges, then the practice of argumentation is inherently dialectical.” This sounds fair and objective until he argues further that argumentation is dialectical, firstly because “there is the practical matter of convincing the interlocutor”, and secondly, “in order to be fully justified in that attitude, he or she [the one proposing the argument] must be able to answer ... any ... reasonable objections” (p. 95). In written argument, without the interlocutor present, the only “reasonable objections” are the ones the writer allows, the ones that are refutable by the justifications of the writer’s perspective. In fact, the only dialectical dialogue happening is actually unilateral. The writer creates the illusion of dialogue through the orientation imposed upon the reader through elements of the sentence that are selected to be thematic. The reader has the impression of having entered into an exchange without having said a word, as it were.

Not surprisingly then, Blair (2003) (like Andrews, 2005, presented above) also points out the significance of argument in all social contexts, especially political and legal, as well as

educational. He identifies its three aspects: logic (formal mathematical), dialectic (exchange of ideas) and rhetoric (verbal persuasion) and their different contributions to argumentation as a social phenomenon, pointing out that “the norms used to decide what to believe ... should not be those of rhetoric, but those of logic and dialectic” (p. 103). This is enormously significant for education, as students need to be able to recognise and interpret rhetoric in order to distinguish it from the logic (or the lack of it) and thus be able to enter meaningfully into dialectic on controversial or disputable matters. Upon this skill surely depends the continuation of civilised social and political processes. Teaching argumentative writing is not merely an academic exercise.

What all this adds to the linguistic material necessary for this study is the fact that academic writing, which by nature operates in the argumentative mode of thought rather than the narrative, has perhaps been characterised too generously as a dialogue or exchange in Linguistic studies, even by those who emphasise its interpersonal features. An exchange or a dialogue it may be, but in a unidirectional sense only. The discussion is only going one way: to the writer’s conclusion; hence it is a “unilateral conversation”, with all the implications of that oxymoron noted. Kaufer and Geisler (1991) again: “Authors decide to include other perspectives for self-serving not democratic reasons. They include other perspectives when these perspectives can make their own more clear or fair-minded or persuasive by way of background or contrast.” (p. 117). The brief by instructors should actually be to write something that sounds reasonably objective and fairly representative of all perspectives but is actually subtly but highly persuasive. Learning to understand the nature of argument, and to practise argument, in academic writing is, then, not so straightforward a matter.

3.2.8 Psycholinguistic research validating the cognitive significance of sentence initial position

It stands to reason, that if the purpose of academic writing is to convincingly present an unmistakable line of reasoning then the writer would want to make it as easy to follow as possible. Indeed, it may be desirable to allow omissions or inferences to lead or even mislead a reader in the narrative mode, with the purpose of retaining interest by rousing

curiosity and uncertainty. But quite the opposite is true in the argumentative mode. Some Psycholinguistic studies have investigated how writing is made easy to follow – or perhaps (in the case of argumentative writing) that should be, difficult *not* to follow.

Eysenck and Keane (2005, p. 377) state, “Comprehension of discourse would be impossible without the process of drawing inferences ... it is so natural for us to draw inferences that we are often unaware that we are doing so.” They list three kinds of inferences (pp. 377 - 379):

1. logical (entailed in the meaning of words)
2. bridging (necessary for textual coherence, for example, anaphoric reference)
3. elaborative (subconsciously adding unstated but reasonable embellishments or details to a scenario that may well be confidently but incorrectly ‘recognised’, on a memory test, as having been stated!).

The first two types of inferences, logical and bridging are relatively easy for the writer to control. Unambiguous terminology or defining the terms used can resolve the logical entailments of words. Ensuring that pronoun referents are easy to retrieve by accuracy of gender, number and order, can resolve many bridging inferences at sentence level or paragraph level. At whole text level, adequate discourse markers are necessary. These are items such as conjunctive Adjuncts, without ideational / topical content.

But, Gundel, Hegarty and Borthen (2003) investigated the fact that bridging inferences can actually be manipulated by raising the salience of an entity in the discourse. They work from the basis that entities in discourse may occupy a level on a cognitive attention status continuum of six levels. “In focus” is the focus of attention (top level) and “activated” (second level down) means that an entity is accessible but not the centre of attention. Usually, the pronoun “it” is used to refer to entities in focus while “this” and “that” are used for activated entities. Entities introduced by a clause as opposed to being nominal, remain activated (“this” or “that”) but not in focus (“it”). To raise the salience of an entity so that it can become the focus of attention requires that it be rankshifted from clause to nominal group. This means that facts and propositions can become entities in focus, for discussion rather than merely activated background information and writers can control what readers are focusing on. Gundel et al. (2003, pp. 292 - 293) also mention that certain

structures, such as the cleft (Theme predication in SFG) and initial concession clauses can trigger presuppositional status for an entity introduced as a clause (“given” as opposed to “new”) which then boosts its salience and means that it is immediately available for reference by “it” and therefore can become the focus of attention. Skilful use of this knowledge by writers means that they can maintain tight control over the reader’s attention focus by choosing which entities to raise to salience through manipulation of grammatical structures and the entailed bridging inferences.

And what about the third type: elaborative inferences? How does the writer of academic argument prevent readers from embellishing the line of reasoning with their own ideas, such as causes for outcomes not considered valid (or considered less valid than the ones offered) by the writer or imagining circumstances which may have contributed to an outcome that the writer may have chosen to exclude?

The simple answer, of course, is that the writer needs to get there first and dismiss the possible elaborative inferences before they become entrenched. This may be done by concession – acknowledging a possible explanation but directing the reader to a better one. Or, the writer can allow no room for alternative circumstances by tightly specifying the relevant ones. The Psycholinguistic studies below show the importance of sentence initial position (the thematic or orienting structure) in achieving this control.

Using corpus data, Diessel (2005) examined the ordering distribution of main and adverbial clauses to assess the competing (cognitive or discourse functional) motivations for their placement. He found that “final occurrence of adverbial clauses is motivated by [cognitive] processing, while initial occurrence results from semantic and discourse pragmatic forces that may override the processing motivation” (p. 449). In other words, the linguistic metafunction of a sentence constituent may play a more compelling role in linguistic structuring than basic cognitive processing requirements.

Basing his understanding of the simplest sentence constituent ordering for ease of processing on Hawkins’ processing theory which states that complex sentences (containing adverbial clauses) are easier to process if the adverbial clause follows the main clause (see

Diessel, 2005, p. 454 & p. 462), he investigates the cases in his data where this order is flouted. His overall conclusion is that “adverbial clauses occur sentence-initially if they provide a thematic ground or orientation for subsequent clauses” (p. 462). This accords well with the SFG understanding of the role of Theme. Diessel’s specific conclusions, however, offer even more insight and are best expressed in his own words, (pp. 462 - 463, numbering and emphasis added):

- (1) Conditional clauses tend to occur sentence-initially because they establish a specific framework for interpreting subsequent clauses.
- (2) Temporal clauses tend to precede the main clause if they denote a situation prior to the one in the main clause so that initial occurrence results in iconic order.
- (3) And causal clauses tend to follow the main clause because causes and reasons are commonly expressed in sentences that function like independent assertions, providing information that is communicatively too important to serve a subsidiary discourse function in the position preceding the main clause; *only in scientific articles, a substantial number of causal clauses occur sentence-initially because in this type of discourse causal clauses are often used to provide a common ground for a subsequent conclusion.*

He further specifies that initial causal clauses are more likely to make use of “since” or “as” whereas “because” clauses tend to be placed post-main clause because they usually encode new information while “since” and “as” are preferred for a known cause. Both the selection of an external conjunction and the placement of the clause it introduces have to do with creating meaning through discoursal function.

It is thus easy to see how structural manipulations may control the inferential possibilities available to the reader. An initial conditional clause would limit readers in terms of the situational factors required for a proposition to be valid before they could produce elaborative inferences themselves and initial temporal (and most likely other) circumstantials would limit the time, place, manner and so on, in which the proposition may be valid, also shutting down the readers’ elaborative inferences. Finally, whether a causal clause is read as the all important reason for an assertion, or, as common ground shared by writer and reader that acts as a basis for a conclusion is dictated by its terminal or initial placement, respectively. It appears that how a reader interprets a sentence constituent is as dependent on where it is encountered in the sentence as on its actual semantic content. This means that a writer’s reasoning is easier to follow (or harder to miss) if he/she makes astute use of the variety of sentence Theme structures available.

The same is true at a whole text level. Bestgen and Vonk (2000) investigated the use of segmentation markers¹⁰ to cancel the “boundary effect” created by topic discontinuous sentences: “sentences that introduce a new topic are read more slowly than nontopic [topic continuous] sentences” (p. 76). Based on the “continuity” or “nextness” principle, that readers will assume that text is topic continuous unless, according to Gricean maxims of communication, they are timeously informed that this is not case, they performed a series of four experiments specifically to test the effect of temporal adverbials in cancelling the slower reading time (the boundary effect) for topic discontinuous sentences.

Bestgen and Vonk (2000) found that the use of segmentation devices not only reduced the boundary effect (slower reading time) in the simple narrative texts they tested on readers but entirely cancelled it. This means that their readers read the topic discontinuous sentences with segmentation markers as quickly as they read topic continuous sentences. However, they added that it is unlikely that with more complex expository text (with which we may associate academic writing) such a dramatic effect would be found. Nevertheless, segmentation markers would still be likely to reduce the boundary effect in expository text to some extent, as the marker would enable readers to skip the “nextness principle” stage of seeking continuity between successive sentences and proceed directly to initiating a new discourse substructure (p. 85). Moreover, the result of their second experiment led them to note that “a discourse marker should be inserted at the beginning of a sentence to be effective in the comprehension process ... a marker introduced at the end is not used to signal a topic shift” (p. 80).

This study suggests that if a writer wants to ensure that his/her line of reasoning is difficult to miss, he/she needs to make use of such markers, be they non-semantic discourse markers or segmentation markers which involve a semantic element. The present research investigates whether such markers are more common in boundary positions (in initial or terminal sentences within paragraphs, introductions or conclusions) since, although paragraphs are visual-spatial discourse markers in themselves, in academic writing, it may be felicitous to make the reason for the boundary as prominent and explicit as possible.

Another study that focuses on the issue of boundary markers is an earlier one, undertaken by Prideaux and Hogan (1993). They make the point that initial marked structures are actually for the benefit of the hearer/reader rather than the speaker/writer of the discourse because they facilitate management of the incoming information. They contend that “marked structures are found significantly more often than unmarked ones at discourse unit boundaries, while unmarked structures are significantly more frequent within discourse units.” (p. 397). By “marked” they are referring to the flouting of the unmarked ordering in English syntax of main clause before a subordinate adverbial clause (Bloor & Bloor, 2004, p. 178; Rose & Purkis, 1986, p. 83). Non-textual reasons for making the subordinate structure thematic (initial) have been forwarded, for instance, iconicity, when a temporal adverbial precedes a main clause syntactically because the semantic content it refers to is prior to that in the main clause, but Prideaux and Hogan chose to follow Givon (1987, see Prideaux & Hogan, 1993, p. 399) for their study, predicting that preposed adverbial clauses (marked Theme structure) would be more likely to occur at major discourse boundaries in a text while post-posed adverbial clauses (unmarked structure) would occur medially in a discourse unit. In their study, they found this to be a statistically significant accurate result but their research used oral and casual written narrative material only. In fact, they predicted that the more formal the writing the less likely it would be that the finding would hold. This suggestion was based on the fact that their findings indicated that the less casual the narrative, the less it supported their hypothesis.

Since their data offered up some counter examples, part of their study identified three reasons for the marked Theme structure to be used discourse unit internally (or, for the written material, paragraph internally). These were: (1) to refer back to the first mention of the current episode; (2) to signal the end of an episode and thereby herald a new one; (3) to signal an especially salient event. If we substitute the concept “point being made” for “episode” and consider that in more formal writing the writer wants to make the text organisation as explicit as possible for rhetorical reasons, it may well be that such markers are used as frequently paragraph internally as in boundary positions. This possibility added further motivation for investigating where marked Themes (not only use of initial adverbials but of all kinds)¹¹ are more commonly used, in the academic texts examined in the present research.

The strength of psycholinguistic studies is that they not only point to linguistic items and structures as means of achieving certain effects or purposes in discourse, but they account for this by cognitive theory underpinning their research. Gundel et al. (2003) point out that although it is possible to account for linguistic phenomena by noting correlations between forms and contexts, that in itself, is insufficient to explain why those correlations exist by means of factors governing human information processing systems which are actually independent of language. For example, the fact that academic writing is more explicit in topic definition and textual organisation may be noted by linguistic studies and the forms this explicitness takes may be researched in different disciplines, but Psycholinguistics can add weight to this information by showing, for instance, that reduced relative clauses cause temporary ambiguity which then causes considerable processing disruption (Clifton & Duffy, 2001, p. 174); thus, these forms are avoided in academic writing which prefers full relative clauses. It is true that many of the experiments used in Psycholinguistics to measure reading times and track eye movement make use of specially designed sentences (therefore unnaturalistic data) and often the explanations do not take sufficient note of individual differences, especially to do with mental capacity (Eysenck & Keane, 2005, pp. 372 & 383); nevertheless, from the perspective of research in Linguistics, the contribution of such studies as cognitive backing for findings, is extremely valuable, hence their inclusion in this review.

As a final comment on the complementary nature of the two disciplines, it is interesting to note how the findings of Hyland (2007) with regard to “code glosses” (specifically, reformulations and exemplifications) in academic writing sit well with a principle of sentence comprehension in Psycholinguistics. One of the early theories of the way humans comprehend sentences was the “garden-path” theory (Clifton & Duffy, 2001, p. 169; Eysenck & Keane, 2005, p. 361). It suggests that a reader or listener constructs a representation of the meaning of a sentence based on grammatical principles, attaching each new word in the simplest way possible, until that method fails and revision must take place. Naturally, this has been extensively criticised for a variety of reasons but one response to the criticism has involved posing the “least effort principle” (Fodor & Inoue, 2000, cited in Clifton & Duffy, 2001, p. 171). Basically, a reader or listener initially prefers to comprehend a sentence in the way that requires the least effort.

It is interesting then, to read Hyland's paper (2007) that investigates the function of elaboration in academic text, that is, propositional expansion in which a clause further specifies or describes another. He undertakes a detailed analysis of the markers of exemplification and its purpose, which he indicates is to make the abstract more concrete for the reader (p. 270). Also, he looks at reformulations, restatements or paraphrases, which present a statement from a different point of view and thereby reinforce the message (p. 269) either through expanding it by explanation or implication or narrowing it by extracting a gist or specification of detail (p. 274). He identifies linguistic markers of reformulation and argues that they facilitate comprehension. In fact, Hyland states that these types of expansion "help to contribute to the creation of coherent, *reader-friendly* prose while conveying the writer's audience-sensitivity and relationship to the message" (p. 266, emphasis added).

This appears to be the other side of the exchange to the one posed by the "least effort principle": the writer has a certain message to convey and the reader wants to access that message with the least possible effort. In academic writing particularly, it is in the writer's interests to comply with the reader's expectations, hence the provision of code glosses and the reader's co-operation in using them to understand the complexities of the writer's point of view with the greatest possible ease. This could go a long way to explaining why skilled use of the resources of writing which make complex ideas easy to follow results in high grades for students. There is a co-operative principle at work between reader and writer: a meeting of minds in the text. However, the process is still very much under the control of the writer and it is the reader who must make at least as much effort in reading as the writer has made in producing the text, if he/she wishes to disagree with what is being proposed.

3.2.9 Conclusion to Literature Review Part II

The scope of the material covered in Part II of this review has been wide although each reference included has clear connections to the concepts of Theme and/or metafunction in SFG and the influence of these in the production of academic writing. The controversial nature of the Theme concept to begin with has resulted in much research and development,

which has in turn produced valuable insights. From a Linguistics point of view, there has been a consideration of different types of grammatical structures as thematic resources and how they are to be understood as thematic as well as analysis of their metafunctional value or values. Research in Psycholinguistics has confirmed that initial position is a key structural entity and may be manipulated by the writer to have a cognitive effect on the reader so that the grammatical item or structure selected to represent a referent or sentence constituent and where it is placed may be as influential as the semantics of a proposition. Argumentation theory has made evident the connection of language to the argumentative mode of thinking and the way that it is conducted through linguistic structures and their metafunctions, especially initially positioned and especially the interpersonal. The significance of this not only in education but also in social processes was highlighted. All of this shows that academic writing is a highly complex phenomenon that has many facets worth investigating, and the understanding that results may have far-reaching implications for society.

3.3 Summation and General Conclusion to Literature Review

The literature included in Parts I and II of this review has ranged from broad curricula matters in education to specific approaches to teaching academic writing in subject English and the problems encountered in that process; it has included Linguistic theory and research, mainly from SFG, which is relevant to academic writing, Psycholinguistic data which supports the validity of the Linguistic material and the concept of written Argumentation which has connections both to the purpose of academic writing and its linguistic manifestation, and to educational matters with regard to learning to think and write in the argumentative mode.

It has been shown that teaching academic writing is a particularly challenging aspect of the secondary curriculum despite the politically motivated attempts to pin down precisely what teachers should be doing in the classroom in every subject, through national curricula. Extensive descriptions of what is required for top grades in subject English have not meant significantly greater clarity for teachers in how to help students achieve the objectives handed down to them. This is largely because the specific linguistic characteristics of the writing of top graded secondary students are not fully known. Teachers are limited to descriptions of what such writing is like, or what it achieves, or models of it, which they and the students must try to unravel in order to emulate. But, they may not have sufficient linguistic terminology to identify key features such as grammatical structures or the metafunctional values of those structures. Nor are they required to have anything more than rudimentary training in written Argumentation.

At the start of the Literature Review, in chapter 2, it was mentioned that applied research inevitably faces the challenge of integrating findings back into the relevant context. The theoretical material considered in this chapter may seem very far from the average senior secondary English Literature classroom and in fact, it is. It is not appropriate for teachers of English, or any subject in which academic writing is required, to have to negotiate areas of Applied Linguistics, Psycholinguistics and theories of Argumentation before becoming teachers. However, applied research may be able to identify aspects of all of these, which are helpful to the practice of teaching academic writing and formulate the information in such a way that it is accessible to teachers and makes their task more transparent.

3.4 Research-based¹² Rationale for the study

This section clarifies the approach taken to the study in light of previous research. It briefly covers the findings of my earlier research (Meyer, 2005a & b), which motivated the selection of the sentence elements explored, and the findings of the pilot study, which refined the methodology used. Finally, some research projects, which have undertaken similar investigations in different contexts, are presented as precedents for aspects of the methodology.

The earlier research, referred to above, compared argumentative writing assessed as “Excellent” to that assessed as “Not-Achieved”¹³ by native and non-native speakers in subject English. A framework was designed which traced the presence of certain linguistic and cognitive features in the data. It was found that one particular linguistic feature, namely, the marked and/or multiple sentence Theme (the deliberate initial placement of sentential elements other than the grammatical Subject) clearly distinguished writing graded as “Excellent”. In fact, it not only plainly distinguished the “Excellent” native-speaking writing from “Not-Achieved” writing but also from the “Excellent” non-native writing which implies that it is a key instrument used by skilled writers. The native-speaking writers of “Excellent”- grade essays used sentence initial elements as a metadiscourse that enabled the reader to follow their thinking more easily. It was as if they were holding a (unilateral) conversation with the reader.

Such sentence Themes were extracted for special analysis in that research. The descriptors designated for the categorisation of marked or multiple sentence Themes, according to their linguistic metafunctions, were the same as those described in the Literature Review above, following Halliday and Matthiessen (2004): marked topical (ideational, emphasising an aspect of the topic but not the Subject), textual (emphasising the organisational place of the point in the text) and interpersonal (emphasising the writer’s perspective). All writers used multiple sentence Themes, but the native speaking “Excellent” writing contained more textual Themes than other groups in the study. They were also the only group who integrated two or sometimes even three metafunctions within a sentence Theme. This

noticeable difference made sentence initial elements a potential area for further research in the context of senior secondary writing and motivated this study.

In preparation for this PhD project, a pilot study was undertaken using five essays graded as A+ on English A-Level standards. The sentence initial elements were examined to identify which grammatical categories would be needed for the analysis and how they should be distinguished. For example, whether to include initial non-finite clauses as a separate category or include them with Adjuncts, and whether to consider grammatical Subjects with weighty, elaborated nominalisations as marked topical Theme or not. The final categories chosen and the defining criteria used were determined by what seemed most efficient in the analysis of these essays. One finding of this study was the greater tendency of the writers to use Adjuncts in initial or medial sentences within paragraphs and a lesser tendency to use them in paragraph terminal sentences. (See Meyer, 2007, for more details on this.) Also of interest in the pilot study was the fact that paragraph initial and terminal sentences had an almost identical distribution of marked topical, textual and interpersonal thematic elements, while paragraph medial sentences had a completely different distribution. Most interesting of all was that boundary sentences (initial and terminal) had fewer marked / multiple initial elements than medial sentences. (Details on the latter two results are available in Meyer, 2008b). Finally, interpersonal elements accounted for the majority of multiple sentence initial elements in the pilot study and suggested the characterisation of sentence initial elements in the title of this thesis as: “unilateral conversations”. This accords with Thompson (2005, pp. 786 - 787) who emphasised the interpersonal as central rather than peripheral in academic writing (see section 3.2.6).

If the control of sentence Theme through the deliberate marking and multi-functional nature of initial elements is a key to skilled academic writing (which the research reviewed in this chapter also suggests) then analysis and description of it can make this information available to teachers and their students. The effect of this may not only be more successful academic writing but, more importantly, the stimulation of cognitive development in the argumentative mode of thinking.

The diagram below portrays visually the concept of markedness and multi-functionality in sentence initial elements and its operation. It could be compared to a camera lens which can zoom in to the heart of the message: the ideational material (topical elements) – the most basic unit; it can pull back to include a wider view which includes the position of that concept in relation to others and the whole argument (elements with a textual metafunction); it can pull back further to include an evaluation of the concept (elements with an interpersonal metafunction). Unlike a camera lens, however, the skilled writer can perform two, perhaps even all three of these within the sentence initial elements, without a compromise in focus: in skilled writing, the reader is never confused as to the point being made, how that point relates to others and what opinion the writer has about the point in focus. This research is an attempt to investigate how skilled writers, by linguistic means, manage to maintain perspective from all three aspects and still convey the focus to the reader.

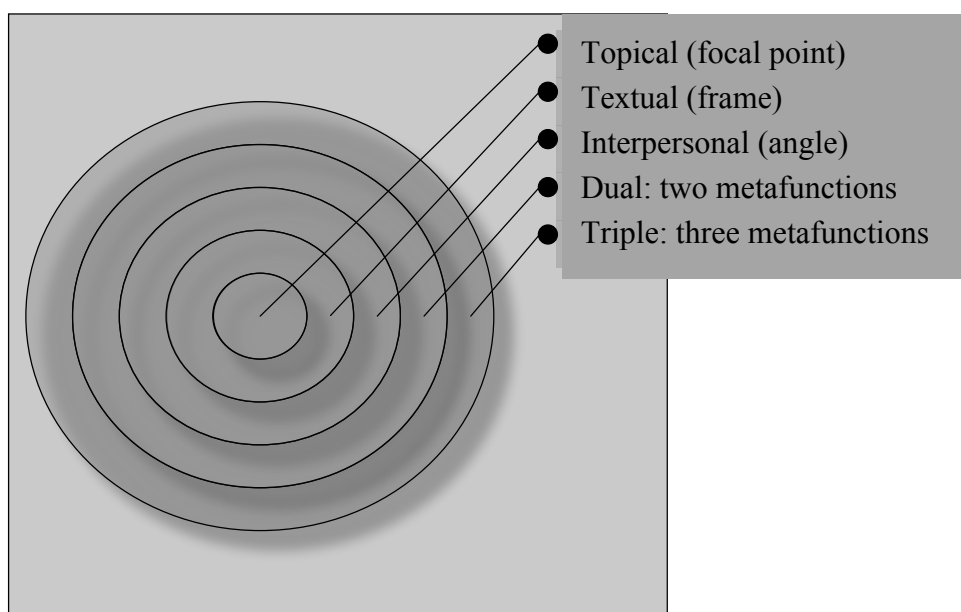


Figure 3.1: Diagram indicating widening breadth of focus facilitated by multiple / marked sentence initial elements in skilled academic writing

At this point it is important to reinforce that this research uses sentences rather than clauses as a unit of analysis. This facilitates the study of “sentence initial elements”, which obviously are those which steer (or orient) the reader rather than those that may be clause initial but medially located in the sentence (such as in complex or compound sentences).

Precedent for this comes from the array of studies that focus on sentence initial elements, such as many of those presented in Part II of the Literature Review and those presented below, which have involved a similar enterprise to the present one but with contextual and methodological differences.

Gosden (1993) examined the use of *unmarked Theme* (grammatical Subject) by writers of scientific research articles to show how “sentence initial thematic choices help a writer stage the appropriate flow of social interaction through this genre” (p. 58) and achieve “success in written communication ... by ... [the] ability to judge the appropriate balance between interactional ‘human face’ discourse and impersonal topic-based discourse” (p. 56). He defined different kinds of grammatical subject Themes and counted the instances of their appearance in the different sections of a research article, demonstrating how each section acquires a certain quality, produced by the type of Theme most commonly used in it. The “Results Section” is higher in “real world” (topical) thematic elements while the “Discussion Section”, for instance, is higher in “interactional” (interpersonal) thematic elements. It was anticipated that the academic essays used in the present research, being discursive or argumentative in quality, would be most similar to the Discussion Section findings of Gosden’s research.

Lovejoy (1998) analysed a psychology research article to analyse the kinds of sentential Themes that occur in academic writing because in earlier research (of his own) he had found that “The beginnings of sentences – or what I am calling sentential themes – were especially important in helping the writers ... to communicate their ideas successfully” (p. 3). He found that most Themes were (obviously, by definition) unmarked and used to carry given (or previously mentioned) information but when writers used marked or multiple Themes, they did so for reasons such as the following: to add new information to a given concept by use of a modifier; to avoid “uninformative repetition” (p. 7); to act as a transition device, by explicating the connection of new information to previously given information, for instance, adverbial clauses in sentences which are paragraph initial, may link the information of the previous paragraph to that coming in the next; to highlight the introduction of a new topic, for example, through a “ ‘there’ construction ... which allows for new information to be moved into the theme... but not at the beginning where readers

would expect to find given information. In succeeding sentences ... it [the new information] can be used as given information” (pp. 7 - 8). To put new information sentence initially would disturb the cognitive processing flow but if the writer wants to establish the new information as a topic to be referred to thereafter by “it”, it must be introduced as a nominal group. (This concurs with Gundel et al. 2003, see Literature Review Part II section 3.2.8). The answer is to use the existential “There” construction to place new information where it is expected from a cognitive processing perspective – at the end - but highlight it in the text as a nominal entity so that it can become the next topic (grammatical Subject in thematic place or sentence initial element). The uses of sentence Theme observed in Lovejoy’s study are accounted for by a metafunctional analysis from SFG theory and it is also interesting to note his tendency to look to cognitive processing explanations for his findings.

North’s (2005) comparative study of Science- and Arts- background History of Science students’ writing (more fully presented in the General Rationale section of the Methodology chapter as justification for the selection of arts students for this study) recognises that “The selection of theme is bound up with decisions on what to make more or less prominent within a text, and may therefore be expected to reflect ideological and epistemological positioning.” (p. 434). She approached her analysis of Theme by identifying sentences which had multiple or marked sentence initial elements, classifying these as “Orienting” and categorising them as “textual”, “interpersonal” and “experiential” and then identifying the “topical” Theme (or grammatical Subject). Once classified, categorised and counted, she discusses the effect of the use of “Orienting” and “Topical” Themes in the students’ essays, concluding that “the more frequent use of orienting themes in the ‘arts’ essays creates space for the ‘interplay between data and argument’ ... providing an epistemic framing of the phenomenal content” (p. 449).

The examination of sentence initial elements undertaken in this research is similar to that of North (2005), with the exclusion of a category for what she calls “topical theme” (the grammatical Subject) as opposed to “orienting theme” (marked Theme). Instead, topical Theme in this research will be limited to grammatically marked sentence initial elements with an ideational metafunction (such as circumstantial Adjuncts). This allows for a

separate “unmarked” category, which comprises sentences with only the grammatical Subject in initial position. In addition a more specified grammatical categorisation of sentence initial structures is undertaken than in North’s study, so that the grammatical means by which the metafunctions are conveyed may be analysed and, of course, the position of each sentence in its paragraph and in the essay as a whole is noted. Finally, since the data collected included writing done in two different conditions, timed and untimed, the difference these conditions make to the features under consideration are also noted.

There is substantial acknowledgement of the significance of sentence initial elements in academic writing and a clear need for better ways of approaching instruction in this, especially at senior secondary level when academic writing is first introduced. The research project undertaken for this thesis, with the theoretical backing of SFG to investigate sentence initial elements, may be able to make a contribution to the improvement of academic writing instruction in schools.

3.5 Research Questions

The research questions below are intended to extract the most useful information from the data with regard to what may be helpful to teachers of academic writing at secondary level. (Of course, this does not mean that it could not be used at other levels.) The questions guided the application of the theory to the project and the methodological design presented in chapter 4. They are separated into theoretical questions (1 - 4), which the data analysis addresses and the key question of application (question 5).

Theoretical Questions:

1. To what extent, and in what sentence initial grammatical and metafunctional characteristics, do essays written in a timed condition differ from those written in an untimed condition?
2. To what extent is each grammatical structure (marked and unmarked) represented in sentence initial elements in each of the nine locations¹⁴ in skilled essays?
3. To what extent is each metafunction represented in the sentence initial elements in each of the nine locations in the skilled essays?¹⁵
4. Are there any significant tendencies apparent in the above findings and if so, what are they?

Application Question:

5. How may this study be used to improve the linguistic resources available for instruction in academic writing?

¹ Several sources are cited from other references in sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 for a variety of reasons: some are translations (Weil, 1844; Mathesius, 1939), some are older sources and not readily available Daneš (1964), Firbas (1964) and the first edition of Halliday's *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985) is out of print as it is now in its third edition (2004).

² As a structural concept, the term "Theme" is capitalised in SFG.

³ Huddleston's paper was part of an acrimonious debate in the late 1980s to early 1990s, largely over definitions and terminology. The debate is now in abeyance and Martin's paper (1992) covers the issues thoroughly. Since this research uses the Hallidayan SFG model, the terminology used by Huddleston, which aligns more with American theorists' model has not been pursued further.

⁴ Sentences beginning with "it" where "it" has no specified referent e.g. "It's late", or, has an extra-posed referent, "It's surprising that John went to London", or, refers to a single, deferred entity, "It's a bit of a nuisance, the decorating of the room". (These examples from Kaltenböck, 2003, pp. 247 – 248 typify, respectively, what he terms "prop it", "anticipatory it" and "referring it" along a gradient of increasing specificity but more generally, they are known by any of the terms "empty", "dummy" or "anticipatory" it).

⁵ 'the expression of a single proposition via bi-clausal syntax', such as 'It is champagne that I like.' or 'What I like is champagne.' rather than 'I like champagne.' (Lambrecht, 2001, p. 463 & p. 467). In SFG the former structure (it-cleft) is termed Theme predication and the latter, called thematic equatives, are considered pseudo-clefts as the sentence is still a single clause, with a nominalisation as Subject.

⁶ These are sentences in which 'There' expresses an existential notion rather than an adverbial one, such as in 'There is reason to believe ...'

⁷ Iddings' research methodology did not contribute to the research-based rationale for this study (see section 3.4) as Iddings' paper was not published until 2008, and this research was proposed in 2006 and confirmed in 2007. This is probably unfortunate as a comparison would have been interesting but it does open the way for future comparative research of this nature, using either methodology.

⁸ See chapter 1, Introduction or chapter 4, Methodology, section 4.3, "Specific Rationale for the Analytical Method", for definition of "sentence initial elements" as opposed to "Theme".

⁹ Andrews distinguishes between 'argument', 'a set of propositions (called premises) and a proposition (called its conclusion)' (p. 109) and 'argumentation', 'the process of arguing' (p. 110).

¹⁰ The researchers distinguish "segmentation markers" from "discourse markers". The former make a semantic contribution to the text, e.g. "The following year, ..." (segmentation marker) whereas the latter do not, e.g. "Finally, ..." (discourse marker).

¹¹ Strictly a "marked" Theme in SFG refers to a topical (ideational metafunction) element that precedes the grammatical Subject, thus a marked topical Theme. Elements with textual or interpersonal metafunctions that are either "inherently" or "characteristically" thematic are not termed "marked Themes" but much of the research into such elements refers to them as "markers" as seen above and it is in that sense that they are called "marked sentence initial elements" in this research.

¹² The rationale for the study given here is based on previous research done by others and myself; the General Rationale for the study and the specific Analytical Rationale are stated in chapter 4 (Methodology).

¹³ New Zealand's NCEA qualification has four grades of assessment: *Not Achieved*, *Achieved*, *Achieved with Merit*, *Achieved with Excellence*. The latter is referred to as "Excellent" or "Excellence" for brevity.

¹⁴ These nine locations are: Introduction: initial, medial, terminal; Paragraph (sentences in the body of the essay, not the introduction or conclusion): initial, medial, terminal; Conclusion: initial, medial, terminal.

¹⁵ The unmarked ideational metafunction in the form of unmarked topical Theme (the grammatical Subject), being obligatory, is excluded; hence the topical elements noted are those experiential elements that differ from the grammatical Subject.

Chapter 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction to Methodology

4.2 General Rationale for the Project

4.3 Specific Rationale for the Analytical Method

4.4 Data Collection Procedure

4.5 Ethical Considerations

4.6 Data Analysis

4.7 Conclusion to Methodology

4.1 Introduction to Methodology

This chapter includes sections: 4.2 General Rationale for the project, 4.3 Specific Rationale for the Analytical Method, 4.4 Data Collection Procedure, 4.5 Ethical Considerations, 4.6 Data Analysis, with subsections for Grammatical Analysis (4.6.1), Metafunctional Analysis (4.6.2), Other sentence types (4.6.3), Statistical Analysis (4.6.4), and 4.7 Conclusion to Methodology. The general rationale is underpinned by both the current situation in academic writing instruction in the contexts discussed in chapter 2 of the Literature Review and the Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) approach to investigating and describing text, presented in chapter 3 of the Literature Review. In this case, top-rated essays in English Literature at Year 13 level have been chosen for investigation. The research questions have developed from the application of selected aspects of the theoretical model of SFG to the students' writing to determine what information may be derived from the exercise that may be helpful to teachers and students. The analytical method entails grammatical and metafunctional terms and concepts of SFG, most recently set out in Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and elucidated by Bloor and Bloor (2004), Morley (2000) and Thompson (2004). Minor additions to, or deviations from, this grammatical model will be detailed in the relevant sections of this chapter. Appendix E contains an example of the full grammatical and metafunctional analysis of one sentence from each location.

4.2 General Rationale for the Project

“Teachers have to continually rethink what they do if their practice is not to become irrelevant or moribund” according to Christie and Mission (2002, p. 17). It is unlikely that in any area of instruction, secondary teachers would claim to have developed the ultimate methodology for imparting to students the knowledge or skills that they need to achieve a top grade. The literature reviewed in chapter 2 suggests that there is room for improvement in the subject English. Academic writing appears to be one of the aspects of that subject which causes concern for teachers of English. It is an aspect over which they have, perhaps, less control than, for instance, giving students insights into the literature studied. Investigation into academic writing is, then, justified, especially since it is required not only in English, but many other subjects at secondary level and continues to be a necessary skill in many forms of tertiary education, where, in fact, sustained writing becomes increasingly important: “the higher you go up the system, the more true this becomes: the essay has a stronger grip ... when you come to do a Ph.D. the course and the essay have become identical” (Womack, 1993, p. 42).

But skill in academic writing does not only have pragmatic value. Many theorists have argued for the importance of sustained writing in terms of cognitive development. Writing is one of the productive skills and requires intentional arrangement of thoughts into a coherent text – or as Vygotsky so much more poetically puts it, “deliberate structuring of the web of meaning” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 100). In order to construct a text in which one’s thoughts become accessible to another’s mind, those thoughts must be carefully arranged, structured and then expressed. This makes writing a discipline of abstract, symbolic mental manipulation. Educational value also lies in the cognitive demand writing places on writers to organise and assess their own thinking about, and understanding of, an area of knowledge. Many theorists and researchers consider academic writing to be under-researched and not taught explicitly enough even though this type of writing stimulates advanced cognitive development (Andrews, 2005; Christie, 1995, 2002 & 2005; Emig, 1977; Fitzgerald and Shanahan, 2000; Limbrick and Ladbrook, 2003; Myhill, 1999 & 2001; Odelle, 1980; Wilkinson, 1990; Wilkinson, Barnsley, Hanna & Swan, M, 1980).

Since this suggests that academic writing is a worthwhile aspect of secondary education to investigate, the challenge is, how to undertake the exploration. In New Zealand, most schools begin teaching sustained academic writing in Year 9 or 10 on fairly basic exercises and students are generally given formulaic type essay structures to help them get started (Meyer, 2008a). Some writers do not move much beyond these formulae but others develop impressive skills that go far beyond what a formulaic approach can offer. This is what all teachers intend but achieving it is by no means straightforward and has led some teachers to consider it “intuitive” (Meyer, 2008a). While this may very well be the case, just as talent in any field is unequally distributed amongst the population, it does not mean that we cannot attempt to improve our efforts to help students to progress towards their goals. If we want to know what they are aiming to achieve by Year 13, then a reasonable way to approach this is to examine Year 13 writing that is considered merit-worthy. By describing such writing in some depth from a linguistic perspective, it may be possible to identify certain linguistic features (both grammatical and metafunctional) or even patterns that could be used in instruction at earlier levels.

To some extent, this is what writing formulae are all about. They offer structural information and nowadays, some include grammatical items, such as textual Adjuncts, for their semantic value in assisting to bring about the structural organisation. This is progress in the right direction but before actually offering students a selection of linguistic items to use, it would be useful to check to what extent the top-rated writers are actually using those items, and whereabouts in their essays they are placing them. Only a detailed study of their writing can do this. The reason for the choice of SFG in this project is that it offers some concepts that a traditional grammatical description of language does not. It identifies and names grammatical structures that sit at the interface between grammatical and functional organisation. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the structure called “thematicised comment”, such as in this sentence, from the sample:

*It is obviously true that good judgement is rarely exercised by characters with regard to other people. (pit 105)*¹

Traditionally, we might simply describe this as a main clause with a bound subordinate clause following, or a post- or extra-posed clause, since the insertion of the dummy Subject “It” means that the sentence head that “It” stands for, *that good judgement is rarely*

exercised, is placed later in the superordinate clause. SFG identifies this arrangement grammatically but also allows a deeper analysis by recognising that the function of the initial clause is to offer an evaluation of the subsequent one, effectively imparting the writer's opinion. Thus, the grammatical structure serves an interpersonal function between writer and reader. The grammatical main clause then is *semantically* subordinate to the grammatically subordinate clause, in terms of information-bearing in the sentence.

It is exactly this kind of information that teachers could find useful when helping students to find a way to express their personal response without using the less sophisticated "I think that ...". If it is possible to identify when skilled writers use this and a number of other structures identified by SFG, for interpersonal, textual or topical emphasis, then a great deal of insight may be added to instruction in academic writing. This project aims to do this by analysing skilled writing in a systematic way.

Finally, the rationale for choosing essays written by students in English Literature is based on the fact that if we are going to describe the kind of writing we want students to be able to produce, then we should examine the best writing. That the best writing is produced by students in Arts and Humanities subjects is not purely an assumption but verified in a study done by North (2005), mentioned in the Literature Review Part II. She investigated the fact that students whose previous study at university had included predominantly Arts subjects appeared to produce essays that were consistently graded more highly in a "History of Science" course than those doing the same course whose previous study had included predominantly Science subjects. The students were matched as closely as possible for age, gender and level of formal educational background. When North considered the key difference between the writing of Arts and Science students, the factor she identified as mainly responsible for the superior writing, was the Arts students' use of sentence Theme to construe a concept of knowledge as interpretive rather than simply factual. This higher level of cognitive functioning may be described as stepping back from the argument so that a wider view or interpretation of its place and significance within the domain of knowledge may be achieved (North, 2005).

The Arts students achieved this wider view by using

both textual themes to make explicit the structure of the argument *and* interpersonal themes to indicate ... degree of commitment to the views [presented] while the ‘science’ [students] ... although dealing with similarly complex ideas, offer[ed] a series of bald assertions Through the use of these Themes, the Arts students tended to provide more explicit guidance to the reader on how to construct a coherent interpretation of the text.
(North, 2005, p. 441)

Thus, the Arts students step outside of the ideational content of the writing and conduct a kind of conversation with the reader in which a view of knowledge is negotiated while the Science students write as if “dealing with an objective reality” (North, 2005, p. 441).

Additionally, as justification for Literature essays being chosen, Christie’s description of a skilled writer’s literary essay shows that these both require and demonstrate sophisticated thinking and writing:

... the student constructs qualities through use of quite elaborate nominal groups. On the one hand the qualities are in the book On the other hand, the qualities are in the characters

In order to write in this manner, the writer needed to distance herself from the events of the novel to construct an argument and an interpretation, not about the details of who did what to whom, but rather about the values and moral positions that give the novel its point. To build such an argument, she had considerable recourse to the grammar of written language in order to construct statements about the moral positions of some of the characters. Herein lie some of the critical features which English students must master in order to construct abstract thought and reasoning in their writing.

(Christie, 2002b, p. 68)

The discovery of the distinction between Arts and Science-background students in North’s research and Christie’s description of literary writing at secondary level underpin the decision to use essays written by Year 13 students of English for the research. Since the object of the research is to use the most skilled secondary writing to identify and describe tendencies or patterns in the use of sentence initial elements with regard to grammatical structures and metafunctions, the information rendered by English literature essays may be extremely useful.

4.3 Specific Rationale for the Analytical Method

As partly explained in the introduction and further in chapter 3, section 3.2.4 the SFG construct of Theme has a positional aspect, two functional aspects and a grammatical delimitation. It is the “point of departure”, it “grounds” and “orients” the clause or sentence and it ends with the first experiential sentence element (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 58 & 64). For this research, it was decided to retain the positional and functional aspects of Theme because they would give some insight into how the skilled writers are approaching each sentence they write (“point of departure”) in order to make it relevant with regard to its content (“grounding”) and its role (“orienting”). However, the grammatical delimitation seemed to be somewhat restrictive for the purposes of this study since many sentences included elements directly following the initial experiential element (the Theme boundary in SFG) that still seem to be involved in an “orienting” function. This is partly because the unit of analysis was the sentence rather than the clause. (Theme / Rheme analysis may be undertaken at both structural levels.) When more than one clause was involved, frequently, the whole initial clause appeared to be entailed in the “orienting” function and it seemed that it was not until the Subject group of the following clause was reached that the sentence was truly “grounded”. Alternatively, in some cases, the initial experiential element was followed directly by an element that very clearly had an “orienting” function. Thus, it was decided to undertake an analysis of sentence initial elements rather than only Theme. The examples below will illustrate the theoretical ideas discussed above.

In a sentence such as the following, the unmarked topical Theme (experiential component, ideational metafunction) would be the proper noun, *Pinter*:

Pinter perhaps suggests that Mick's search for power through experimentation of different methods, while achieving what he desires, is futile as he already had what he wanted before he started. (cmu 132)

Clearly, the second word, a modal Adjunct (an interpersonal element), *perhaps*, has an orienting function in that it conveys the writer's invitation to the reader to agree with the statement to follow. To limit the analysis to Theme would have meant overlooking such elements, which could still be considered “initial”, and the considerable contribution they

make to the “unilateral conversation” conducted within sentence initial position by skilled writers.

For this reason, it was decided to analyse all sentence initial elements, up to the main verb of the main clause. In the case of initial projecting clauses², Theme predication³ and thematicised comment⁴, this was extended up to (but not including) the verb of the subordinate clause immediately following. This was because, as indicated in the example above and the example of thematicised comment in section 4.2, the main clause in these sentence types is not the main clause semantically speaking but serves as a kind of introduction to the subordinate clause, which then carries the main information load of the sentence. This means that in these sentences readers are not truly “grounded” until they encounter the initial experiential (ideational metafunction) element of the subordinate clause, and, any Adjuncts directly following that element may still be involved in “orienting”.

The same is true for sentences that begin with a subordinate clause. Readers remain airborne, as it were, throughout the subordinate clause, until they reach the Subject group of the main clause. Consider the sentence below:

Although the directors' intentions for making films are varied, ranging from to express an idea to showing an event, films are not enjoyable if the characters are not believable. (imt 29)

Throughout the reading of the sentence initial subordinate clause, the reader is aware that this is only a concessive addition to the main clause of the sentence and that it must be held in mind while seeking out the chief idea of the sentence. The whole initial subordinate clause was considered “sentence initial” in such cases.

In the following example, the reader must hold in mind a circumstantial element and then a concessive one, before finally “grounding” with the personal pronoun *he*. However, the writer is not finished. The next element, *still* adds an (interpersonal) emphasiser, with an orienting function, before the sentence finally resolves.

When asked by Kim to aid a robbery, although he knows it is the wrong thing to do, he still proceeds out of his love for her. (cmu 143)

Sentences such as the ones above were few in the sample but they could well be the ones that account for the depth, personal engagement and other qualities demanded in the descriptors for excellence or A-grades presented in chapter 2 of the Literature Review. Extending the analysis, therefore, to sentence initial elements seemed a judicious decision for this project. This is the rationale for identifying and describing them and taking note of locational differences in top-rated student writing.

The concept of “marked” Theme was mentioned in the introduction but not fully explicated there due to its complexity. It was explained in chapter 3, section 3.2.4, that in SFG, when a clause or sentence begins with an experiential element that is not the grammatical Subject, it is categorised as having a “marked topical Theme” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 83). When the topical Theme (marked or unmarked) is preceded by textual and/or interpersonal elements not involved in the experiential meaning, then the Theme is considered “multiple”. These terms were simplified for this research in order to make the findings more straightforward for discussion. The first experiential element was still categorised as marked (topically) if it was not the grammatical Subject, but textual and interpersonal metafunctional elements preceding the experiential element were also simply called “marked” (textual or interpersonal) elements rather than “multiple” (especially since there was often only one such element before the topical Theme and the term “multiple” would then seem confusing⁵.) In fact Halliday and Matthiessen do state: “A Theme that is something other than the Subject, in a declarative clause, we shall refer to as a **marked theme**” (2004, p. 73). Such textual and interpersonal elements have nothing to do with the Subject and play “no part in the experiential meaning of the clause” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 79). They actually represent a different order of reality from the experiential element. Textual and interpersonal elements allow writers to “create space for the ‘interplay between data and argument’ ... providing an epistemic framing of the phenomenal content” (North, 2005, p. 449). The writer momentarily steps outside of the experiential reality of the essay content and orients the reader as to the role of the sentence to follow.

In keeping with the SFG “marked Theme” concept, this analysis of marked sentence initial elements was only applied to the *first* element. In other words, if the textual and/or interpersonal markers appeared after an initial nominal group containing the experiential

element, which served as the topical element, the sentence was not categorised as beginning with a marked metafunctional element. However, ensuing textual and interpersonal elements were counted up and recorded as contributing to the total number of textual or interpersonal elements within *all* sentence initial elements. (Definitions of “marked” grammatical and metafunctional elements and examples are given in the grammatical and metafunctional analyses below, sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2, respectively, and a detailed illustrative reminder is given at the start of chapter 5, Results, section 5.2.2.)

Recognising the distribution of linguistic metafunctions, ideational (translating to topical Theme), textual and interpersonal, within students’ writing, in itself, would be inadequate for facilitating better instruction in academic writing. Just as telling a student that she needs to include her personal opinion in her writing is unhelpful without telling her how to do so, so telling her that she should include the interpersonal metafunction in the conclusion initial sentence would also be unhelpful. What may be beneficial is a selection of grammatical structures that are useful for performing the interpersonal (or topical or textual) metafunction. Thus, students may be introduced to these structures and the metafunctional value they have. They could then choose among the structures available for improving the interpersonal quality or textual organisation or topical emphasis as the case may be in their writing.

In line with this purpose, it was decided to undertake separately an analysis of the grammatical structures and metafunctional elements within sentence initial position. Halliday and Matthiessen’s cline of unmarked to most marked initial grammatical elements (2004, p. 73; see chapter 3, section 3.2.4) was used as the basis for the grammatical analysis and full details are given below (section 4.6.1). Thereby, the contribution of each grammatical structure to each metafunction for each sentence location could be determined. In this way, it was possible to ascertain which metafunctions appeared in specific locations within the essay and how they were achieved grammatically. While there was (and is) no intention to construct a metafunctional/grammatical template for successful writing on this highly linguistic basis, there is the possibility that the information gained from this exercise may assist teachers and, in turn, students, in understanding how skilled writers construct and conduct their writing. Hence, if “grammar is seen as a resource for making meaning ... a network of interrelated meaningful choices” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 31) then

that resource may be made more explicit for students so that they have the necessary means to make “meaningful choices”.

4.4 Data Collection Procedure

Twenty schools in the Auckland East and central areas were approached to participate in this project by collecting and contributing English Literature essays graded as “Excellent” or at least high “Merit” by NCEA Level 3 standards or graded as “A” on Cambridge International Examination standards. They were from a variety of socio-economic areas and included state, private and integrated⁶ schools. Fourteen were high schools and the remainder were composite⁷ schools. Two schools did not have any suitable candidates for the project. Six schools were either too busy with general activities or with special extra-mural activities that coincided with the research project. The remaining 12 schools did participate and contributed from 1 to 25 essays with the median number contributed being 7. Understandably, the size of the student body of each school to some extent influenced the number of suitable candidates they had. All together 109 essays were collected.

Schools were approached and invited to participate through the principals and the Heads of English Departments by means of letters of invitation which gave a general explanation of the project and a sample of the letters and consent forms to be given to potential candidates and their parents. (See Appendices A and B.) Follow-up telephone calls were made to each principal and if they agreed to participate, appointments were made to meet the teachers to be involved. Three schools chose to participate through postal and telephonic communication, as staff members were too busy to meet in person. An offer was made to meet all students who were suitable candidates, in order to explain the project more fully to them. Only five schools arranged such a meeting for students; however, most schools expressed that they would have liked to have done so but found it extremely difficult to co-ordinate it with the great variety of activities that students are involved in.

Teachers of English at Year 13 level were also invited to participate in a semi-structured interview⁸ to discuss their approach to teaching academic writing and the particular difficulties they experienced with this aspect of the English syllabus. Twenty-three teachers from nine schools agreed to be interviewed. With consent, these interviews were recorded and the most frequently expressed views were extracted and compiled in an article which

was then submitted to and published in the New Zealand English teachers' professional journal, *English in Aotearoa* (Meyer, 2008a).

Of the 109 essays collected, 103 were used in the study. Suitably completed consent forms did not accompany two essays. (These candidates' parents were overseas.) One essay was actually a transcription of an oral seminar, which had been delivered by the student and did not fit the genre of literary essay required. Three of the essays were clearly not of "Excellence" standard in the researcher's view, mainly due to the fact that they did not conform to the NCEA Level 3 descriptor: "Your essay should show accurate use and control of **writing conventions**" (NZQA, 2008b).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

As mentioned in section 4.4, Principals and Heads of Department were approached first and given written information regarding the project, including the letters of invitation and consent forms to be distributed to potential candidates. An offer was made to explain the project in more depth to teachers before the school agreed to take part, by means of an oral presentation using PowerPoint, but only one school opted for this. Seven of the twelve schools, however, did receive more detailed explanations from the researcher on an impromptu basis when the teacher interviews were conducted, which was after the school had agreed to participate in the project.

Teachers identified suitable student participants and invited them to participate. Similarly, an offer to explain the project in more detail to students by means of an oral and PowerPoint presentation was made and five schools arranged for this to take place. The letters of invitation and consent forms were sent home for students and parents to consider together. Consent was obtained for the use of essays from both the students who wrote them and their parents, for all essays used in the project. Teachers gave consent for the recorded interviews and for their comments to be used in any articles based upon the interviews, with the assurance of anonymity. At the researcher's request, teachers ensured that all essays were anonymous to the researcher by checking for, and removing, names and grades that students may have inadvertently left on their work and keeping the consent forms separate from the students' writing.

On the initial approach, consideration was offered to any students of a Maori cultural background, who may have required greater liaison between the researcher and the student's whanau. This was offered through the Principal and at his/her discretion. No Principals requested this for any student.

The English Department of each school received koha for their participation in the form of book vouchers and students received certificates of participation, which stated that their work had contributed to a study of senior secondary skilled writing.

See Appendix A for copies of the letters to students and teachers and Appendix B for copies of consent forms for students and their parents, and teachers. Appendix C contains the questions used for the semi-structured interviews with teachers.

4.6 Data Analysis

The essays were typed into Microsoft Office Excel for Mac. One sentence per line was typed into nine spreadsheets. Each spreadsheet was designated for a location within the essay, as indicated in Table 4.1, below. Essays written under timed (test and examination) and untimed (assignment) conditions were kept in separate sections on each spreadsheet.

Since the paragraph medial location obviously rendered far more sentences than the other locations, a random selection of these sentences was made, to equal the number of paragraph initial and paragraph terminal sentences (323 timed; 215 untimed). Since there were approximately five times as many paragraph medial as paragraph initial and terminal sentences, this was done by allocating a number, 1 - 5, to all the paragraph medial sentences and selecting all number fives, beginning at the end of the sample. Table 4.1, below, states the final numbers in each sentence location, under each time condition.

Table 4.1 Analytical categories for sentences and number in each category

	Sentence Location	Condition	Abbreviation	Number
1.	Introduction initial	timed	iit	66
		untimed	iiu	37
2.	Introduction medial	timed	imt	91
		untimed	imu	71
3.	Introduction terminal	timed	itt	63
		untimed	itu	37
4.	Paragraph initial	timed	pit	323
		untimed	piu	215
5.	Paragraph medial	timed	pmt	323
		untimed	pmu	215
6.	Paragraph terminal	timed	ptt	323
		untimed	ptu	215
7.	Conclusion initial	timed	cit	58
		untimed	ciu	38
8.	Conclusion medial	timed	cmt	79
		untimed	cmu	92
9.	Conclusion terminal	timed	ctt	66
		untimed	ctu	37
			TOTAL	2349

Sentences were then analysed according to the criteria specified below in the Grammatical (4.6.1) and Metafunctional (4.6.2) Analysis sections and (4.6.3) Other sentence type

section. (These criteria had been tested, and refined, by means of a pilot study undertaken prior to the full project. The decisions with regard to the full project which were influenced by the pilot study are given in more detail later in this chapter, in the relevant sections.) Once the full analysis was complete, an inter-rater reliability check was undertaken on a sample. An undergraduate university student with strong grammatical knowledge was trained in the analytical process and undertook an analysis of 900 sentences (100 from each sentence location, equalling 38% of the sample). The reliability was 99%, with nine sentences being queried. These related to the problematic category discussed in section 4.6.1.7 and to the designation of metafunction in some cases where this was somewhat interpretive. After discussion between researcher and moderator and close reference to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), these queries were resolved. Finally, the results in each category were compared across locations and for the two time conditions, using descriptive statistics and a number of inferential statistical tests were performed. (See 4.6.4.)

4.6.1 Grammatical Analysis

Ten non-exclusive grammatical categories were used for the grammatical analysis of sentence initial elements. Three of these were further divided for analysis. Table 4.2, below, broadly sets out the categories and more detailed explanations are presented thereafter.

Table 4.2 Grammatical categories used in analysing sentence initial elements

	Grammatical category	Definitions and Examples
1.	Unmarked	The sentence begins with the main clause, with a nominal group, or, pronominal group that refers to a nominal group in the sentence immediately preceding, as Subject. Example: <i>Many novels from children's fairy tales to adult's fiction novels use the contrasting of good and evil to present their ideas. They set examples through the antagonist fighting for the good of others.</i> (imu 108 & 109)
2.	Receptive (Passive voice)	The sentence begins with the direct object and the verb is in passive form, called 'receptive voice' in SFG. Example: <i>Polonius is stabbed while eavesdropping.</i> (pmu 539)

	Grammatical category	Definitions and Examples
		In the case of equative sentences (see no.7 on this Table), the verb is in receptive form if, when substituted with another verb, such as “represent” that verb would have to be in receptive voice. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 231). Example: <i>A common theme of Thomas Hardy's works is the dominance of men over women by their nature.</i> (iiu 102)⁹
3.	Heavy Nominal Group	The sentence begins with a nominal group that includes an embedded clause. Example: <i><u>A movie that was categorised under the genre of war</u> is Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now: Redux."</i> (imu 115)
4.	Adjunct	The sentence begins with an element grammatically unnecessary to, and distinct from, the elements of the main clause. Adjuncts may be circumstantial, modal or conjunctive in nature. Examples: <i><u>In the closing moments</u>^{circumstantial}, <u>however</u>^{conjunctive}, George says 'the party's over' and Nick and Honey start to leave, he says 'Goodnight' with a finality that supersedes anything Nick could respond with.</i> (pmu 451) <i><u>Of course</u>^{modal}, Adrien Brody's performance as Szpilman is the most powerful.</i> (pit 68)
5.	Subordinate clause	The sentence begins with a subordinate clause which has subject and finite verb intact. Example: <i><u>If the character of Szpilman was not so incredibly real and believable</u>, the film would not have been as brilliant as it is.</i> (cmt 11)
6.	Projecting clause	The sentence begins with a main clause the subject of which projects an idea in a subordinate clause following. Example: <i><u>I believe</u> that novels prominently use a clash of opposites to present ideas to the reader.</i> (iiu 84)
7.	Equative	The sentence takes the form of a ‘this = that’ construction where the complement may be identifying or attributive in nature. Or, the complement may be a circumstantial element. Examples: <i><u>The mood of melancholy is the necessary means by which these contrary states can be united</u>,^{identifying} as shown in Keats' analogy.</i> (pmu 355) <i><u>'The Pianist' is an award winning film of intense realism and emotion.</u>^{attributive}</i> (iiu 88) <i><u>The film's plot itself is about the protagonist's mission to assassinate another member in his army.</u>^{circumstantial}</i> (The US Army). (pit 157)

	Grammatical category	Definitions and Examples
8.	Theme predication	This is the sentence type known in traditional grammar as “cleft”. The sentence begins with “It”, or “There” as subject and transfers one of the clause constituents to predicate position while the remainder of the clause appears in a subordinate clause following, thus creating two clauses where one could have sufficed. Examples: <i>It is this concept of being incapable of uniting the two worlds in life</i> ^{subject} transferred to predicate <i>that evokes great pathos.</i> (cmu 136) <i>It is here</i> ^{adjunct transferred to clausal predicate} <i>Lear's flaw is further illustrated to us.</i> (pmt 221)
9.	Thematicised comment	The sentence begins with a main clause which serves to evaluate the information contained in the subordinate clause following. Example: <i>It is therefore not surprising that Hamlet develops a feeling of disgust towards Claudius and thus lays the basis for Hamlet's later vengeful intentions.</i> (ptu 490)
10.	Direct object or complement	The sentence begins with the direct object or (part of the) complement of the sentence, placed immediately in front of the subject. Example: <i>This principle,¹⁰ I believe, can be applied on several levels.</i> (itt 21)

4.6.1.1 Unmarked category

Apart from simple nominal groups, this category also included sentences that were categorised as beginning with heavy nominal groups, using receptive voice, projecting clauses, equatives and thematicised comments as long as the initial nominal group still served as the Subject of the main clause. Preposed attributives were the only exception where a constituent of a nominal group was considered grammatically marked, because being deliberately fronted, they assume thematic prominence. (See discussion of nominal group constituents, section 4.6.1.3, below, for a fuller explanation based on Thompson, 2004.) Otherwise, only sentences beginning with Adjuncts, subordinate clauses, Theme predication and direct object or Complement were considered marked in a grammatical sense. Although it is understood that at a more delicate level of analysis, some subordinate clauses are more commonly found in initial position (Diessel, 2005), and therefore would not necessarily be unusual, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 363ff.) symbolise the main

clause in a hypotactic (subordinating) relationship with “ α ” and the dependent (subordinate) with “ β ”; they list “dependent ... following dominant” ($\alpha \wedge \beta$) as the first option in such clause complex ordering, calling it “the basic method” or “progressive sequence” and the $\beta \wedge \alpha$ option, “a variation” or “regressive sequence” (p.393). This suggests that at the broadest level, the natural or unmarked way to start a sentence is with the main clause. They recognise that the regressive sequence is a thematic signal to re-orient the development of the text (p. 393). Bloor and Bloor in *The functional analysis of English*, based on SFG, (2004, p. 178) state:

The decision to put the dependent clause before or after the clause on which it depends (the dominant clause) is not an arbitrary one... . . .placing a clause at the beginning of a clause complex suggests a thematic role for that clause as a whole in relation to the other clause(s) within the complex.

- The thematically *unmarked* sequence is: dominant clause followed by dependent clause: α , β .

The non-arbitrary nature of selecting the subordinate clause as the initial element is recognised in traditional grammar with the distinction between loose and periodic sentences:

A periodic sentence is one where the main clause comes *at the end*

Periodic sentences can be used (a) *for emphasis* ... (b) *for suspense*

(Rose & Purkis, 1986, p. 83)

As discussed in chapter 3, placement of a subordinate clause in initial position disrupts the cognitive flow (Prideaux & Hogan, 1993) and places an additional cognitive processing burden on the reader (Diessel, 2005). Thus, it is an example of grammatical manipulation on the part of the writer for the purposes of discoursal fluency and can be considered marked.

Similarly, Theme predication begins with an anticipatory “It” and appears unmarked but “It” does not actually refer to any preceding noun but serves as a dummy Subject so that the notional Subject (that which would have served as Subject had the sentence taken its agnate form) may become predicate in the initial clause and receive the emphasis associated with the end-weighted position. Hence the writer grammatically manipulates the sentence by creating an additional clause purely for the purpose of discoursal emphasis. “The central function of it-clefts [is] to direct the addressee’s attention towards the EIF [Element In

Focus]” (Gomez-Gonzalez, 2004, p. 81). Once again, this is considered evidence of grammatical marking.

It is recognised that some grammatical elements, such as conjunctive Adjuncts are “**characteristically thematic**” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 83) but for clarity’s sake in this study, the statement: “We shall refer to the mapping of Theme onto Subject as the unmarked Theme of a declarative clause. The Subject is the element that is chosen as Theme unless there is good reason for choosing something else.” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 73) is taken as definitive. To be considered grammatically marked, then, the sentence initial element had to be something other than a nominal group serving as the Subject of the main clause.

4.6.1.2 *Receptive category*

This included the traditional passive (or receptive) voice sentences as exemplified in Table 4.2, above, but also, the receptive form of equative sentences, which requires further explanation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 233):

With the verb *be* one cannot tell whether the clause is ‘operative’ [active] or ‘receptive’ [passive]; the best strategy for analysing these is to substitute some other verb, such as *represent*, and see which voice is chosen.

An example from the sample will demonstrate this clearly:

The most obvious example of ‘good’ acting in ‘Hamlet’ is the play ‘The Mousetrap’.
(pit 259)

When the “to be” verb is replaced by “represent”, it is plain that the sentence is indeed in passive or receptive voice as the two hypothetical examples below show:

The most obvious example of ‘good’ acting in ‘Hamlet’ is represented by the play ‘The Mousetrap’

**The most obvious example of ‘good’ acting in ‘Hamlet’ represents the play ‘The Mousetrap’.*

Like the traditional passives, these sentences were not considered grammatically marked as they begin with the Subject of the main clause in the receptive voice.

4.6.1.3 Heavy nominal groups

This category had two sub-divisions, which were for the analysis of all nominal groups in terms of their constituents. On the spreadsheet, the first column of this category was checked if the nominal group contained verbal material (heavy nominal group as exemplified in Table 4.2, above). The second spreadsheet column of this category contained abbreviations, which indicated the constituents of the nominal group. Table 4.3, below, has examples of the constituents noted and additional comments follow for some categories, which are specific to SFG and require brief explanation.

Table 4.3 Nominal group constituents

	Grammatical constituent and abbreviation	Examples
1.	Preposed attributive (pa)	<i><u>Arguably one of Shakespeare's best plays</u>, 'Hamlet' is not only a gripping tale of ruthless murder, bloody revenge and corruption within the castle of Elsinore, but of human qualities and nature. (iiu 108)</i>
2.	Premodification (pm)	<i><u>Tragic</u> heroes are often depicted as self-sacrificing but Iago is by no means that. (imt 17)</i>
3.	Definition (def)	<i>Iago's judgement <u>of Othello and Cassio</u> however is accurate, and is the undoing of many and Iago's tool of manipulation. (itt 22)</i>
4.	Elaboration (el)	<i>Iago, <u>Othello's cunning and manipulative knave</u>, creates a play that ensures this. (itt 9)</i>
5.	Extension (ex)	<i>The author of 'The Wizard of Oz' <u>and the director of 'Alice in Wonderland'</u> have used fantasy in a similar way. (piu 548)</i>
6.	Enhancement (en)	<i>Advertisements <u>on television</u> showing a malnourished African infant tend to provoke one to change the channel rather than to call world vision. (pmu 431)</i>
7.	Discoursal Pronoun (pn)	<i><u>This</u> shows why conflict occurs and contributes to the drama of the play. (cmu 92)</i>
8.	1 st person pronoun (ppn)	<i>; <u>we</u> connect with his confused feelings. (ptt 46)</i>
9.	Projection (pr)	<i><u>That 'King Lear' is a world of inversions</u>, where convention is thrown away and orthodox values neglected, is a truism. (iit 38)</i>
10.	Embedded clause as nominalisation (ecnom)	<i><u>Killing Claudius</u> now would also save the seven lives. (ptu 481)</i>
11.	'What' nominalisation (whnom)	<i><u>What she says</u> however mostly builds on our knowledge of her through her action and inaction. (pmt 252)</i>
12.	'Fact' nominalisation (fact)	<i><u>The fact that Goneril and Regan feel that they have no real duty to their father</u> prompts his madness. (pit 317)</i>

Preposed attributives (example 1) are described by Thompson (2004, p. 163) as “a distinctive structure...where an attribute of the Subject, rather than following it...is placed in front... . The preposed attributive clearly has thematic prominence, and could therefore be taken as Theme.” For this reason, sentences beginning with preposed attributives (such as the example given in Table 4.3 above) were the only nominal group constituent taken as grammatically marked.

Premodification (example 2) and the two pronoun categories (examples 7 and 8) are familiar from traditional grammar, although the term “discoursal pronoun” (example 7) has been chosen to distinguish the use of “This’ or “These” to refer to whole propositions (sentences or arguments) rather than a single preceding noun or nominal group. Hence, the cohesive discoursal (textual) function of these terms is acknowledged (Francis, 1994).

Definition (example 3) involves both embedded clauses (defining relative) and embedded prepositional phrases. For example, respectively:

The patients that constitute the wards each carry a dilemma similar to the ones we carry ourselves. (pmu 337)

The mood of melancholy is the necessary means by which these contrary states can be united, as shown in Keats' analogy. (pmu 355)

Elaboration, Extension and Enhancement (examples 4, 5 and 6) are particular to SFG and may need some explanation. They are forms of group or clause expansion (as opposed to projection) in which the meaning remains “a direct representation of non-linguistic experience” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 441) whereas projection (example 9) involves “a representation of a (linguistic) representation” or an “idea of a phenomenon – a **metaphenomenon**, something of a different order of reality.” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 441). Elaboration involves the further specifying or describing of the head noun, as in example 4. Extension involves additive, alternative or adversative expansion of the head noun, as in example 5. Enhancement is the addition of circumstantial information to the head noun, which is an integral part of the nominal group and not separated from it by commas, as an Adjunct would be. Compare the following examples:

The abuse of authority in 'The Crucible' is an idea conveyed which helps the reader to learn about important human truths. (pit 283)

The power of the Earth, in both poems, is inevitably understood. (imt 53)

The latter example was counted as a “post-head minor circumstantial Adjunct of location”. The last four categories in Table 4.3 (9 -12) would qualify as heavy nominal groups as they all contain embedded verbal material.

The third column under the nominal group analysis served as an interface between the grammatical and metafunctional analysis. It was used only if the nominal group performed a metafunction other than the natural ideational (experiential) metafunction of a Subject (topical Theme). An abbreviation was used which indicated which metafunction was present and what grammatical structure or, in some cases, word category, was responsible for the metafunction so that these could later be collated with the metafunctional analysis. Examples are given in Table 4.4 below; note that examples may contain more than one structure but are used in each instance only to exemplify one structure:

Table 4.4 Metafunction and Grammatical Analysis

	Metafunction, Grammatical Structure and abbreviations	Examples
1.	Textual: Deictic (X:D)	<i><u>These</u> two events in history are politically charged, full of connotations of isolation, social upheaval and a lack of change.</i> (imu 129)
2.	Interpersonal: Classifier (I:C)	<i>The <u>main</u> idea of the film is 'Appearance vs reality'.</i> (itt 27)
3.	Interpersonal: Epithet (I:E)	<i>His <u>sadistic</u> treatment to Clov reveals his cruel and selfish nature.</i> (pmt 216)
4.	Textual: Numerative ¹¹ (X:N)	<i>The <u>second</u> reason Hamlet procrastinates is because of the nature of the request: revenge.</i> (pit 242)
5.	Interpersonal: Subjunct (I:SJ)	<i><u>Only</u> death can hold dominion over all.</i> (ctt 40)
6.	Interpersonal: Superlative (I:SP)	<i>The <u>most striking</u> example of this is Iago, the play's protagonist and villian.</i> (imt 13)
7.	Interpersonal: Head noun (I:H)	<i>The <u>debauchery</u> of the family is also taking effect in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" where children are trained by the government to report on any unorthodox behaviour on [by]¹² their parents.</i> (piu 531)
8.	Interpersonal: embedded clause (I:EC)	<i>The dishonest acting <u>condemned by Hamlet</u> is something quite different to the acting he loves for its ability to reveal truth.</i> (cmt 70)
9.	Interpersonal: hypotactic clause (I:HC)	<i>The main victims <u>whom we are led to pity</u> in 'Othello' are: Desdemona, Othello, Cassio and Emelia.¹³</i> (iit 9)

	Metafunction, Grammatical Structure and abbreviations	Examples
10.	Interpersonal: paratactic nominal group (I:PNG)	<i>The best films, <u>those with the most worthwhile things to say</u> do not restrict themselves to one genre but [use] a range of styles of different genres to communicate their purpose.</i> (imt 38)
11.	Textual: embedded prepositional phrase (X:EPP)	<i>The music <u>for these two</u> is a bridge between their two worlds, both of which are out of control, at the mercy of others.</i> (ptu 377)
12.	Textual: hypotactic prepositional phrase (X:HPP)	<i>The dehumanisation <u>in all the text[s]</u> is portrayed through excessive conformity and reliance on synthetic products to tune emotions.</i> (piu 544)
13.	Textual: discoursal ‘this’ (X:DTHIS) ¹⁴	<i><u>This</u> perhaps proves that there is truth to the idea of the cinematic voyeur.</i> (cit 22)
14.	Interpersonal: I, We (I:WE)	<i><u>We</u> also find out that Claudius in fact, was not repenting for his sins.</i> (pmu 538)
15.	Interpersonal: projection (I:PR)	<i><u>The answer that Coppola wanted to show</u> is that there is no victory because "they were fighting for the biggest nothing in history".</i> (pmt 166)
16.	Interpersonal: fact noun (I:CASE)	<i>Just <u>the fact that the novel was banned</u> is an indication of the conservatism of the 1950's America.</i> (ptt 8)
17.	Interpersonal: direct question (I:WHAT?) ¹⁵	<i><u>What makes killing acceptable in one instance and not in another?</u></i> (ptt 178)

4.6.1.4 Adjuncts

The Adjunct category was based on a combination of SFG (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and the theoretical analysis of this grammatical structure in *Grammar and Meaning* (Jackson, 1990). The reason for this was that it enabled a more helpful categorisation of types of Adjunct than either theoretical model would have done alone.

SFG offers the broad division of Adjuncts into circumstantial, conjunctive (discoursal) or modal (comment) types. Circumstantial elements are divided into ten specific sub-divisions: time, manner, place, extent, cause, contingency, accompaniment, role, matter and angle (Thompson, 2004, pp. 109 - 112). Conjunctives and modals are divided into 14 divisions each, according to their function; for example, “additive”, “dismissive”, “concessive” (conjunctive) and “probability”, “opinion”, “desirability” (modal) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 82). This produces too fine a grouping for the study (thirty-eight types) but merely classing them as circumstantial, conjunctive or modal, was too broad and

also would only provide a distinction that was based on metafunction. Strictly applied, SFG would treat circumstantial Adjuncts and having an ideational metafunction, conjunctives as textual and modal Adjuncts as interpersonal. Since this part of the analysis was intended to be grammatical, it was decided to keep the SFG theory in mind in terms of the broad categories, but look for a theoretical supplement that consisted of fewer types, which were grammatically specified.

The theory of Jackson (1990) provided a workable option for this purpose. Under the broad category of “Adverbial”, Jackson distinguishes obligatory Adjuncts from optional and separates Adjuncts from subjuncts, disjuncts and conjuncts. The obligatory Adjunct was not relevant to this study as it is by definition the necessary circumstantial information that follows a verb that opens up an Adjunct slot, such as the verb, “put” in “I put my book on the table.” Without the Adjunct, this sentence would be “ungrammatical” (Jackson, 1990, p. 51). The present study examines sentence initial elements and, therefore, only Adjuncts occupying initial position or directly post Subject (but before the verb) are relevant. This left the optional Adjuncts (circumstantials), subjuncts disjuncts and conjuncts.

Adjunct types finally determined for the study are defined below and Table 4.5, thereafter, gives examples. The following definitions are paraphrased from Jackson (1990, pp. 150 - 157):

1. **Adjunct:** most common type of adverbial, containing circumstantial information such as temporals and locatives which function as full, although not always obligatory, elements of a sentence, “Optional Adjuncts are ‘positionally mobile’ in a way that Subjects, Objects and Complements are not.” (Jackson 1990, p. 152).
2. **Subjunct:** adverbial element which does not function as a full element of the sentence but either modifies the sentence as a whole (viewpoint subjuncts) or are subordinate to another element of the sentence, relating to subject, time, emphasis, intensification or focus
3. **Disjunct:** a syntactically detached element usually separated by commas and appearing initially or early in the sentence and modifying the whole sentence by commenting on the style or content of what is being said in the sentence
4. **Conjunct:** grammatically similar to disjunct but with a joining function rather than a comment function

In line with SFG, all of these are categorised as Adjuncts in the present study, and subjuncts, disjuncts and conjuncts are treated as types of Adjunct. Circumstantial Adjuncts

(type 1 above) are specified into sub-types: locative, temporal, manner, reason, condition, illustrated below. Finally, two other sub-divisions were designated which did not fall easily into any of the aforementioned groups. These were concessive Adjuncts, which occupied the interface of conjuncts and disjuncts, and, comparative Adjuncts, which functioned at the interface of circumstantial and conjunctive Adjuncts.

Table 4.5 Examples of Adjunct types

	Adjunct types & sub-types	Example
1.	Subjunct	<i><u>Morally</u>¹⁶, Gulliver concedes that in this way he has found the "Path of Virtue", yet ironically, Swift has [shown] that despite all Gulliver's efforts, he is not seen as a Honyhuhum, but a Yahoo nevertheless, with the great potential to become a Honyhuhum. (pmt 144)</i>
2.	Post head subjunct (2 nd element)	<i>She <u>inarguably</u> does not know enough of Othello as a person to judge his moods. (pmt 105)</i>
3.	Disjunct	<i><u>Indeed</u>, the lasting image of this play is that at the end, where it alludes to the beginning with a division of the kingdom. (cmt 44)</i>
4.	Conjunct	<i><u>As a result</u> the lives of the characters are not only influenced but changed through these political outcomes. (itu 87)</i>
5.	(Circumstantial): locative	<i><u>In his novel</u>, Catcher in the Rye, author Jerome Salinger challenges the values of post-World War II America. (iit 2)</i>
6.	(Circumstantial): temporal	<i><u>Today</u> the message is (and always will be) as relevant as it was in the fifties as it is universal human truth. (ctt 52)</i>
7.	(Circumstantial): manner	<i><u>Through the utilisation of characterisation, imagery and language techniques</u>, Shakespeare effectively differentiates the dualities of Rome and Egypt. (iiu 99)</i>
8.	(Circumstantial): reason	<i><u>Due to the confined nature of Offred's existence</u>, she never really has any opportunities to take any action, but rather spends much of the novel reflecting on her life before the regime, and how she lives now. (pit 268)</i>
9.	(Circumstantial): condition	<i><u>Without his soliloquies</u> we would not be able to watch the development of the reasons behind his delay, his unwillingness to perform the act of revenge and his action suspending reflections. (cmu 150)</i>
10.	Concessive	<i><u>Despite Cleopatra's melodrama</u>, she does understand the extent of Antony's responsibilities in ruling a country and gives him the due status that his fighting abilities deserve. (ptu 431)</i>
11.	Comparative	<i><u>As in 'Once Were Warriors'</u>, alcoholism in 'Angela's Ashes' is certainly not glorified; (piu 516)</i>

Some Adjuncts contained embedded clauses, participles or verbs without Subjects. These were initially given the designation “major” to differentiate them from the above Adjuncts,

which were categorised as “minor”; however, in the statistical analysis, the major and minor categories were conflated. This was because the major Adjuncts were very few in number in comparison to the minor. Some examples are given in Table 4.6, below:

Table 4.6 Examples of major Adjuncts

	Adjunct type	Example
1.	Major (circumstantial): manner	<i><u>Through Shakespeare's message that all who commit corrupt deeds or are tainted by them, cannot redeem themselves, until death, the audience is shown, how exactly, corruption is a central theme in Hamlet.</u></i> (ctt 59)
2.	Major (circumstantial): temporal	<i><u>From the point where Szpilman's family is loaded onto rail carts and Szpilman is saved from this fate by a Jewish Policeman, he is entirely at the mercy of others.</u></i> (ptu 374)
3.	Major subjunct	<i><u>Regarding the war in Iraq, this is especially true.</u></i> (cit 33)
4.	Major conjunctive	<i><u>As discussed below¹⁷, each text cleverly connects our 'reality world' with the created image or interpretation of their 'fantasy world', which convey[s] different messages to a wide range of audiences.</u></i> (itu 110)
5.	Major disjunct	<i><u>In saying that, a man's physical strength also determines where he stands among other members of his own gender when women are taken out of the equation completely.</u></i> (pmu 504)

The Adjunct category also consisted of three columns of analysis; however, these were designated in terms of the position of the Adjunct within the sentences initial elements. The first column contained Adjuncts appearing as first element within the initial elements. The second and third contained Adjuncts appearing:

1. directly after other initial Adjunct/s
2. post head (Subject) (“ph”)
3. post Theme predication (“ptp”)
4. post thematicised comment (“ptc”)
5. post projecting clause (post finite, “pf”)
6. finally, within a subordinate clause, preceding the main clause (“sc”)

Example 2 in Table 4.5, above, appeared in column two as it occupies second position in the sentence, after the head (Subject).

The second column contained Adjuncts appearing in second position while the third column contained Adjuncts appearing as third element or beyond within initial sentence elements but still preceding the main verb of the main clause of the sentence, or directly

after Theme predication, thematicised comment, a projecting clause or within an initial subordinate clause. Table 4.7, below illustrates Adjuncts occupying first to fifth position.

Table 4.7 Examples of Adjuncts occupying first to fifth position within sentence initial elements, indicating type

	Position & Adjunct type	Example
1.	1 minor conjunctive 2 (circumstantial): minor manner	(1) <u>Therefore</u> , (2) <u>through dialogue</u> , Mick has <i>cruelly triumphed over Davies once again, however unnecessary it may have been.</i> (ptu 419)
2.	1 minor conjunctive 3 post head minor conjunctive	(1) <u>Similarly</u> , "Pause" ¹⁸ (3) <u>also</u> gives a <i>similar description but of a varying perspective.</i> (imt 59)
3.	1 (circumstantial) minor locative 2 (circumstantial) major temporal 4 post head minor disjunct	(1) <u>At the end of the film</u> , (2) <u>after suffering a monumental amount of hardship</u> , Szpilman (4) <u>ironically</u> , is back where he started - <i>playing piano on the Warsaw radio.</i> (pit 75)
4.	1 minor conjunctive 3 subordinate clause minor subjunct 4 subordinate clause minor subjunct 5 post head minor conjunctive	(1) <u>However</u> , while the play ¹⁹ (3) <u>to a large extent</u> illustrates that Rome and Egypt differ (4) <u>greatly</u> , it (5) <u>also</u> suggests they are <i>inextricably interlinked as presented through the couple's relationship.</i> (itu 96)
5.	1 minor conjunctive 3 (circumstantial): post thematicised comment minor locative	(1) <u>In contrast</u> , it is clear ²⁰ (3) <u>in 'On A Good Day'</u> that the community that Helena and Lee are living in is well educated and is aware of <i>the harmful effects of alcoholism.</i> (piu 517)
6.	2 post finite minor conjunctive	<i>I believe, <u>however</u>, that the essential similarities between the paths are what Gee uses to portray his main idea about humanity.</i> (ptt 97)

The Adjunct category required the greatest flexibility in terms of combining sub-types from different theories to produce the analysis that was the best fit for the purpose of the study. The categorisation enabled the grammatical types to be collated with metafunctional roles in the same way as the nominal group constituent categorisation permitted (without actually being based on a metafunction, which would have been a circular analysis). Despite apparent complexity, once established, the analytical categories presented no problems in application.

The analysis of Adjuncts departed somewhat from the SFG model and all Adjuncts as first element were considered grammatically marked even though it is understood that, as

referred to in chapter 3, section 3.2.4 and above, section 4.3, Conjunctive and Modal Adjuncts become part of a “multiple Theme” structure; however, “[a] Theme that is something other than the Subject, in a declarative clause, we shall refer to as a **marked theme**.” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 73). In view of the fact that these elements are not any part of the grammatical Subject, they are referred to as “marked” in the grammatical sense for the purposes of this research. And, of course, initial circumstantial Adjuncts would be marked topical Theme in SFG: “The most usual form of marked Theme is an adverbial group” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 73).

4.6.1.5 *Subordinate clauses*

This is a label borrowed from traditional grammar as it distinguishes those initial clauses that are introduced by a subordinating conjunction and have Subject, Finite and Predicator intact, from non-finite clauses, which have been grouped with Adjuncts in this analysis. It was decided to keep the subordinate clause category limited to full, finite clauses because it requires the writer to plan ahead the relationship between two whole propositions rather than only being an addition to a single proposition as is the case with the Adjunct. Furthermore, finite subordinate clauses frequently have additional Adjuncts of their own, which increase their complexity. Adjuncts and non-finite clauses are usually, by nature, shorter and less demanding on both reader and writer. In other words, at sentence analysis level, an initial finite subordinate clause is a step beyond the Adjunct in terms of complexity.

As the analysis was undertaken, the appropriate types of subordinate clause were designated to accommodate the examples in the sample. By the end, six different types of subordinate clause were included: temporal, concessive, reason, conditional, comparative and dismissive. Table 4.8, below, gives examples of each type.

Table 4.8 **Examples of initial subordinate clauses**

	Type	Example
1.	Temporal	<i><u>When Justin is escaping in a UN plane from a Sudanese village being attacked by bandits,</u> he asks the pilot to save one Sudanese girl "here is one we can help now".</i> (pmt 129)
2.	Concessive	<i><u>Although they have both professed that they cannot live without the other,</u> there has been little physical intimacy between them.</i> (ptt141)
3.	Reason	<i><u>As the tragedy is based upon the male protagonist,</u> a main function of other characters is what they highlight or develop about the protagonist.</i> (imu 158)
4.	Conditional	<i><u>If the character of Szpilman was not so incredibly real and believable,</u> the film would not have been as brilliant as it is.</i> (cmt 11)
5.	Comparative	<i><u>As much as she loves Antony,</u> she fears rejection due to her aging and her fears make her self-destructive.</i> (ptu 370)
6.	Dismissive	<i><u>Whether it was an intellectual or physical dominance,</u> men acted as if they were superior to women.</i> (cmu 144)

As in the case of the Adjunct category, the subordinate clause category did not present interpretive problems during the course of the analysis. This structure was considered grammatically marked for the reasons discussed in section 4.6.1.1.

4.6.1.6 *Projecting clauses*

In SFG, projection covers what was called, in traditional grammatical terms, direct and reported speech as well as thought. Thus, the projecting clause (usually initial) involves verbs of locution and some mental process verbs. The sentence structure still takes the form of main and subordinate clause, but,

The relationship between them is not that of one element being part of a bigger component... . Instead it is more like relationship between a picture (the projected clause) and its frame (the projecting clause): together they make up a single complex unit, but neither is actually part of the other. (Thompson, 2004, p. 103)

It is important to recognise the difference in the order of reality represented by the projecting clause and the projected. The former represents the real world but the projected clause represents an item that only exists as an idea or a linguistic phenomenon. The purpose then of the projecting clause, is to alert the reader to the fact that what is to follow is less “real”, and perhaps, therefore, more subjective and open to re-interpretation or even rejection by the reader. Some examples from the sample follow in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9 Examples of projecting clauses and projections

	Process type	Projecting clauses (underlined) and projections
1.	Mental	<u>I believe</u> that novels prominently use a clash of opposites to present ideas to the reader. (iiu 84)
2.	Mental	<u>He feels</u> he escaped death on the battlefield but can never truly be safe, even in peacetime. (ptt 16)
3.	Verbal	<u>Jungian theory expresses</u> that often a mythical unboundless type of love is due to a "projected soul image". (pit 146)
4.	Verbal	<u>Most critics have agreed</u> that it was done in "hot blood" and not premeditated. (pmu 541)
5.	Mental	<u>We can see</u> that these truths run deep within our society and are still the same, so many years on. (ctt 63)

Example 5, above, may seem like a material process but the projecting verb *can see* is used metaphorically here. “If the ‘seeing’ is understanding, then ... the relationship must be one of projection.” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 441).

There was one particular type of projecting clause that was less straightforward to identify. This entailed sentences in the equative category (see section 4.6.1 Table 4.2, above, for definition and section 4.6.1.7, below, for details). Falling into the “identifying” equative category, for example, is the following:

Furthermore Heathcliff calls Cathy a 'devil' here, whilst this has been his supposed form throughout the novel. (pit 148)

In this instance, the verb of locution, *calls* is easy to identify as a projecting verb but there is no “that” indicating the projection following, either stated, as in examples 1 and 3 - 5, or ellipsed, as in example 2, in Table 4.9. Instead we have an equative “by assignment” structure (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 237-8, see section 4.6.1.7). Hypothetically, this would be equivalent to:

Furthermore Heathcliff says that Cathy is a ‘devil’ here ...

Once rewritten, the presence of the projecting/projection structure is clear. Perhaps less obvious is the following example of projection in the form of an equative of the “attributive” variety, also “by assignment”:

O'Brien holds the American society responsible for the war. (pmu 401)

The hypothetical equivalent also reveals the projecting/projection structure:

O'Brien holds [thinks/contends] that the American society is responsible for the war.

Projecting clauses were not considered grammatically marked as they follow the main clause before subordinate clause order and are the natural means of expressing locutions and thoughts; however, occasionally, the subordinate clause or a part of it, preceded the main clause, as in:

Ophelia's madness in 'Hamlet' I do believe served an important function in the play to help further develop ideas. (ciu 98)

In this case, the structure was categorised as beginning with (part of) the complement preceding the Subject (see Table 4.2, category 10) and as such is grammatically marked: “The ‘most marked’ type of Theme in a declarative clause is thus a Complement” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 73). Hypothetically, the natural order, of course, would have been:

I do believe that Ophelia’s madness in Hamlet served ...

4.6.1.7 *Equatives*

This was, by far, the most challenging category to apply to the sample. It includes clauses termed “relational” in SFG, which “serve to characterise and identify” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 210). In traditional grammar the complements of these clauses would be called “adjectival” and “noun” complements, respectively. They are known as intensive “attributives” and “identifiers” in SFG. Instead of Subject and Complement, the terms used for the attributive clauses are “carrier” and “attribute” while identifying clauses consist of the “identified” and the “identifier”. But the relational category is somewhat broader in SFG and includes verbs other than “to be”, but which, in function, are equivalent to “to be”. The relationship set up by such verbs is termed “intensive” but other relations are also included, namely, “possessive” and “circumstantial” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 215).

The label “equative” has been borrowed from the term “thematic equative” which identifies clauses “in the form of an equation, where Theme = Rheme” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 69). Below is an example from the sample:

What this passage tells us about Desdemona and Othello's relationship is that it is a relationship based on too much pity and insecurity. (piu 416)

“Equative” encapsulates the “this = that” structure descriptively and serves as a reminder of the key criterion for this category: the static relationship between the Subject (or Theme)

and Complement (or Rheme). These are the “being” rather than “doing” verbs, to use that rather rudimentary classification.

The three Tables below (4.10 – 4.12) give examples of each relational type: intensive, circumstantial and possessive, with instances of the attributive and identifying varieties of each type. Once again, the detailed categorisation of these structures facilitated the collation with their metafunctional roles, as in the cases of nominal group constituents (4.6.1.3) and Adjuncts (4.6.1.4).

Table 4.10 Examples of intensive relational type: identifying and attributive

	Identifying/ Attributive	Examples
1.	Identifying	<i>Jealousy is the protagonist's inherent flaw.</i> (cmt 13)
2.	Identifying	<i>The comparison of the environment of the ward and the 'outside' made up the other important point in the novel.</i> (itu 81)
3	Identifying	<i>On the other hand, John The Savage represents us, the reader.</i> (piu 400)
4.	Identifying	<i>This misjudgement proves to be the one weakness in Iago's plan to spite Othello.</i> (ptt 106)
5.	Attributive	<i>The novel 'Brave New World' by Aldous Huxley is an extremely controversial satire of the future.</i> (iiu 91)
6.	Attributive	<i>The idea of a 'Chain of Being' or 'Nature', where everyone has a hierarchical role in the structure of society, is evident here.</i> (pmu 366)
7.	Attributive	<i>His schemes do not seem suspicious to even his wife who ignorantly aids his cause only to be killed by him when she finally sees past his terrible actions.</i> (ctt 8)
8.	Attributive	<i>However, he remains completely detached from these events.</i> (pmu 424)

The final example above, introduces one of the complexities of this category. Is *remains completely detached* to be considered a verbal group or is *completely detached* an attribute of *he*? Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 224) give four criteria to test these cases but the one found most useful was the potential for submodification. Since submodifiers are applicable to nominal groups but not verbal groups, if a submodifier could be applied, then the element could be considered an attribute rather than part of the verbal group. We can accept that *detached* is indeed an attribute because the example could, hypothetically, have read:

He remains so [completely] detached from these events.

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 224) acknowledge the fact that the “four criteria do not always coincide and not every instance can be clearly assigned to one category or the other”. Below, *tainted* could be interpreted either as part of a receptive verb form or an attribute:

Overall, most of Hamlet's relationships are tainted and the combination of each of them results in the tragic demise of Hamlet at the conclusion of the play. (ctt 53)

Mostly, however, these cases were resolvable as attributive (as in example 8 from Table 4.10, above, *He remains completely detached...*) or as part of the verbal group, rather than remaining interpretive, as in the last example.

The circumstantial relation may be expressed with the intensive process or circumstantial process verb form. It also has identifying and attributive forms. The analysis was closely based on examples given by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, pp. 239 - 244). Examples of each from the research sample are given in Table 4.11, below:

Table 4.11 Examples of circumstantial relational type

	Process type	Identifying/ Attributive	Examples
1.	Circumstantial	Identifying	<i>However, corruption <u>extends beyond</u> Claudius and Gertrude's sins, Hamlet himself has become tainted with corruption the moment the ghost's order to revenge is laid upon him.</i> (pit 280)
2.	Circumstantial	Identifying	<i>This anger and abuse towards the women in Hamlet's life <u>stem from</u> the influence of Claudius and his evil.</i> (pmt 324)
3.	Circumstantial	Attributive	<i>We can see that these truths <u>run deep within</u> our society and are still the same, so many years on.</i> (ctt 63)
4.	Circumstantial	Attributive	<i>Traditional tragedies usually <u>deal with</u> a tragic hero who suffers a downfall caused by a fatal weakness in their character.</i> (iiu 105)
5.	Intensive (circumstantial)	Identifying	<i>One common way that humans are dehumanised <u>is</u> by making them conform; thus removing humanity's intrinsic individuality.</i> (iiu 112)
6.	Intensive (circumstantial)	Identifying	<i>One of the main reasons why <u>was</u> because of its staggering artistic achievement.</i> (imt 35)
7.	Intensive (circumstantial)	Attributive	<i>Within this idea of Rome as opposed to Egypt <u>are</u> many other specific contrasts.</i> (itu 76)
8.	Intensive (circumstantial)	Attributive	<i>Screenplay <u>is</u> where the characters begin.</i> (pit 66)

The examples show that in the circumstantial relation type, one side of the “this = that” structure, is a circumstantial element (intensive process); for instance, *was because of its staggering artistic achievement (reason)* and *is where the characters begin (spatio-temporal)*; or, the verb itself, expresses the circumstantial relationship (circumstantial process), such as *extends beyond* (spatio-temporal), *stems from* (causal), *deal with* (matter). In the case of a spatio-temporal circumstantial, the space and/or time may, of course, be metaphorical.

Finally, the possessive relational type “can be thought of as another kind of circumstantial relation” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 247) but more specifically,

the relationship between the two terms is one of ownership [and] also includes possession in a broader, more generalised sense – possession of body parts and other part-whole relations, containment, involvement and the like
(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 244).

There are also identifying and attributive varieties as illustrated below, Table 4.12. The analysis follows the examples given in Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, pp. 244 - 247).

Table 4.12 Examples of possessive relational type

	Identifying/ Attributive	Examples
1.	Identifying	<i>His perception of similar events and his path through the day <u>provide</u> stark contrasts with that of Clarrissa's, despite the many images Woolf uses to link the two characters. (imt 6)</i>
2.	Identifying	<i>The beauty and pathos of this reconciliation - "I did [Cordelia] wrong" - perhaps <u>offers</u> the most morally pleasing resolution, more than any heart warming conclusion could achieve. (ptt 192)</i>
3.	Identifying	<i>The play <u>is made up of</u> contrasting characters and contrasting themes. (cmu 93)</i>
4.	Attributive	<i>They <u>have</u> no personality or individuality. (ptu 522)</i>
5.	Attributive	<i>Good literature <u>has</u> the power to influence society, and this is mainly achieved by turning Stendhal's "mirror" back on ourselves. (iit 16)</i>
6.	Attributive	<i>Their relationship <u>involves</u> a mutual dependence, cruelty towards each other and also a strange kind of reluctant affection. (itt 43)</i>

It may be noted that example 3 in Table 4.12, above, has the same verb as example 2 in Table 4.10:

*The play is made up of contrasting characters and contrasting themes.
(cmu 93, Table 4.12)*

The comparison of the environment of the ward and the 'outside' made up the other important point in the novel. (itu 81, Table 4.10)

The difference is that *is made up of* indicates that the play consists of or has as some of its parts or contains, that is, possesses *contrasting characters and contrasting themes* whereas, *made up* in the example in Table 4.10 implies definition, *The comparison is the other important point*.

These were not the only complexities that arose with this analytical category. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, pp. 234 - 235) also stipulate subtypes of identifying clauses where the relationship of identity construed is “inherently symbolic”. These may or may not actually use the verb “to be”. There are eight such subtypes: equation, equivalence, role-play, naming, definition, symbolisation, exemplification and demonstration. Table 4.13 gives examples of those subtypes that were identified in the sample, by close observation of the examples given in Halliday and Matthiessen (2004):

Table 4.13 Subtypes of identifying clauses

	Subtype	Example
1.	Equivalence	<i>The penalty exacted is 'the bond, one pound of flesh.'</i> (iit 12)
2.	Role play	<i>He is a foil to Peter Walsh and a comparative character for <u>Clarissa Dalloway</u>, the comparison embodying the theme of insane versus sane.</i> (imt 8)
3.	Naming	<i>The main victims whom we are led to pity in 'Othello' are: <u>Desdemona, Othello, Cassio and Emelia</u>.</i> (iit 9)
4.	Definition	<i>Both Orwell and French author Camus recognise that <u>society</u> is merely the sum of individuals, and to exemplify the actions of an individual is an effective way to comment on society as a whole.</i> (ptt 81)
5.	Symbolisation	<i>The relationship between Winston and Julia is allegorised in <u>his ulcer</u>.</i> (piu 529)
6.	Exemplification	<i>Othello is certainly an example of a story that shows <u>clouded judgement or judgement completely reversed</u>.</i> (cit 20)
7.	Demonstration	<i>The actions of these characters show us <u>how fear, guilt and the desire for revenge can ruin a community</u>.</i> (imt 83)

Furthermore, there are equatives of the intensive relation that are structured slightly differently.

Both ‘identifying’ and ‘attributive’ clauses of the ‘intensive’ kind have the option of ASSIGNMENT: they may be configured with a third participant representing the entity assigning the relationship of identity or attribution In the case of ‘identifying’ clauses, this is the **Assigner**; in the case of ‘attributing’ clauses, this is the **Attributor**’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 237).

If the sentence is in the receptive voice, the assigner or attributor may be absent, just as in passive voice sentence form. Below are some examples, again, identified by close

consideration of the explanation and examples given in Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, pp. 237 - 238):

Table 4.14 Examples of assignment intensive equative structures

	Identifying/ Attributive	Examples
1.	Identifying	; <i>this</i> ^(assigner) in his eyes makes <i>him</i> ^(identified) <i>the biggest hypocrite of them all</i> ^(identifier) . (pmt 258)
2.	Identifying (receptive)	<i>Even a marriage</i> ^(identified) can be turned into <i>a business deal</i> ^(identifier) . 'dispatch we the business we have talked of'. (pmu 339)
3.	Identifying (receptive)	<i>The whole of 'Hamlet'</i> ^(identified) can be considered a study of <i>human nature</i> ^(identifier) and therefore the reasons for which Hamlet procrastinates in avenging his father's death. (cit 54)
4.	Attributive	<i>The greatness of the characters in a political sense</i> ^(attributor) makes <i>their reckless actions</i> ^(carrier) both <i>destructive</i> ^(attribute) to themselves and the country in which they have the supreme authority. (imu 116)
5.	Attributive (receptive)	Leading into the final scenes of the play, <i>we</i> ^(carrier) are made <i>aware</i> ^(attribute) of the powerful images that portray the alarming tension between contrary possibilities. (pit 201)
6.	Attributive	<i>O'Brien</i> ^(attributor) holds <i>the American society</i> ^(carrier) <i>responsible</i> ^(attribute) for the war. (pmu 401)

The key to identifying these structures in the operative voice, was the presence of a noun in object position, followed directly by another noun, which identified it, or followed directly by an attribute which described it, as illustrated in examples 1, 4 and 6 in Table 4.14, above. In the receptive voice, it was a matter of being alert to the verbs that perform the assignment equative function, given in Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 238) and then reformulating the sentence as operative to ensure that the structure was an assignment equative.

The assignment type in the equative category presented the greatest challenge for both the researcher and moderator, and was responsible for the majority of the 1% variation in the inter-rater reliability score. Some examples were, ultimately, a matter of interpretation. Table 4.15 has examples, some of which were retained and some discarded, as indicated. One difficulty related to the assignment identifying clauses that used “as”, not to introduce a circumstantial element, but as equivalent to “to be”. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 238) give the verb “choose (as)” as an example of a verb serving as Process in the assignment identifying clauses used for elaboration. An example might be: “They chose

him as leader”. Some instances in the sample were not as straightforward as this and some criterion was needed to determine whether sentences such as those given in Table 4.15, below, fitted this type or not. The key criterion was considered to be identity as opposed to comparison. The latter were categorised as circumstantial while the former were considered identifying. As will be evident from the examples, even this was not always absolutely definite.

Table 4.15 Interpretive examples of assignment equative structures

	Retained/ Discarded	Example
1.	retained	<i>He^(assigner) presents himself^(identified) as Othello^(identifier) the great general, the Christian, the authoritative and eloquent warrior.</i> (pmu 435)
2.	discarded	<i>In both these texts women^(identified) are portrayed as simple objects that are to be lusted over^(circumstantial element).</i> (piu 451)
3.	retained	<i>But most importantly, he^(assigner) refers to the hat^(identified) as "a people shooting hat"^(identifier) which represents his defiance to society.</i> (pmt 12)
4.	discarded	<i>Desdemona herself^(identified) in this passage is spoken of as someone who lives vicariously through Othello.^(circumstantial element)</i> (cmu 128)
5.	retained	<i>Hamlet^(assigner) sees it^(identified) as his duty^(identifier) to his father's memory to kill "the serpent that did sting thy father", whom he discovers to be Claudius, and he also sees it as his duty to the state to kill Claudius, whom he sees as symbolic of the corruption that is spreading through the "unweeded garden" that is Denmark.</i>

(Interpretive instances of this type amounted to 48 sentences, or, 2% of the whole sample.)

The final sentence type to be classified in this category, are the actual thematic equatives themselves. These are identifying clauses that contain a thematic nominalisation and thus “allow for the Theme to consist of any subset of the elements of the clause” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 70). The “wh-nominalisation” may be Theme or Rheme but the equative structure remains. Examples are given below in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16 Examples of thematic equatives

	WH-nominalisation as Theme/Rheme	Examples
1.	Theme	<i>Perhaps <u>what Hamlet does not realise</u> is <u>that strength and opportunity are of little consequence</u> so long as the moral issues in his task remain unresolved.</i> (ptu 494)
2.	Theme	<i>However, <u>what makes the play a great tragedy</u> is <u>that the final catastrophic deaths of the tragic heroes do not degrade or reinforce deserved retribution</u> as in the traditional Shakespearean tragedy.</i> (cmu 137)
3.	Rheme	<i>The near complete breakdown of the hope of filial gratitude is <u>what causes the complete descent into chaos</u>.</i> (ctt 66)
4.	Rheme	<i>Margaret Atwood's success in showing important human truths through these supposed robots is then <u>what makes this novel so "powerful"</u>.</i> (itt 53)
5.	Rheme	<i>Claudius' "<u>foul and most unnatural murder</u>" of old Hamlet is <u>what prompts the duty of revenge</u>.</i> (piu 472)

4.6.1.8 Theme Predication

This is the structure known as cleft in traditional grammar. Lambrecht (2001, p. 465) defines the cleft construction as:

A complex sentence structure consisting of a matrix clause headed by a copula and a relative or a relative-like clause whose relativised argument is co-indexed with the predicative argument of the copula. Taken together, the matrix and the relative express a logically simple proposition, which can also be expressed in the form of a single clause without a change in truth conditions.

Simply put, “the defining property of clefts [is] the expression of a single proposition via biclausal syntax” (Lambrecht 2001, p. 463). Lambrecht (2003, p. 465) quotes Jespersen explaining that the cleft “serves to single out one particular element of the sentence and ... by directing attention to it and bringing it ... into focus, to mark a contrast”.

Similarly, in SFG, Thompson (2004, p. 151) describes the cleft sentence as a “thematicizing structure that allows the speaker [or writer] to pick out a single element and give it emphatic thematic status.”²¹ The element selected for emphasis may be Subject, Complement or Adjunct. The purpose is to emphasise by grammatical manipulation in written text, that which may be emphasised by intonation in speech and thus,

guide the reader towards a particular pattern of emphasis that is not the most natural one [but that will] single out the predicated constituent as particularly noteworthy in some way, often because it contrasts with something in another part of the text.
(Thompson, 2004, p. 152)

The most common item selected to act as dummy Subject for the predicated element, is “It”. Table 4.17, below, shows examples of Subject, Complement and Adjunct used as predicated Theme.

Table 4.17 Examples of Theme predication

	Predicated Constituent	Examples
1.	Subject	<i>Also symbolically, <u>it is Cordelia's proactive action of bringing an army that moves the plotline and gives her a more adult role.</u></i> (ptt 316)
	Hypothetical agnate	<i>Also symbolically, <u>Cordelia's proactive action of bringing an army</u> moves the plotline and gives her a more adult role</i>
2.	Subject	<i><u>It is this concept of being incapable of uniting the two worlds in life that evokes great pathos.</u></i> (cmu 136)
	Hypothetical agnate	<i><u>This concept of being incapable of uniting the two worlds in life</u> evokes great pathos.</i>
3.	Object	<i><u>It is not only Hamlet's character that she helps develop, but as some critics saw it, it is also herself.</u></i> (pmu 526)
	Hypothetical agnate	<i>She helps develop <u>not only Hamlet's character</u>, but as some critics saw it, also herself.</i>
4.	Adjunct	<i><u>It is in this way that the motif of procrastination can be universally applied to anyone facing an inner conflict such as Hamlet.</u></i> (cmt 75)
	Hypothetical agnate	<i><u>In this way</u>, the motif of procrastination can be universally applied to anyone facing an inner conflict such as Hamlet.</i>
5.	Adjunct	<i><u>It is through this exploration that those watching the play can grasp a better understanding of the noble prince 'Hamlet' even though no definite conclusions can be reached.</u></i> (imt 86)
	Hypothetical agnate	<i><u>Through this exploration</u> those watching the play can grasp a better understanding of the noble prince 'Hamlet' even though no definite conclusions can be reached.</i>

Another form of cleft mentioned by Lambrecht (2001, p. 467) is the “WH cleft”. However, these are designated thematic equatives in SFG and traditionally regarded as “pseudo-cleft” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 70). These did appear in the sample, as shown in 4.6.1.7 (Table 4.16), above.

Collins (1992) specifies another type of cleft: the “cleft existential” or “there-cleft”. He sees these as distinct from There-existentials on the basis of several syntactic, semantic and

pragmatic properties. The key identifying characteristics are that cleft existentials serve to highlight an event rather than an entity, the post-verbal noun phrase and its extension are the locus of interest rather than only the post-verbal noun phrase. Cleft existentials resemble it-clefts in that the relative pronoun is omissible and the “there + to be-verb” are de-emphasised as the “It + to be-verb” is de-emphasised in an it-cleft.

Only one sentence in the sample was a contender for analysis as a cleft existential:

There was a photo entered into the Zoos World Press photo exhibition. (cit 24)

(Hypothetical agnate:

A photo was entered into the Zoos World Press photo exhibition.)

Firstly, this seems to meet the first two characteristics because the focus appears to be not only the existence of a photograph but also its entry into an exhibition. (To some extent this could be judged from the surrounding text, which indicated that the subject of the photo was a group of humans whereas the photo exhibition was “Zoos ... photo exhibition”.) Secondly, “that” has been ellipsed, together with the finite in this case, and the *There was* is definitely de-emphasised. This conforms to the characteristics of the it-cleft. (The sentence was, accordingly, categorised as an example of “There-cleft” Theme predication but, as a single instance, this was more as a matter of interest than significance.)

4.6.1.9 *Thematicised comment*

Although thematicised comment involves a structure that also uses “It” (or another initial element) as a dummy Subject, these complex sentences cannot be restated as a single proposition. The predicate position in the initial clause is used to evaluate the information to follow in the grammatically subordinate but semantically salient clause. Thompson (2004, p. 153) points out that Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) do not examine this feature in detail as a thematicising device as they consider the “It” alone to be the Theme in such sentences. This is not especially helpful in a study of sentence initial elements as “It” alone does not tell the researcher (or the reader) what the writer is focusing on as the point of departure of the sentence. A different approach, one that was adopted in the current research, is suggested by Thompson (2004, p. 153):

However, my own experience of analysing text suggests strongly that it makes more sense to include the comment: in many cases, thematicised comment occurs at key transition points in the text and it obscures the method of development of the text if one simply labels ‘It’ as Theme.

As the examples from the sample given in Table 4.18, below, demonstrate, there is some variety in the opening item in these sentences.

Table 4.18 Examples of sentences with thematicised comment

	Examples
1.	<i>In literature across both time and place <u>it is commonly found</u> that women are abused and exploited by men.</i> (iiu 103)
2.	<i>In such a world as this, <u>it is a logical conclusion</u> that loyalty, too, is inverted within the play's endless layers of paradox and contraries, leading to a black ending.</i> (imt 52)
3.	<i><u>There is no doubt</u> that Hamlet's procrastination is one of the most important motifs in what is commonly referred to as Shakespeare's most complex play.</i> (itt 61)
4.	<i><u>It is interesting to note</u> that he delivers these lines in front of the whole court so it shows he is wanting to seem a caring sensitive King in front of his people.</i> (pmt 261)
5.	<i>Even in the holocaust, <u>it is believable</u> that there were good Germans.</i> (ptt 65)
6.	<i><u>It is not to say</u> that we should forgive torture, but that the whole situation itself is just an enormous tragedy which we must not repeat, and that things there are more complex than just good or bad.</i> (ctt 36)
7.	<i><u>I find it to be a fascinating if somewhat cynical concept</u>, that the perceptions we have of someone can be so wholly different from their real character.</i> (ptt 90)
8.	<i><u>It is true</u> that the piano and its music give Szpilman hope, but it is essentially the goodwill of others which keeps him alive - this Szpilman does not live alone, as Polanski suggests.</i> (ptu 375)

Example 3 in this Table throws up the same debate as the notion of the existential (“there”) cleft in the previous section. That example 3, *There is no doubt that ...* is not a case of a straightforward existential “there” with the “that - clause” an embedding in the noun *doubt*, is clear from another example of thematicised comment with the same functional meaning, in the introductory initial sentence of a different essay:

*It certainly appears true that Shakespeare's *Othello* is a play where good judgement and the proper estimate of people's true selves are clouded or completely reversed.*
(iit 21)

The use of SFG allows the interface between grammar and function to be acknowledged in such cases.

4.6.1.10 Direct object or Complement

This was one of the grammatical categories considered marked as Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 73) state: “The ‘most marked’ type of Theme in a declarative clause is thus a Complement”. They explain further:

This [the complement] is a nominal element which, being nominal, has the potentiality of being Subject; which has not been selected as Subject; and which nevertheless has been made thematic. Since it could have been Subject, and therefore unmarked Theme, there must be a very good reason for making it a thematic Complement – it is being explicitly foregrounded as the Theme of the clause. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 73)

Accordingly, very few instances were identified in the sample. Most of them are included in Table 4.19 below.

Table 4.19 Examples of sentences with Complement (or part thereof) in initial position

	Examples
1.	<i><u>This principle</u>, I believe, can be applied on several levels.</i> (itt 21)
2.	<i><u>'What is a woman?'</u>, Woolf asks in her lecture to the London Society for Women's service.</i> (pmt 234)
3.	<i><u>Ophelia's madness</u> in 'Hamlet' I do believe served an important function in the play to help further develop ideas.</i> (ciu 98)
4.	<i><u>What matters most</u>, Gee seems to be saying, is whether we can accept these things.</i> (ptt 98)
5.	<i>How[What]ever the catalyst, <u>the only way</u> it seems this could have happened is due to his situation, his outside status and the insecurities that came with it, and these insecurities are what in the end opened Othello to manipulation, to jealousy and ultimately to his tragic downfall.</i> (ctu 92)

This concludes the sentence initial grammatical analytical categories noted in the project; however, as there were sentence types in the sample that were not declarative, and therefore, could not be assessed on the same criteria, these interrogative and imperative statements were noted in a separate section. (See 4.6.3).

4.6.2 Metafunctional Analysis

Seven metafunctional sentence initial categories were designated: unmarked (topical Theme, ideational/experiential metafunction), marked topical²² (ideational), textual, interpersonal, dual metafunction, triple metafunction and multiple. These are based chiefly on Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and Thompson (2004) but also Jackson (1990) (for functional description of Adjuncts), Thompson and Zhou (2001) (for functional analysis of conjuncts), Thompson (2005) (further analysis of conjuncts) and Van de Velde (2007) (functional analysis of the nominal group). The criteria for each metafunction are set out in Table 4.20 below, and examples from the sample are given in Tables 4.21 – 4.27, following.

Table 4.20 Criteria for metafunctional categories

	Metafunction	Criteria
1.	Unmarked topical Theme (ideational)	The initial element is a nominal group, which is the Subject of the main verb and represents the topical (ideational) metafunction only.
2.	Marked topical Theme (ideational)	The initial element represents some material or ideational element that is not the same as the Subject of the main verb in the main clause. Examples: a. an Adjunct containing circumstantial information relating to time, manner, place, reason etc b. a subordinate clause which has as Subject, something different from the Subject of the main clause c. Theme Predication (which emphasises the notional Subject by making it the predicate of the main clause and substituting anticipatory “It” as Subject) d. Direct object or Complement of the superordinate clause (or part thereof) preceding the Subject
3.	Textual	The initial element is an item that serves the purpose of discursal organisation by inter-sentential anaphora or cataphora, excluding simple pronominal reference. For example: a. “This” as a nominal group referring anaphorically to a whole proposition or stretch of discourse in a preceding sentence/paragraph, rather than a single nominal referent b. “This” as premodifier within the Subject nominal group, emphasising the following head noun (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 558) c. Elements within the Subject nominal group creating cohesion by inter-sentential reference (numeratives, embedded or hypotactic prepositional phrases and clauses etc) d. Adjuncts with an inter-sentential conjunctive function e. Equatives in receptive voice which create cohesion by pronominal reference to another stretch of discourse by their Subject
4.	Interpersonal	The initial element is an item that serves the purpose of conveying the writer’s opinion, or an evaluation of, or stance towards, the whole sentence or some element of it. Examples: a. Adjunct (usually subjunct or disjunct) b. Thematicised comment c. Use of “I” or “We” as Subject (including of projecting clause) d. Other projecting clauses (the explicit acknowledgement that a proposition is someone’s view makes the proposition either more tentative or more forceful than a direct statement, depending on the authority or status of the projecting Subject) e. Elements within the nominal group such as epithet, subjunct, embedded and hypotactic prepositional phrases and clauses etc which are of a strongly subjective nature f. A Head nominal group (of Subject) which is strongly emotive
5.	Dual metafunction	One grammatical element serves two metafunctional purposes: topical (ideational) and textual, topical (ideational) and interpersonal or textual and interpersonal
6.	Triple metafunction	One element represents all three functions: topical (ideational), textual and interpersonal
7.	Multiple	More than one grammatically marked element precedes main Subject eg two consecutive Adjuncts, or, Theme predication + Adjunct, with different metafunctions

The following seven Tables (4.21 – 4.27) illustrate the categories described above and explanatory notes follow where necessary as the analysis in this section was to some extent more interpretive than the grammatical analysis.

Table 4.21 Examples of unmarked topical Theme as sentence initial element

	Theme (Metafunction: ideational)	Examples
1.	Unmarked topical	<i><u>Albert Camus</u> expressed his own philosophical theories in the novels he wrote throughout his life. (iit 7)</i>
2.	Unmarked topical	<i><u>Hamlet</u> has killed an innocent man. (pmu 544)</i>
3.	Unmarked topical	<i><u>Jealousy</u> is the protagonist's inherent flaw. (cmt 13)</i>
4.	Unmarked topical	<i><u>The notion of conformity demonstrated in the text "The children's story"</u> reinforces this point, however to a more exaggerated extent. (piu 446)</i>

Notes:

(1) Example 4 is an example of a heavy nominal group as it contains embedded verbal material but since the Head nominal group is the initial element, it is a not marked topical element.

(2) The unmarked category was checked for first element only within the initial elements as, if an element preceded a topically unmarked Subject group, then that sentence initial element would be considered marked for the purposes of this research.

The following categories were checked for first – seventh element within the sentence initial elements. Seven was the largest number of elements in any one sentence to precede the main verb of the main clause. Very few sentences had this many initial elements. (Only 1% of the sample had more than three.) The position of the element within the sentence initial elements is stated in column 2 of each Table.

Table 4.22 Examples of sentence initial topical elements (ideational metafunction)

	Element no.	Examples
1.	1	<i>Through the use of music, lighting and a collection of different shots, Coppola portrays a number of themes related to the reality of War. (imt 45)</i>
2.	1	<i>Although the directors' intentions for making films are varied, ranging from to express an idea to showing an event, films are not enjoyable if the characters are not believable. (imt 29)</i>
3.	1	<i>It is not physical imprisonment or torture that humans find most unbearable, "it is the lack of love that we die from." (ctt 54)</i>
4.	1	<i>Ophelia's madness in 'Hamlet' I do believe served an important function in the play to help further develop ideas. (ciu 98)</i>
5.	1	<i>In the film 'Apocalypse Now' (redux), director Francis Ford Coppola uses production features to great effect. (iit 34)</i>
6.	2	<i>Thus, in the world of Lear, the most loyal relationships are repudiated and those most faithful are exiled. (cit 35)</i>
7.	3	<i>Also [,] symbolically, it is Cordelia's proactive action of bringing an army that moves the plotline and gives her a more adult role. (ptt 316)</i>

Notes:

(1) Where the topical element is the first element, it would be marked.

(2) The unmarked hypothetical version of example 3 would be: Humans do not find physical imprisonment or torture the most unbearable, [but] "it is ..."

(3) In example 7, a comma has been inserted after *Also* because in context, the implication is *symbolically* as opposed to "literally", not a second symbolic action.

Table 4.23 Examples of sentence initial textual elements

	Element no.	Examples
1.	1	<i>This perhaps proves that there is truth to the idea of the cinematic voyeur.</i> (cit 22) [where <i>This</i> refers to the fact that the film (<i>Rear Window</i>) makes the audience itself voyeuristic yet neither the public nor the critics rejected it as it was a highly successful film both commercially and artistically, winning four Oscar nominations]
2.	2	<i>All in all, this acts as a reminder that such happenings are often if not always the responsibility of many.</i> (ctt 49) [where <i>this</i> refers to the fact that the events of the play (<i>The Crucible</i>) are a result of a whole community's decisions and that such events have occurred throughout history]
3.	1	<i>This novel, which many consider to be warning for our future does not lie solely in the physical implementations and restrictions of the dystopian regime, for what makes it most unbearable as a dystopia is its lack of human emotions and connections.</i> (cmt 69) [where <i>This</i> refers to the only novel discussed in the essay (<i>Brave New World</i>) and “The” would, therefore, have sufficed but <i>This</i> has a textually summative function, coming as it does, in the conclusion.]
4.	1	<i>The final technique which successfully conveys the theme of Detachment versus Involvement is the use of sound in the same bomb sequence.</i> (piu 412)
5.	1	<i>The second relationship that the passages highlight to the reader or audience member is the relationship between Hamlet and his mother, Gertrude.</i> (pit 236)
6.	2	<i>The film also uses the narrative of the characters Roy and Rachel to illustrate values.</i> (itt 20)
7.	3	<i>Having dealt with both the moral failures of Man to redeem himself in terms of body and mind, Swift again reflects to his readers that in matters of soul-searching, Man is still a victim of his own paradoxical nature.</i> (pit 140)
8.	1	<i>Another incident which Salinger uses to question the adult society is Holden's encounter with Sunny, a young prostitute.</i> (pit 4)
9.	1 & 2	<i>However, we who do receive this insight are condemned to repeat the horrors that blind us.</i> (ctt 32)
10.	1	<i>Thus the dysfunctional family relationships in these two texts expose a loveless society.</i> (ptu 531)

Notes:

(1) In further explanation of example 3:

Thus *the* is an unmarked demonstrative, while *this* and *that* are both ‘marked’ terms – neither includes the other. Their basic deictic senses are ‘near’ and ‘remote’ from the point of view of the speaker. But they are also used to refer within the text. They state explicitly how the identity is to be established.

(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 558)

(2) In example 7, the 2nd element is the projecting clause “Swift ... reflects ...that ...” which, although split, begins before the Adjunct is inserted.

(3) Examples 4, 5 and 8 are equatives in receptive voice; they contain premodifiers and Head nominal groups that create anaphoric reference to preceding paragraphs by listing (numeratives), deixis and repetition, respectively.

Table 4.24 Examples of sentence initial interpersonal elements

	Element no.	Examples
1.	1	<u>Notably</u> , these characters each fulfil one type of human relationships - her husband Luke fulfils her need for romantic love. (pmt 271)
2.	2	<u>But, even to the end</u> , Caesar knows the greatness of Antony and when his death is announced, Caesar believes "the breaking of so great a thing should make a greater crack". (ptu 345)
3.	2, 3 & 4	Because novels <u>almost always</u> carry a message <u>I agree with certainty</u> that the clash of opposite ideas can almost always be found in novels. (imu 103)
4.	2	In such a world as this, <u>it is a logical conclusion</u> that loyalty, too, is inverted within the play's endless layers of paradox and contraries, leading to a black ending. (imt 52)
5.	1	<u>It could be</u> that a more "deep-seated" inner voice causes his hesitation, a voice that Hamlet is unsuccessful in bringing to the surface of his consciousness. (ptu 493)
6.	2	Therefore <u>it is clear to see</u> that Edmund was focussed on a nature where rewards come now, not in the future. (ptt 166)
7.	1 & 2	<u>Without a doubt I can say</u> the theme of blindness is central in 'King Lear'. (cit 40)
8.	1	<u>We can see</u> that these truths run deep within our society and are still the same, so many years on. (ctt 63)
9.	1	This <u>devoted</u> loyalty of the rejected daughter arouses our sympathy for Lear more than his own actions or words. (pmt 189)
10.	1, 2 & 3	<u>Perhaps Shakespeare is suggesting</u> that <u>the most prized and honest</u> relationship should be, and is, one between mutual friends. (itt 63)
11.	1	The <u>only</u> time that Anne controlled her own fate was when she makes a decision that leaves her emotionally numb for 8 years. (ptt 320)
12.	1	Another visual feature <u>that stands out in importance to understanding the film</u> is camera techniques. (pit 136)
13.	2	Therefore, Cordelia's (and <u>to a smaller extent</u> , Edgar's) filial loyalty, <u>that is devoid of profuse rhetoric and rich in warm affection</u> , promises a greater reply to this world of despair than any happy ending. (cmt 50)
14.	1	The <u>debauchery</u> of the family is also taking effect in "Nineteen Eighty-Four" where children are trained by the government to report on any unorthodox behaviour on [by] their parents. (piu 531)
15.	1	<u>Although the film is packaged as entertainment - a drama and thriller - the reality of the film is not entertaining, but sickening.</u> (ptt 134)
16.	1	<u>Whether it was an intellectual or physical dominance</u> , men acted as if they were superior to women. (cmu 144)
17.	1	<u>Nevertheless</u> , her entrance to the jungle shows her desperation. (pmt 134)

Notes:

(1) Example 3 contains subjuncts within the initial subordinate clause and directly following the projecting clause, all of which precede the semantically dominant projected clause; hence there are three interpersonal elements before the reader reaches the main message of the sentence.

(2) Example 10 opens with a hedging disjunct, before a projecting clause, followed by a nominal group containing superlative premodifiers; hence, three interpersonal elements precede the Head of the nominal group serving as Subject of the main message-bearing clause.

Examples 15, 16 and 17 in Table 4.24, above, require a slightly more in-depth explanation. The conjunction *Although* introduces a subordinate clause of concession, *Whether* introduces one of dismissal and *Nevertheless*, is an example of a conjunctive Adjunct with a concessive function. Although Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) would consider all of these as having a textual function (either intra-sentential structural Theme (p.79), logical component of ideational metafunction, or, inter-sentential conjunctive), they can also all be regarded as interpersonally motivated. As discussed in chapter 3, Thompson and Zhou (2000) and Thompson (2005) have argued for the interpersonal nature of some conjunctive elements, which serve both to connect parts of the text and convey the writer's attitude towards the propositions involved. Acts of concession and dismissal are undeniably dialogical parts of an argument. They reflect the writer's intention of acknowledging his/her interlocutor's likely objection. By conceding that the objection has some validity (but less than the writer's proposition to follow in the main clause) or dismissing it as dealt with, before it occurs, the writer strengthens her/his proposition to follow: "argumentation must convince readers by removing doubts or by responding adequately to their criticisms" (van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Henkemans, 2002, p. 157). Hyland (2001, p. 550) mentions that "the reader-writer dialogue [in academic writing] involves careful interpersonal negotiations [by means of] devices [which] clearly carry meanings that anticipate possible reader objections or acknowledge their interpersonal concerns". Thus, concession, dismissal and two other clause relation markers, namely, corrective (such as "rather ...") and verificative (such as "actually ..." or "as a matter of fact ...") which are categorised as merely conjunctive and therefore, textual, by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 82) have been considered to function as interpersonal elements also, in this research, in keeping with the clause relational analyses of Thompson and Zhou (2001) and Thompson (2005).

Table 4.25 Examples of dual metafunction sentence initial elements

	Element no.	Meta - functions	Examples
1.	1	Topical (ideational) & textual	<i><u>It is this decision</u> that, according to David Cecil, ultimately disrupts the equilibrium of other characters and causes events to be diverted from their natural courses, which compounds increasingly tragic consequences.</i> (itt 31)
2.	1	Interpersonal & textual	<i><u>In saying that</u>, a man's physical strength also determines where he stands among other members of his own gender when women are taken out of the equation completely.</i> (pmu 504)
3.	1	Topical (ideational) & interpersonal	<i><u>As a result of Scott's careful direction</u>, the audience has been led through the film to see possible ideas of what it is to be human, and how we can measure it.</i> (cit 15)

Notes:

(1) Example 1 is an instance of Theme predication, which accounts for the topical marking; it has a textual function owing to *this decision* which refers to an element in the proposition of the first sentence of the introduction, this being the final sentence of that introduction. See Note (1) Table 4.23, above, regarding “This”.

(2) Example 2 begins with an Adjunct that seems to match Halliday and Matthiessen’s category of “concessive”, (such as “nevertheless”). These are categorised as having a textual function but taken in context, the element also has overtones of the category of “obviousness” or perhaps “typicality”. These are modal elements, with an interpersonal function. The inter-sentential item, *that*, adds to the textual function of this Adjunct.

(3) The initial Adjunct in example 3 introduces a topical element different from the topic of the main clause following, *Scott’s ... direction*, as opposed to *the audience*; therefore it is topically marked. It also contains an opinion-giving premodifier, *careful*, giving it an interpersonal function.

Table 4.26 Examples of triple metafunction sentence initial elements

	Element no.	Meta-functions	Examples
1.	1	Textual, interpersonal & topical (ideational)	<i>Through this military, monotheocratic oppressive regime, citizens are treated and expected to behave as emotionless and unquestioning robots. (imt 77)</i>
2.	1	Interpersonal, topical (ideational) & textual	<i>; although they use these same techniques they are used for different purposes. (imu 127)</i>
3.	1	Textual, interpersonal & topical (ideational)	<i>How/What/ever the catalyst, the only way it seems this could have happened is due to his situation, his outside status and the insecurities that came with it, and these insecurities are what in the end opened Othello to manipulation, to jealousy and ultimately to his tragic downfall. (ctu 92)</i>

Notes:

(1) The circumstantial Adjunct in example 1 is marked topical initial element because it has as Head, *regime*, which is different from the Subject of the main clause, *citizens*; it has a textual function because of *this*, which needs to be not only retrieved but extrapolated from the previous sentence (also see Note (1) Table 4.23, above); finally, it has an interpersonal function by the accumulation of emotive epithets.

(2) Example 2 begins with a concessive subordinate clause, which has been categorised as interpersonal in function for reasons explained following Table 4.24, above. The subordinate clause has as Head nominal group, *they* (that is, two short stories under discussion). This is marked topical Theme as it is different from the Subject of the main clause, *they*, which refers to *techniques*; lastly, it has a textual function due to the writer's decision to stress the similarity of the techniques by using *these same* rather than "the" *same*.

(3) The third example (corrected from *How* to "What"- *ever*), is marked topical initial element because it has as Head nominal group, *catalyst* (or cause) whereas the Subject of the main clause is dummy "it" or more usefully, *way*, which suggests manner; hence, the two are dissimilar; the textual function arises from the fact that the whole structure is a textual conjunct and the *catalyst* is the subject of previous discussion; it also has an interpersonal function because of the dismissive function of *Whatever*, as discussed after Table 4.24, above.

Table 4.27 Examples of multiple sentence initial elements

	Element	Metafunctions	Examples
1.	1 & 2	(1) Interpersonal (2) Textual	(1) <u>Surely</u> , (2) <u>then</u> , <i>Othello's true self has been reversed by his placement in Cyprus.</i> (cit 19)
2.	1 & 2	(1) Topical (ideational) (2) Textual	(1) <u>In the closing moments</u> , (2) <u>however</u> , <i>George says 'the party's over' and Nick and Honey start to leave, he says 'Goodnight' with a finality that supersedes anything Nick could respond with.</i> (pmu 451)
3.	1 & 2	(1) Interpersonal (2) Topical (ideational)	(1) <u>Naturally</u> [,] [2] <u>by continuing to avoid the problem</u> , <i>Katherine doesn't help the situation at all and things are left to reach breaking point before she realises the truth.</i> (ptu 514)
4.	1, 2, 3	(1) Textual (2) Topical (ideational) (3) Topical (ideational)	(1) <u>Also</u> [,] (2) <u>symbolically</u> , (3) <u>it is Cordelia's proactive action of bringing an army that moves the plotline and gives her a more adult role.</u> (ptt 316)

Notes:

(1) For example 4, see Table 4.22, above, Note (3) for the reason a comma has been inserted after *Also*.

(2) In example 4, the 3rd element is an example of Theme predication; it has a topical metafunction.

4.6.3 Other sentence types and structures

Two other sentence types were recorded separately: interrogatives and imperatives. These by definition would have different initial elements from a declarative sentence. Seven of the eight questions and the one imperative sentence that were found in the sample, were grammatically unmarked for their type and were recorded as so. However, they were considered to be interpersonal in the metafunctional analysis, as in both cases, questions and imperatives, the writer is directly addressing the reader, which is a strongly dialogical act.

The few sentences in which all the initial elements, or the entire sentence, consisted of a quotation from a literary text were categorised as unmarked both grammatically and metafunctionally as they were not constructions of the writer. They were recorded as an

“other sentence type” for interest. In addition to these, four other elements in sentence initial position were also noted, for interest, to identify where writers used them most frequently:

1. the name of the author of the text being discussed as Subject of the main clause
2. “we” as Subject or “us” as direct or indirect object of the main clause
3. “I” as Subject or “me” as direct or indirect object of the main clause
4. existential There

Examples of each of the “other sentence types” are given in Table 4.28, below.

Table 4.28 Examples of “other sentence types” in the sample

	Type	Example
1.	Interrogative	<i>What makes killing acceptable in one instance and not in another?</i> (ptt 178)
2.	Imperative	<i>Add to this the constant references by the Venetians and even Desdemona, of the Moor, "that I did love the Moor", and Othello always feels slightly marginalised.</i> (pmu 419)
3.	Quotation	<i>'...he preferred to be known and to introduce himself by the very Kiwi name of Ed Hillary'.</i> (iit 11)
4.	Author's name	<i>Salinger questions and challenges the corrupt society of 1950s America through the character of Holden Caulfield.</i> (ctt 2)
5.	'We'	<i>We are able to understand these truths and relate them into our own world as Miller did with the McCarthy trials.</i> (cmt 76)
	'us'	<i>Dystopian texts command <u>us</u> not to become so.</i> (cmu 166)
6.	'I'	<i>Through the texts I have studied <u>I</u> have come to understand more about human nature through the emotional and 'personal' content.</i> (ciu 82)
	'me'	<i>After having realised this, it is clear to <u>me</u> that the techniques used by Phillip Noyce in "The Quiet American" portray the theme of detachment versus involvement successfully.</i> (ciu 85)
7.	Existential There	<i><u>There</u> is no such ambivalent interpretation in "The Womb".</i> (pmt 193)

4.6.4 Statistical analysis

All results of descriptive and inferential statistical analyses are presented in detail in chapter 5. Inferential statistical tests are presented in a separate section at the end of chapter 5 rather than together with the descriptive statistical findings because the primary purpose of this study was descriptive and, therefore, exhaustive inferential testing has not been undertaken on every analytical category. Mainly broad inferential tests were undertaken to establish the significance of the grammatical and metafunctional differences between the timed and untimed samples, and, the significance of the overall relationship between the location of a sentence and its initial grammatical and metafunctional characteristics. From those findings, the usefulness of the grammatical and metafunctional descriptive data for each location could be established and the testing of the set of results for each location against every other location was unnecessary.

A few further inferential tests were undertaken only where the descriptive analysis suggested that grouping locations may provide valuable insights or that a particular finding should be highlighted, especially with a view to addressing research question 5: the application of the findings to academic writing pedagogy. By keeping the grammatical and metafunctional inferential statistical tests together in a separate section at the end of the Results chapter, the parallel application of tests to the grammatical and metafunctional data is more clearly evident and the purpose of the testing, to reveal insights towards writing pedagogy, is better served since the thesis then moves directly into the application of findings to the educational context in the Discussion of Results (chapter 6). Below is a summary of, and explanations for, the descriptive and inferential tests selected and performed.

4.6.4.1 *Descriptive statistical testing*

Once the grammatical and metafunctional analyses were complete, Microsoft Office Excel for Mac was used to carry out basic descriptive statistical analyses in order to answer the theoretical research questions posed in chapter 3, section 3.5. Totals in each column of the spreadsheets were calculated and the percentage of sentences using each grammatical structure stipulated in section 4.6.1, above, and each metafunctional type stipulated in section 4.6.2, above, as first element was calculated, in each sentence location, keeping

timed and untimed samples separate, for comparative purposes across locations and between time conditions.

For the analysis of all initial elements (all elements preceding the main verb of the main clause), results were counted as a score per 100 sentences for each location (keeping timed and untimed samples separate again) so that all sentence locations and both time conditions could be compared on an equal basis. In other words, it was calculated how many of each type of grammatical structure there were, and, how many elements representing each metafunctional type there were, per 100 sentences, for each location, in each time condition.

Totals and percentages for the “Other sentence types and structures” were calculated for each location, also keeping timed and untimed samples separate.

Next, the number of each type of nominal group constituent (as stipulated in the analytical methodology section 4.6.1.3) in each sentence initial nominal group was counted per 100 sentences for each location, keeping timed and untimed samples separate.

Lastly, for the purpose of exploring the interface of the grammatical and metafunctional analyses, the contribution of each grammatical structure to the total representation of each metafunction in each of the nine locations was calculated. This is reported in chapter 5, in section 5.4 called “Combining grammatical and metafunctional results”. As detailed in this chapter, nominal group constituents had been analysed for their metafunction(s), and Adjuncts and equatives classified by types, which largely related to (although was not determined by) their metafunctions, specifically for this purpose. Other grammatical structures generally served a set metafunction; for example, thematicised comment performed an interpersonal role, Theme predication, a topical role. Exceptions to this were identified by summing the volume of metafunctional elements and summing the grammatical constituents accounting for them and comparing the two. Where the two did not coincide, the possible structures responsible were investigated. The dual and triple metafunction analysis was often useful for this purpose because it indicated where one element was responsible for more than one metafunction. For instance, Theme predication occasionally contained an element with an interpersonal metafunction. Both the usual

topical element and the less common interpersonal function would have been recognised in the metafunctional analysis but only one grammatical element (Theme predication) would have been checked in the grammatical analysis. (See chapter 5, section 5.4.2, Figure 5.21 and the commentary on Figure 5.21 for an example and explanation.) The opposite occurred when only one metafunction was recorded but two grammatical structures were implicated. An example is the projecting clause, beginning with “I” or “We”. Under the grammatical analysis, this was noted under nominal group elements column 3 as interpersonal as well as noted as a projecting clause with interpersonal metafunction. For the purpose of the combined results, only the projecting structure was recorded under the grammatical category since this was the predominant structure and the element would have been excluded from the nominal group elements category. These few overlaps did not affect all locations and amounted on average to only 2.7% of the locations they did affect. They therefore did not have a great impact on the overall grammatical / metafunctional interface profiles. In this way, the metafunctional elements were accounted for by specific grammatical structures. The contribution of each grammatical structure to the full volume of metafunctional elements, in each location was expressed as a percentage, again keeping timed and untimed samples separate.

The above statistical analyses were directed at answering research question 2, relating to grammatical characteristics of sentence initial elements and research question 3, relating to metafunctional characteristics of sentence initial elements. And, of course, the combination of the two allowed the interface of grammatical and metafunctional characteristics of sentence initial elements to be investigated. The timed and untimed samples were kept separate in each case so that they could be compared and the result would provide an answer to research question 1. Also, based on the strong likelihood that the untimed sample would represent better quality writing than the timed sample, it was assumed that if there were a notable difference between the characteristics of the two samples, the untimed would be more useful for instructional purposes. This relates to research question 5. Research question 4 is addressed in the inferential statistics section below (4.6.4.2).

4.6.4.2 *Inferential statistical testing*

After descriptive statistical analysis was complete and based on whether those findings suggested that inferential testing may be fruitful, statistical tests were undertaken to assess the significance of the results in response to research question 4, stated in section 3.5 of chapter 3:

Are there any significant tendencies apparent in the above findings and if so, what are they?

In this question “above findings” refers to the difference in grammatical and metafunctional characteristics of the sentence initial elements of the timed and untimed writing samples, and, the different grammatical and metafunctional characteristics of sentence initial elements in each of the nine locations specified as well as some grouped locations.

Below is a list of the tests undertaken, in association with the relevant research questions. Statistical texts by Hayslett (1981), Kanji (2006) and the online lecture notes “Non Parametric tests” (Friel, 2004) were consulted in the selection of tests. Apart from the Mann-Whitney U test, which was performed manually in part, other tests were performed using Microsoft Office Excel for Mac with reference to Nelson (2007). Critical value tables in Kanji (2006) were consulted.

Research question 1:

To what extent, and in what sentence initial grammatical and metafunctional characteristics, do essays written in a timed condition differ from those written in an untimed condition?

The most basic information required in response to this question, is whether there is a significant difference in the number of grammatically and metafunctionally marked (first) sentence initial elements used in the timed and untimed conditions. It was anticipated that there would be a significant difference merely because without time constraints, students can give more thought to both structure and expression in their writing. Two non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests were performed, first on the grammatical, and, secondly, on the metafunctional results. They compared the ranked sum of scores (the number of marked sentence initial elements for each essay location) for the two independent samples,

timed and untimed. This indicated whether it was likely that the two samples, timed and untimed, were similar enough such that they could have come from the same population, or if they were significantly different in each case.

A further two Mann-Whitney U tests were performed on the results for the analysis of the use of receptive (passive) voice in the main verb of the main clause, and, for the use of the equative sentence structure, for each time condition. This determined whether there was a significant difference between the two samples with regard to the use of these grammatical sentence forms.

Research question 2:

To what extent is each grammatical structure represented in sentence initial elements in each of the nine sentence locations, in skilled essays?

The descriptive statistics indicated the actual extent of the representation of each structure as a percentage (first element only) or a count per 100 sentences (all initial elements). The untimed results were further investigated by means of the two-way Chi Squared test for independence, which compared the observed frequencies (in this case of particular grammatical structures) for all groups (in this case nine locations) with expected frequencies derived from the marginal totals of a cross-tabulation table. The null hypothesis assumes no difference between the observed and expected values greater than could be attributed to chance or sampling error. Due to small frequency numbers, only heavy nominal groups, Adjuncts and projecting clauses were able to be investigated to see if the frequency of use of a structure was independent of location by means of Chi Squared. Both first element percentages and total number of elements within sentence initial position per 100 sentences were tested for the untimed sample.

After this general investigation of the relationship between location and structures, the use of specific structures in grouped locations was explored, where the descriptive analyses indicated that this might be worthwhile. The Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the sample of boundary locations (all grouped initial and terminal) to the sample of all grouped medial locations to see firstly if Adjuncts were represented to the same extent in each (as first initial element only), and secondly, the same for the thematicised comment structure

(but in the latter case, the representation of all initial elements was tested). Again the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the sample of grouped conclusion locations to the grouped samples of introduction and paragraph locations to determine if Theme predication was represented to the same extent in each. Lastly, Mann-Whitney U was also used to determine if the receptive voice structure was used significantly more frequently in grouped introduction locations than in the grouped paragraph and conclusion locations, and, whether the equative sentence structure was represented more strongly in the grouped introduction and paragraph locations than in grouped conclusion locations.

Research Question 3:

To what extent is each metafunction represented in sentence initial elements in each of the nine locations in skilled essays?

The descriptive statistics indicated the extent of the use of each metafunction in each location as first element and in all initial elements by means of percentages and a count per 100 sentences, respectively. But since it was anticipated that the writers' selection of topical (ideational), textual and interpersonal metafunctional elements would differ significantly for each location, the two-way Chi Squared test for independence was used to compare the observed frequencies of the three metafunctions in each location with expected frequencies derived from the marginal totals of a cross-tabulation table. The null hypothesis assumes no difference between the observed and expected values greater than could be attributed to chance or sampling error. Both first element percentages and total number of elements within sentence initial position per 100 sentences were tested for the untimed sample.

Next, the Mann-Whitney U test was administered to compare the amount of topical (ideational) elements to textual elements, then, topical to interpersonal and, lastly, textual to interpersonal. The percentage of each type of element used in each location constituted the sample for that metafunction. This indicated whether there was a significantly greater volume of elements representing one metafunction than another. Both first element only and all initial elements were tested and thereafter, due to the relevance of the outcome to this thesis, the timed sample was tested to see if the same results would be obtained. As further corroboration, the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the sample of

interpersonal elements for first element only, to the sample when all initial elements are counted, to ascertain if there was a significant difference in these samples with regard to the volume of interpersonal elements.

Finally, as with the grammatical analysis, groups of locations were compared using the Mann-Whitney U test. The sample consisting of grouped paragraph locations was compared to a sample of grouped introduction and conclusion locations for marked topical elements. The sample of terminal locations was compared to a grouped sample of initial and medial locations for textual elements, and, lastly, the sample of grouped conclusions locations was compared to a sample of grouped introduction and paragraph locations for interpersonal elements. This indicated where each metafunction predominated.

For interest and based on the descriptive statistical findings of the combined grammatical and interpersonal results two additional inferential tests were undertaken on the paragraph locations only. The contribution of the receptive voice equative structure to the total representation of the textual metafunction in paragraph initial location appeared to be notably greater than the contribution of the same structure to grouped paragraph medial and terminal locations. The one-way Chi Squared test compared observed data values to theoretically derived expected values (the sum of observed values divided by the number of groups) for this structure. The null hypothesis assumes equal distribution between groups. This test was used to determine whether significantly more receptive voice equative structures were used as textual elements in paragraph initial location than in the other two paragraph locations. Based once more on what was suggested by the descriptive statistics, the same test was used to ascertain whether textual elements within nominal groups made a greater contribution to the overall representation of the textual metafunction in paragraph terminal location than they did in grouped paragraph initial and medial locations.

Detailed results of all statistical analyses are tabulated in the Results (chapter 5). Observations, commentary and illustration by means of graphs accompany the results.

4.7 Conclusion to Methodology

The use of detailed linguistic analyses in this study is intended to produce findings that may be put to use in academic writing instruction in secondary English, and perhaps, to some extent, in other subjects where essay writing is required. For this reason, the theoretical basis has been used in modified form or supplemented with additional theoretical concepts to highlight key factors. Since the study is an exploration of the nature of sentence initial elements, the analysis needed both breadth and depth. The analytical and statistical methodologies detailed above reflect this intention.

The results in chapter 5 present the descriptive statistics and the outcomes of the inferential statistical testing. Although the descriptive statistics are undoubtedly the most informative with regard to the specific grammatical and metafunctional characteristics of the nine locations, and how the metafunctions are represented by various grammatical structures, the inferential statistics underpin these by indicating the significance of the findings and, therefore, whether it would be worthwhile using them to explore new ways of incorporating linguistic information into academic writing pedagogy.

¹ pit 105: sentences are labelled with three letters and a number. The first letter indicates where the sentence is located in the essay: i = introduction; p = any paragraph in the body of the essay (not in the introduction or conclusion); c = conclusion. The second letter indicates where the sentence stands within the introduction, a paragraph or conclusion: i = initial; m = medial; t = terminal. Hence: ii = introduction initial; pt = paragraph terminal; cm = conclusion medial and so forth. The final letter indicates whether the essay was written under timed (t) examination or test conditions or untimed (u) assignment conditions. Thus ‘imu’ = **introduction medial sentence written under untimed conditions**; ‘ptt’ = **paragraph terminal sentence written under timed conditions**. The number represents the individual number allocated to that sentence within the location. Also note that all quotes from the sample (students’ writing) are italicised, throughout the thesis. This makes them plainly distinguishable from quotes taken from the literature, which are presented in quotation marks in the usual way.

² See Table 4.2, section 4.6.1 for definition of, and section 4.6.1.6 for details on, this structure.

³ See Table 4.2, section 4.6.1 for definition of, and section 4.6.1.8 for details on, this structure.

⁴ See Table 4.2, section 4.6.1 for definition of, and section 4.6.1.9 for details on, this structure.

⁵ The term “multiple” was reserved for those sentences which did indeed have more than one grammatically marked element before the Subject group.

⁶ Integrated schools are partly state-funded but have a “special character”, usually of a religious nature, which is not funded by the state. They are required to offer the national examination curriculum but may also offer other international examination qualifications.

⁷ Composite schools have classes from New Entrant Level (age 5) through to Year 13 Level.

⁸ See Appendix C for interview questions.

⁹ For an explanation of why this is considered a receptive or passive form, and an example, see later discussion of the receptive category in section 4.6.1.2.

¹⁰ *This principle* is part of the complement in the superordinate clause: *I believe that this principle can be applied on several levels.*

¹¹ No distinction was drawn between numerative and ordinal.

¹² The few spelling errors in the essays have been corrected as spelling played no role in the analysis (and they would only distract from the point of an example) but other errors have been amended in square brackets.

¹³ The relative clause *whom we are led to pity* is classified as descriptive rather than defining here (even though it is not separated by commas), which makes it hypotactic rather than embedded. To classify it as defining would mean that there were (other) victims whom we were *not* to pity!

¹⁴ The same designation was used for “These” and “Both” when used as pronouns referring to a preceding stretch of discourse.

¹⁵ Questions beginning with other interrogative pronouns, for example, “Why”, also fell into this category.

¹⁶ This falls into Jackson’s category of Viewpoint Subjunct: “interpreted as a comment by the speaker or writer on the perspective or viewpoint from which the proposition is to be regarded as valid” (Jackson, 1990, p. 153).

¹⁷ This type of structure could have been categorised separately as a “non-finite or moodless clause” (Bloor & Bloor, 2004, p. 285) but such a category was not included in the analysis because (as the pilot study had shown) they were rare in initial position (a minority of the major Adjunct category which was, in turn, a minority of the Adjunct category) and functionally they serve as Adjunct, in this case, being conjunctive in purpose. Furthermore, in a broad analysis of elements ranked at sentence level, this structure would have to be classified as an Adjunct as it is not a Subject, Finite, Predicator or Complement. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 82) have an example of a structure with a finite verb listed on their Table of Conjunctive Adjuncts: “as far as that’s concerned”.

¹⁸ *Pause*, the unmarked sentence head, occupies second position here; in example 3, *Szpilman* (unmarked sentence head) occupies third position.

¹⁹ The second sentence element here is the subordinate clause itself: ... *while the play illustrates that Rome and Egypt differ* ...

²⁰ The second element here is the thematicised comment ... *it is clear*...

²¹ This is not a new idea: Enkrist (1973) stated, “The role of ... cleft constructions as thematic devices is, of course, well known by now.”

²² It is understood that “topical” is not strictly a metafunction, but a Theme type; however, topical marked / unmarked Themes always represent the ideational/experiential metafunction and plainly relate to the content matter of the sentence.

Chapter 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction to Results

5.2 Results of Grammatical Analysis

5.3 Results of Metafunctional Analysis

5.4 Combining Grammatical and Metafunctional Results

5.5 Results of Other Sentence Type Analysis

5.6 Statistical Analysis of Results for Significance

5.7 Conclusion to Results

5.1 Introduction to Results

5.1.1 Layout of the results

Owing to the exploratory and descriptive nature of this research, the results are extensive and detailed. To make them more accessible, they are presented in five sections, following the same arrangement as the Methodology chapter: 5.2 Results of the grammatical analysis, 5.3 Results of the metafunctional analysis, 5.4 Combining grammatical and metafunctional results, 5.5 Results of the “Other Sentence Type” analysis and 5.6 Statistical analysis of results for significance¹. Within each section, the results for the timed and untimed samples are presented alongside each other so that the reader does not have to page back and forth to make this comparison. At the start of each section, the relevant research questions for that section are stated. In sections that have sub-sections, each sub-section ends with a summary of the key findings. At the end of each main section concluding statements in answer to the research questions are formulated. This highlights for the reader those findings that are most noteworthy and, therefore, followed up for discussion in chapter 6.

5.1.2 Focus of research questions

Chapter 3, section 3.5 stated the five research questions for this study. Only the theoretically based research questions, 1 – 4, are fully answered in this chapter as they relate to the analysis of the data by means of the theoretical model. Research question 5, which is of an applied nature, deals with the relevance of the findings of questions 1 – 4 to teaching practice. Although, for cohesive purposes, and where appropriate, that relevance is briefly mentioned in this chapter, research question 5 is mainly addressed in the Discussion of Results, chapter 6.

One of the purposes of this research is to describe grammatically and metafunctionally the best academic writing in the senior secondary context, using subject English for the reasons stated in chapter 4, section 4.2, based mainly on a study by North (2005). Through such description, it is intended that teaching practices may be better informed (thus answering

the applied research question 5). Since it is highly likely that writing without time constraint allows for better quality writing, the timed and untimed samples were kept separate and the focus of research question 1 was whether there was an observable difference between them in terms of their grammatical and metafunctional sentence initial characteristics. In some instances, where there did appear to be a notable difference, further analysis then concentrated on the untimed sample.

Research questions 2 and 3 focused on the extent to which a variety of grammatical structures (question 2) and metafunctions (question 3) were represented in initial position in the nine different locations within essays²; where it seemed to add to insights, locations were grouped in two possible ways, as shown below:

(i)

Group	Locations included
introduction	introduction initial introduction medial introduction terminal
paragraph	paragraph initial paragraph medial paragraph terminal
conclusion	conclusion initial conclusion medial conclusion terminal

(ii)

Group	Locations included
initial	introduction initial paragraph initial conclusion initial
medial	introduction medial paragraph medial conclusion medial
terminal	introduction terminal paragraph terminal conclusion terminal

The focus of research question 4 was whether any significant tendencies were discernable in the results obtained by the grammatical and metafunctional analyses. As the fifth and final research question considers the possible application of the first four questions to teaching practice, it is informed by the results of all sections presented here but, as stated above, it is only briefly mentioned in this chapter and fully addressed in chapter 6.

5.2 Results of grammatical analysis

5.2.1 Relevant research questions

This section presents the relevant results in answer to the grammatical aspect of research question 1 and in answer to research question 2:

1. To what extent, and in what sentence initial grammatical characteristics³, do essays written in a timed condition differ from those written in an untimed condition?

Since it could not be assumed that there was any difference between grammatical sentence initial elements produced under different time conditions, this question was operationalised by keeping the timed and untimed samples separate in each of the nine locations whilst categorising the sentence initial elements according to the grammatical structure(s) used. The paired results (one timed, one untimed) for each location could then be compared easily and the extent of the differences observed. This is the way results are presented in all Tables and Figures in this section (5.2.3 – 5.2.7), unless otherwise stated. Statistical testing was then carried out to ascertain which of the observed differences were significant (see section 5.6.2).

2. To what extent is each grammatical structure represented in sentence initial elements in each of the nine locations in skilled essays?

This question was operationalised by categorising the (very) first element of each sentence, in each of the nine locations, according to the grammatical categories defined in the Methodology chapter, section 4.6.1 (keeping timed and untimed separate as mentioned above). The number of each grammatical structure in each category was then counted and expressed as a percentage since there were unequal numbers of sentences across the nine locations. In this way, the extent of the use of each grammatical structure as first element could be observed in each location and compared across all locations and in grouped locations (as detailed above in section 5.1.2). Results for the analysis of the first element appear in section 5.2.3.

Thereafter, all other initial elements preceding the main verb of the main clause were also categorised and counted⁴. The number of these in each location was expressed as a count per 100 sentences (keeping timed and untimed separate again). The extent of the use of each grammatical structure within all initial elements (before the main verb of the main clause) could then be observed in each location, compared across locations and in grouped locations. Results for the analysis of all initial elements appear in section 5.2.4.

Next, the number of sentences in each location where the main verb was in receptive (passive) voice (see 4.6.1.2) was counted and expressed as a percentage (keeping timed and untimed separate again). The same was undertaken for sentences using the equative structure (see section 4.6.1.7). Thereby the extent of the use of these structures could be observed for each location, compared across locations and in grouped locations. Results for the analysis of receptive voice and equative sentence structure appear in sections 5.2.5 and 5.2.6, respectively.

Finally, the different types of nominal groups and nominal group constituents of heavy nominal groups were categorised according to the categories described in the Methodology chapter, section 4.6.1.3, and counted for each location (keeping timed and untimed separate). These were expressed as a number per 100 sentences as nominal groups occurred as first element as well as within all initial elements. The extent of the use of the various types was noted in each location, compared across locations and in grouped locations. Results for this analysis appear in section 5.2.7.

Where possible in terms of the numbers present, inferential statistical testing on the larger categories was carried out to establish whether the observed grammatical differences were significant among locations and, in some cases, between the extent of usage as first element as compared to when all initial elements were considered. Results for these tests appear in section 5.6.3 for the reasons stated in footnote 1, section 5.1.2 (see end of chapter).

5.2.2 Background to presentation of grammatical findings

As a reminder and to clarify once more, what is meant by “first element” as opposed to “all initial elements”, the former refers to the very first grammatical element of the sentence, be it an Adjunct, a projecting clause, a subordinate clause or one of the others stipulated in the Methodology. The latter, “all initial elements” refers to all elements preceding the main verb of the main clause. (See Chapter 4, Section 4.3 for rationale and details relating to this.) This means that within sentence initial position, in some cases, there were several distinct grammatical elements. The maximum counted was seven, in the sentence below. Table 5.1 shows how these were analysed and categorised:

Although in the end, to a degree loyal and natural bonds are re-established ironically when characters are at their lowest, it is evident that the sin of disastrous misjudgement is redeemable but nonetheless its consequences may be too drastic to recover. (cmt 40)

Table 5.1 Distinct grammatical elements within sentence initial position

1 st element	Sub-ordinate clause of concession	‘Although ... loyal and natural bonds are re-established’
2 nd element	Minor Adjunct ⁵	‘in the end’
3 rd element	Subjunct	‘to a degree’
4 th element	Subjunct	‘ironically’
5 th element	Sub-ordinate temporal clause	‘when characters are at their lowest’
6 th element	Thematicised comment ⁶	‘it is evident’
7 th element	Grammatically unmarked nominal group with defining embedded prepositional phrase	‘the sin of disastrous misjudgement’

Sentences with more than three grammatical elements preceding the main verb of the main clause were extremely rare (less than 1% of the sample).

The focus in section 5.2.3, immediately below, is on the percentage of sentences using a particular structure as the first grammatical element, in each location, and a comparison of the results for timed and untimed writing. The main results table for this section, Table 5.2, below, and all Tables and Figures in section 5.2.3, present only the grammatical elements appearing in very first position, such as the sub-ordinate clause in the sentence cmt 40, above.

5.2.3 Results of grammatical analysis of first sentence element in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions

The tables below and graphs that follow present the differences between timed and untimed writing with regard to the first grammatical element of sentences in the nine sentence locations (research question 1). They also show the extent to which each grammatical structure is represented as a first sentence element in the nine locations (research question 2).

Explanatory notes accompany tables and figures where necessary, and key observations and/or commentary follow.

Notes on Table 5.2, below:

- (1) Since heavy nominal groups, projecting clauses and thematicised comments are also grammatically unmarked, the total of each row has a sum of more than 100%. To compare marked to unmarked sentence initial elements (thus having a total of 100%), the column headed “Nominal group” (unmarked), which is the sum of heavy nominal groups, projecting clauses, thematicised comments as well as other, simpler, nominal groups (such as a single noun as Subject) that are not part of one of these structures, should be compared to the sum of columns headed “Adjunct”, “Subordinate clause”, “Theme predication” and “Direct object / Complement” (marked sentence initial elements).
- (2) Further to Note (1), in some locations, due to unusual, marked miscellaneous sentence initial elements, which were too varied to form one group and too few in number to be groups in themselves, marked and unmarked total slightly less than 100%. Examples of such elements would be: preposed attributives, projections as nominalisation and receptive voice intensive attributives. (Grammatically unmarked versions are given below each example.)

Preposed attributive	<i><u>Bitter and cynical, and weighed down with the burden of revenge and mental anguish</u>, Hamlet takes out his anger on Ophelia, [who]’ is sweet and innocent.</i> (pmt 284)
Unmarked version	Hamlet, who is bitter and cynical, and weighed down with the burden of revenge and mental anguish, takes out his anger on Ophelia, who is sweet and innocent.
Projection as nominalisation	<i><u>That ‘King Lear’ is a world of inversions, where convention is thrown away and orthodox values, neglected</u>⁸, is a truism.</i> (iit 38)
Unmarked version	It is a truism that ‘King Lear’ is a world of inversions, where convention is thrown away and orthodox values neglected.
Receptive voice intensive attributive	<i><u>Especially paramount</u> is time and the social and historical context.</i> (imu 142)
Unmarked version	Time and the social and historical context are especially paramount.

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.2, below:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Unless otherwise stated, this system of abbreviation remains consistent throughout the thesis but will accompany Tables and Figures where it is used, for easy reference.

Table 5.2 Percentage of sentences beginning with each grammatical structure, in each location, timed and untimed

	Grammatically unmarked (Subject = nominal group)		Adjunct	Subordinate clause	Grammatically unmarked	Theme predication	Grammatically unmarked	Direct object or Complement
	Total nominal groups	Heavy nominal group			Projecting clause		Thematicised comment	
ii timed	72.7%	12.1%	22.7%	1.5%	3.0%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%
<i>ii untimed</i>	62.2%	5.4%	37.8%	0.0%	8.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
im timed	73.6%	4.4%	19.8%	3.3%	3.3%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>im untimed</i>	67.6%	7.0%	23.9%	5.6%	2.8%	1.4%	0.0%	0.0%
it timed	77.8%	12.7%	19.0%	0.0%	1.6%	1.6%	3.2%	1.6%
<i>it untimed</i>	64.9%	8.1%	29.7%	5.4%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
pi timed	73.4%	13.3%	23.8%	1.2%	2.5%	0.6%	0.9%	0.0%
<i>pi untimed</i>	66.5%	9.3%	29.8%	2.8%	1.4%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%
pm timed	70.6%	6.2%	22.3%	4.3%	5.6%	1.2%	1.5%	0.3%
<i>pm untimed</i>	65.1%	4.7%	29.3%	2.3%	7.9%	0.9%	0.0%	0.5%
pt timed	68.7%	8.7%	24.8%	3.1%	7.1%	0.9%	0.9%	0.6%
<i>pt untimed</i>	64.7%	6.0%	30.2%	1.9%	7.9%	1.9%	1.4%	0.0%
ci timed	62.1%	3.4%	34.5%	1.7%	3.4%	1.7%	1.7%	0.0%
<i>ci untimed</i>	57.9%	5.3%	36.8%	2.6%	5.3%	0.0%	2.6%	2.6%
cm timed	68.4%	10.1%	25.3%	3.8%	7.6%	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>cm untimed</i>	63.0%	3.3%	28.3%	2.2%	6.5%	6.5%	0.0%	0.0%
ct timed	62.1%	3.0%	34.8%	0.0%	3.0%	3.0%	1.5%	0.0%
<i>ct untimed</i>	56.8%	8.1%	40.5%	0.0%	2.7%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%

Key observations on Table 5.2:

It is noteworthy that in each of the nine sentence locations, the percentage of grammatically marked first elements in the untimed condition exceeds those in the timed condition. The range for the timed condition is 15.7%, (77.8%, introduction terminal to 62.1%, conclusion initial and terminal). The range for the untimed condition is 10.8%, (67.6%, introduction medial to 56.8%, conclusion terminal). The average number of unmarked first elements for all locations for the timed condition is 70% and for the untimed is 63%.

These results suggest that students are less likely to use grammatically marked first elements when writing under timed conditions. In both conditions, conclusion initial and conclusion terminal were the locations with the highest number of grammatically marked first elements. The lowest number appeared in the introductions, with introduction terminal location having the least number in the timed condition and introduction medial having the least in the untimed condition. Sentences within the body of the essay (paragraph sentences) fit in between with only slightly more grammatically marked first elements overall than in the introductions but fewer than in the conclusions. Again, this was true for both timed and untimed conditions but the difference was greater in the timed condition. There is a single exception to these trends: there was a relatively high number of grammatically marked first elements in introduction initial location in the untimed condition.

In terms of the extent of each type of structure used, it is very clear that of the marked structures, Adjuncts far exceeded all others, constituting the first element for a quarter of all sentences in the timed condition and almost one third of sentences in the untimed condition. Heavy nominal groups (unmarked) are the next largest category with projecting and subordinate clauses third and fourth most common, respectively. The other structures did not feature strongly with Direct object / Complement used least as initial structure.

Figure 5.1, below, illustrates the information in the Nominal group column of Table 5.2, comparing the percentage of sentences with a grammatically unmarked first element in the timed condition, to the untimed, for each location.

Key to abbreviations in Figure 5.1:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

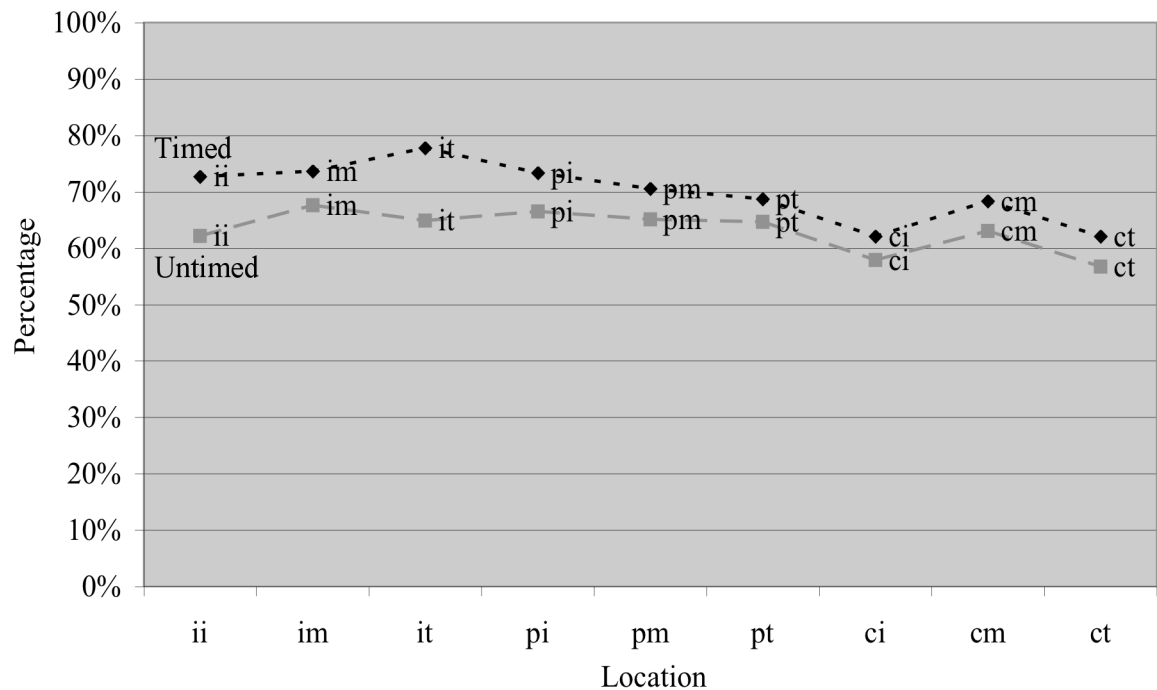


Figure 5.1: Graph comparing the percentage of sentences with grammatically unmarked first elements, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions

Commentary on Figure 5.1:

This graph, showing the percentage of sentences with grammatically unmarked first elements, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions, reveals a small pattern in the untimed results, which is not so apparent in the timed condition. In the untimed condition (the grey dashed line), the initial and terminal locations (boundary locations) in both the introductions and conclusions appear to contain more marked first elements than the medial locations but the paragraph locations do not show the same pattern but appear to be similar in the number of sentences beginning with marked elements. This pattern is only evident in the conclusions of the timed condition (the black dotted line), where the conclusion medials show fewer marked first elements than the conclusion boundary locations (initial and terminal).

Table 5.2(a), below, by extraction from Table 5.2, shows the location of the highest and lowest number of specific types of grammatical structures as first element for both time conditions.

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.2(a):

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Table 5.2(a) Location of highest and lowest percentage of different structures⁹ as first element, for timed and untimed conditions

Structure	Location of highest percentage		Location of lowest percentage	
	timed	untimed	timed	untimed
Heavy nominal group	pi (13.3%)	pi (9.3%)	ct (3.0%)	cm (3.3%)
Adjunct	ct (34.8%)	ct (40.5%)	it (19%)	im (23.9%)
Subordinate clause	pm (4.3%)	im (5.6%)	it, ct (0%)	ii, ct (0%)
Projecting clause	cm (7.6%)	ii (8.1%)	it (1.6%)	pi (1.4%)
Theme predication	ct (3.0%)	cm (6.5%)	ii (0%)	ii, it, ci (0%)
Thematicised comment	it (3.2%)	ci (2.6%)	im, cm (0%)	ii, im, it, pm, cm, ct (0%)
Direct object / Complement	it (1.6%)	ci (2.6%)	ii, im, pi, ci, cm, ct (0%)	ii, im, it, pi, pt, cm, ct (0%)

Key observations on Table 5.2(a):

Most heavy nominal groups appear to be located in paragraph initial locations for both timed and untimed conditions. The fewest heavy nominal groups occur in conclusions although in different locations within the conclusions (terminal in the timed condition and medial in the untimed). The average number of heavy nominal groups used in sentence initial position was slightly higher in the timed than in the untimed condition: 8.2% (timed) as opposed to 6.3% (untimed).

Similarly, for both conditions, most Adjuncts are used in conclusion terminal location and the fewest are used in introductions although, again, in different locations within introductions: terminal for the timed condition and medial for the untimed condition. On average, more Adjuncts were used in the untimed condition (31.8%) than the timed (25.2%) as first sentence element.

Subordinate clauses are more commonly located in medial locations and less frequently used in terminal locations. Introduction terminal in the untimed condition was a notable

exception to this, returning the second highest percentage of all locations in both conditions, at 5.4%. A similar overall average was observed in both conditions: 2.1% (timed) and 2.5% (untimed).

There does not appear to be any noteworthy finding with regard to the use of projecting clauses in terms of the location of the highest and lowest figures; however, a glance back at Table 5.2 reveals that there is some consistency between the timed and untimed results: in both conditions paragraph medial, paragraph terminal and conclusion terminal all returned higher percentages than other positions (over 5.5%), apart from paragraph initial in the untimed condition, which returned the highest percentage of all (8.1%). Slightly more projecting clauses were used on average as first sentence element in the untimed condition: 5% as opposed to 4.1% (timed).

The use of Theme predication was more prevalent in conclusion medial and terminal positions for untimed and timed conditions, respectively. Both conditions returned a 0% score in introduction initial position for this structure. Conclusion initial and introduction terminal also returned zero scores for Theme predication, in the untimed condition. All medial locations had some instances of this structure, in both time conditions. Averages were very similar in both conditions: 1.3% (timed) and 1.5% (untimed).

The thematicised comment structure presented the most surprising result in that the timed condition produced nearly three times as many instances of this structure than the untimed: 1.4% (timed) in contrast to 0.5% (untimed). Also, seven of the nine locations contained examples of thematicised comment in the timed condition whereas only three locations held instances of this structure in the untimed condition. The most popular location for thematicised comment in the timed condition was introduction terminal (3.2%) although introduction initial had nearly as many examples (3%). Quite differently, in the untimed condition there were no examples in the introductions and the most popular location for thematicised comment was conclusion initial. However, in both conditions, medial locations contained few or no instances.

Finally, using either a Direct object or Complement as the first element was extremely rare in both time conditions. Both rendered an average of 0.3%. Under timed conditions

introduction terminal was the most common place for this structure and conclusion initial was most common for untimed. A single example was found in paragraph medial location in both conditions and the timed condition also had two examples in paragraph terminal location.

The profile graphs below (Figures 5.2 - 5.4) illustrate Table 5.2 more fully.

Notes on Figures 5.2 - 5.4, below:

- (1) Creating a visual profile by means of adjacent bars, the graphs in the following figures represent the results in Tables 5.2 and 5.2(a) visually.
- (2) The figures consist of six graphs each, which compare the percentage of sentences written in timed (left profile) and untimed (right profile) conditions, using the different grammatical structures as first element, in introductions (Figure 5.2), paragraphs in the body of the essay (Figure 5.3) and conclusions (Figure 5.4). This represents the columns on Table 5.2, from Heavy nominal groups through to Direct object / Complement, with “other nominal groups” accounting for all the unmarked nominal groups that are not part of a heavy nominal group or Theme predication or thematicised comment, in other words, simple, unmarked nominal groups.
- (3) It is most useful to refer closely to the figures while reading the commentary that follows, by paying attention to the profile, rather than the percentages, which are included for accuracy only.

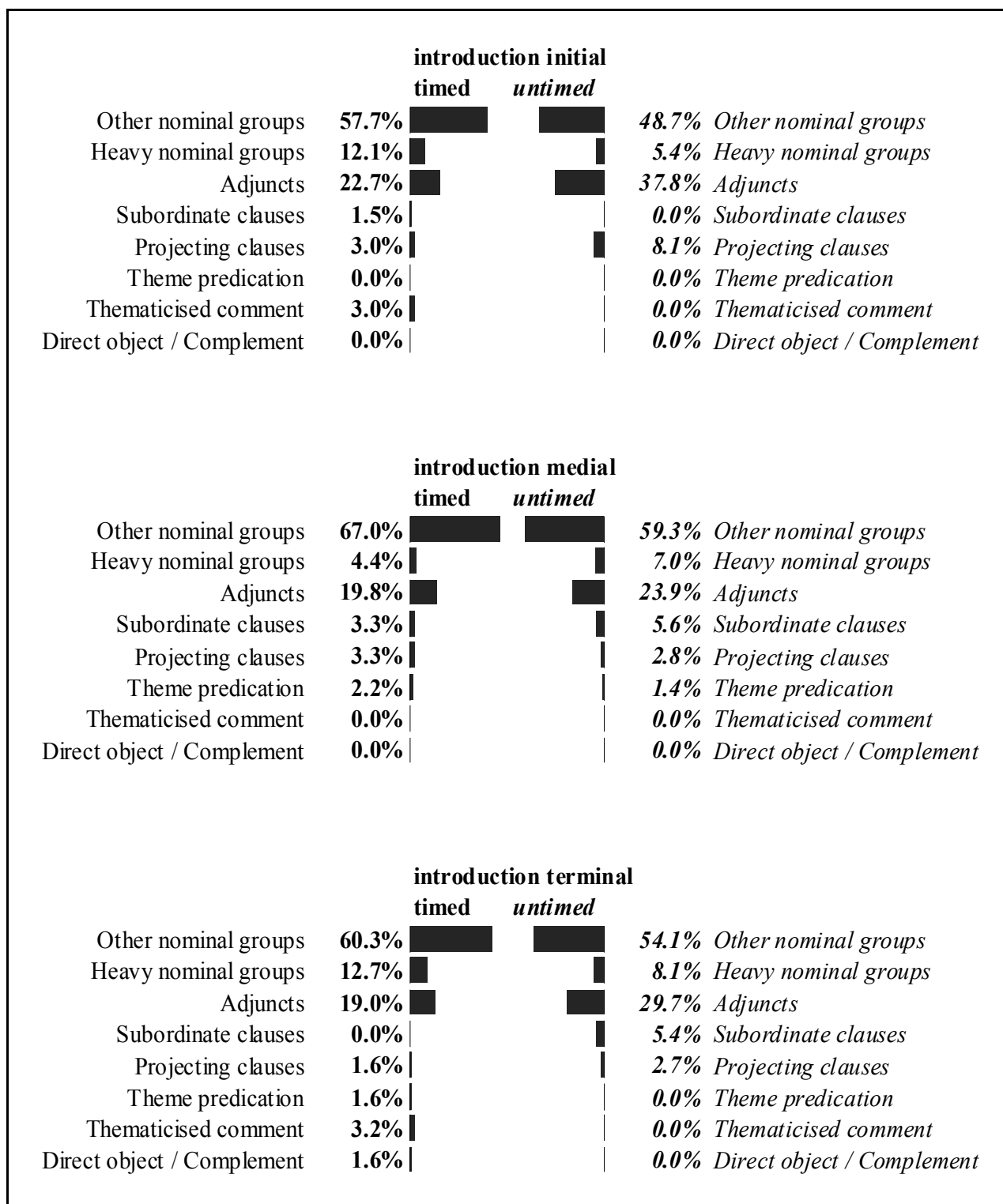


Figure 5.2: Graphs comparing the percentage of each grammatical structure as first sentence element in introduction initial, medial and terminal locations, for timed and untimed conditions

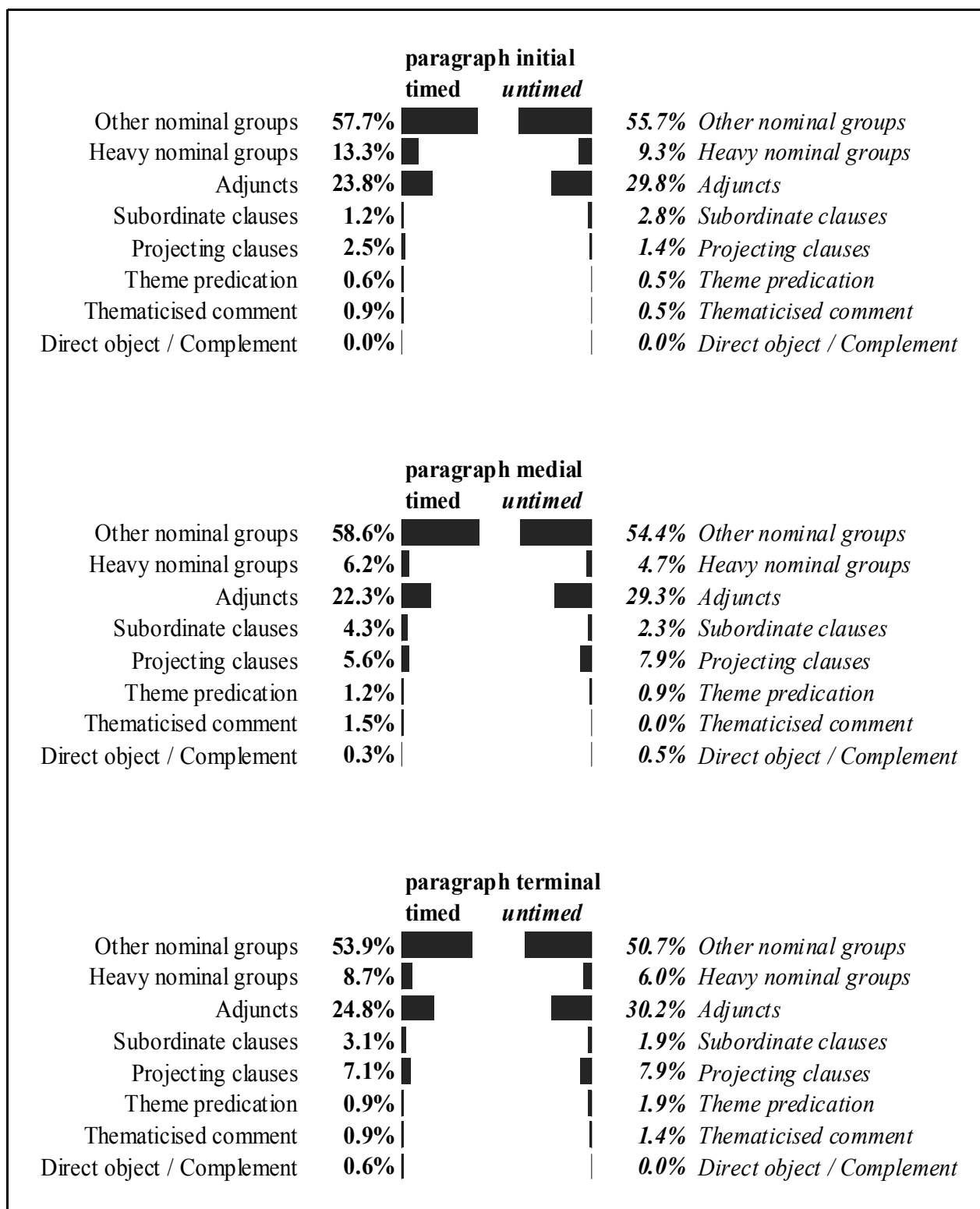


Figure 5.3: Graphs comparing the percentage of each grammatical structure as first sentence element in paragraph initial, medial and terminal locations, for timed and untimed conditions

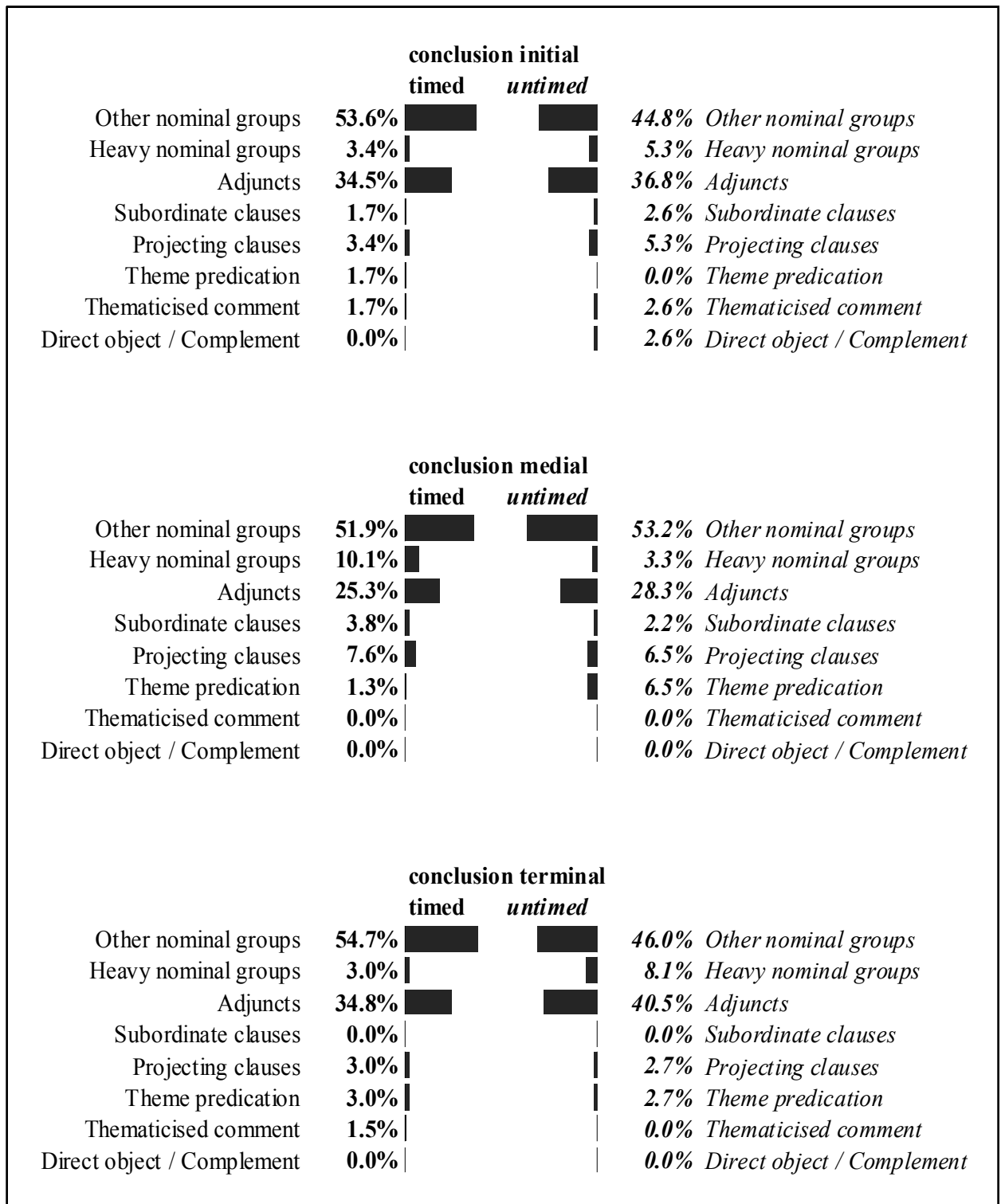


Figure 5.4: Graphs comparing the percentage of each grammatical structure as first sentence element in conclusion initial, medial and terminal locations, for timed and untimed conditions

Commentary on Figures 5.2 – 5.4:

The profile bar graphs, above, show that there are grammatical similarities and differences between the writing produced in timed and untimed conditions, relating to the first sentence initial element, as have been listed in the Key Observations on Table 5.2(a), above. While those will not be repeated here, especially noticeable is that in Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.4 (introductions and conclusions, respectively), for both time conditions, the bar profile for medial locations looks different from the bar profiles for initial and terminal locations, which are more similar. In paragraph locations (Figure 5.3), the difference is less noticeable.

Another way to glean information from Figures 5.2 – 5.4 is to compare initial locations in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions on each figure by turning through the three pages and examining the top graph on each. It becomes apparent that introduction and conclusion initial locations resemble each other to a greater extent than paragraph initial location, which has a slightly different profile. Introduction and conclusion initial locations are more likely to make use of a wider variety of structures whereas paragraph initial location relies more on nominal groups (other and heavy) and Adjuncts. This is true for both time conditions.

When comparing medial locations in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions, by paging across the three figures (middle graph on each page), the differences are somewhat more complex. There is a decline in the use of “other nominal groups”: introduction medials use the most, paragraph medials use fewer, and conclusion medials the least. This is true for both conditions but the drop off is far greater in the timed condition (67% down to 52%). The untimed drop from 59% to 53%. The greater decline of the use of “other nominal groups” in the timed condition is balanced by an increase in the use of heavy nominal groups and Adjuncts. The untimed condition differs considerably here, with a decrease in the use of heavy nominal groups from 7% (introduction medial), to 5% (paragraph medial), to 3% (conclusion medial) but also with an increase in the use of Adjuncts. The timed sample shows a more or less steady use of subordinate clauses in medials throughout the essay but in the untimed conditions there is a more definite drop off, from 6% to 2%. Both conditions, however, show an increase in the use of projecting clauses from 3% in introduction medials, to 7 – 8% in body paragraph and conclusion medials. Apart from the

somewhat out of kilter 6.5% use of Theme predication in untimed conclusion medials, the remaining grammatical structures do not feature strongly in medial locations.

Finally, looking at the bottom graphs across the three pages, to compare terminal locations in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions, it appears that there is a definite decrease (from introduction terminals, through paragraph terminals to conclusion terminals) in the use of other nominal groups in both time conditions. There is a correspondingly definite increase in the use of Adjuncts from introduction terminals through paragraph to conclusion terminals in both conditions. Both conditions are also similar in a rather extraordinary spike in the number of projecting clauses used in paragraph terminals 7% (timed) and 8% (untimed) compared to introduction and conclusion terminals, which range from 1.6% – 3%. A slight difference between the timed and untimed conditions in terms of terminal locations is that the timed condition has a wider range of structures represented in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions.

The bubble graphs, in Figures 5.5 – 5.7, below, illustrate the differences between timed and untimed conditions in terms of the locations where the different grammatical structures are used most.

Note on Figures 5.5 - 5.7, below:

The area of the bubble represents the relative size of the contribution of each grammatical structure as first element¹⁰. The top four locations where the structure is found are presented. This is a strong visual representation of the information in the shaded columns of Table 5.2(a) (the top location for each structure) with the addition of second to fourth highest locations.

Key to abbreviations in Figure 5.5 – 5.7, below:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal
pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal
ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

The size of the bubble and the number to the right indicate the percentage of sentences using this grammatical structure as first element, in the location indicated inside of the bubble.

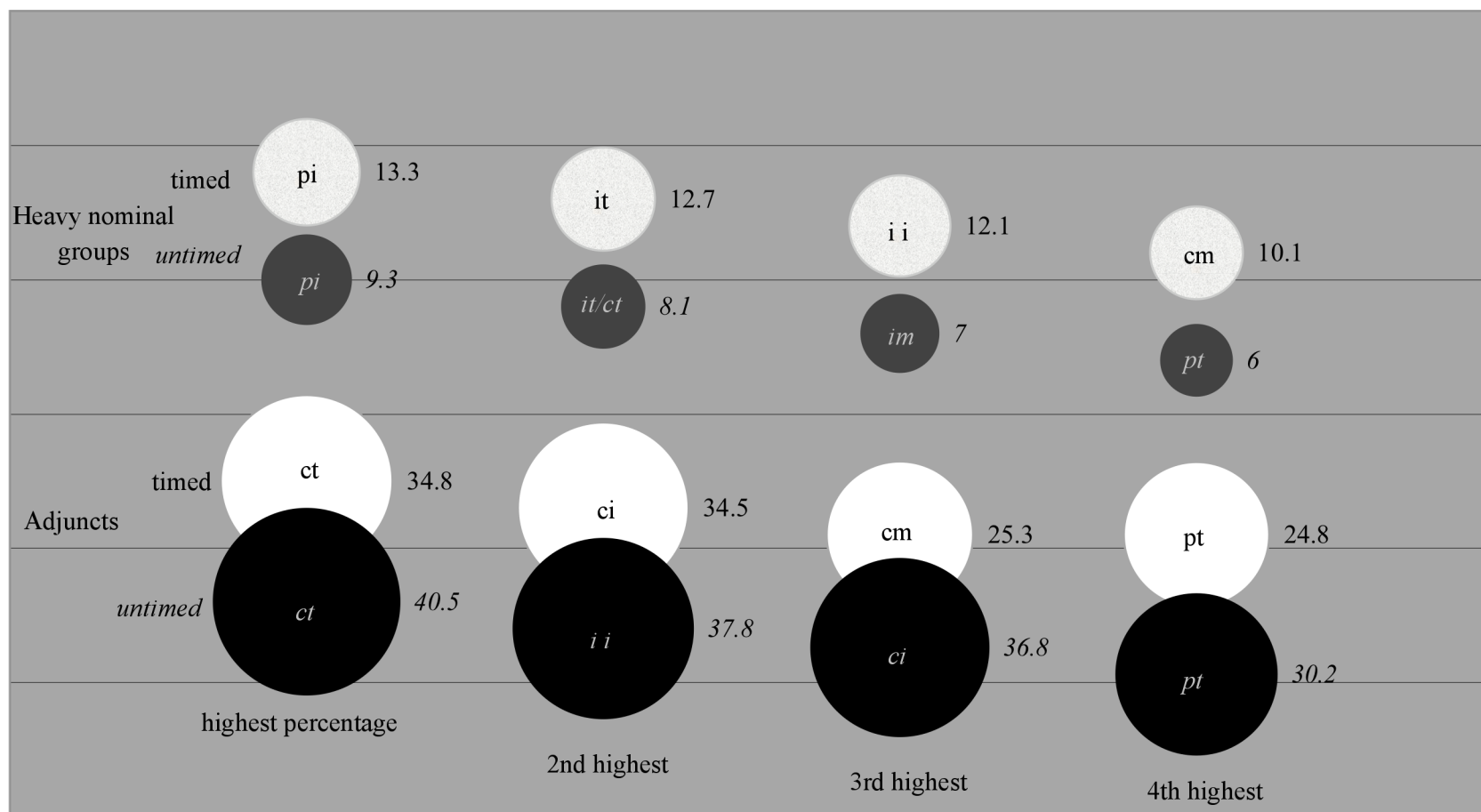


Figure 5.5: Bubble graph showing the four locations with the highest percentage of heavy nominal groups and Adjuncts, as first element, for timed and untimed conditions

The size of the bubble and the number to the right indicate the percentage of sentences using this grammatical structure as first element, in the location indicated inside the bubble.)

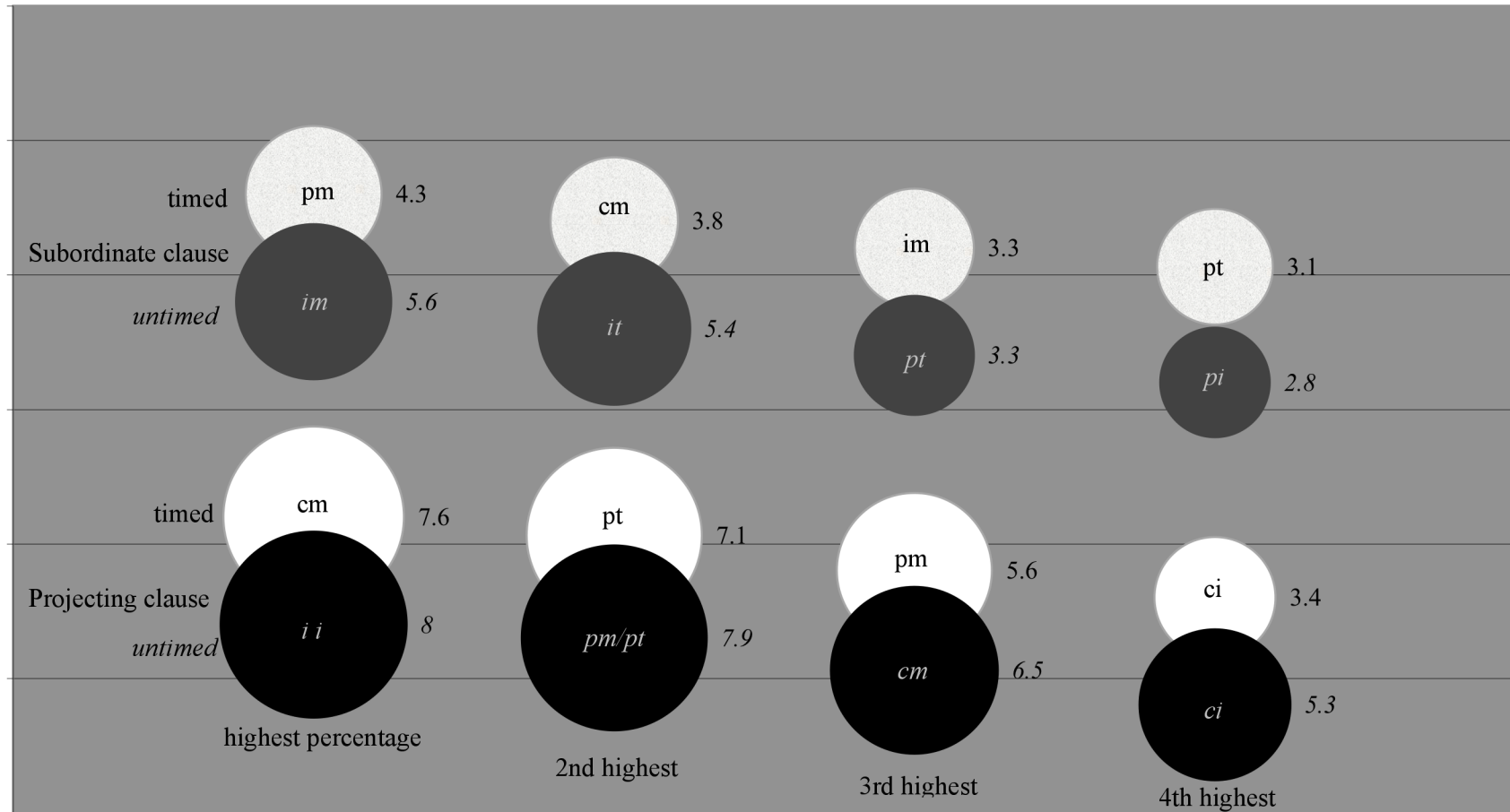


Figure 5.6: Bubble graph showing the four locations with the highest percentage of subordinate and projecting clauses, as first element, for timed and untimed conditions

The size of the bubble and the number to the right indicate the percentage of sentences using this grammatical structure as first element, in the location indicated inside of the bubble.

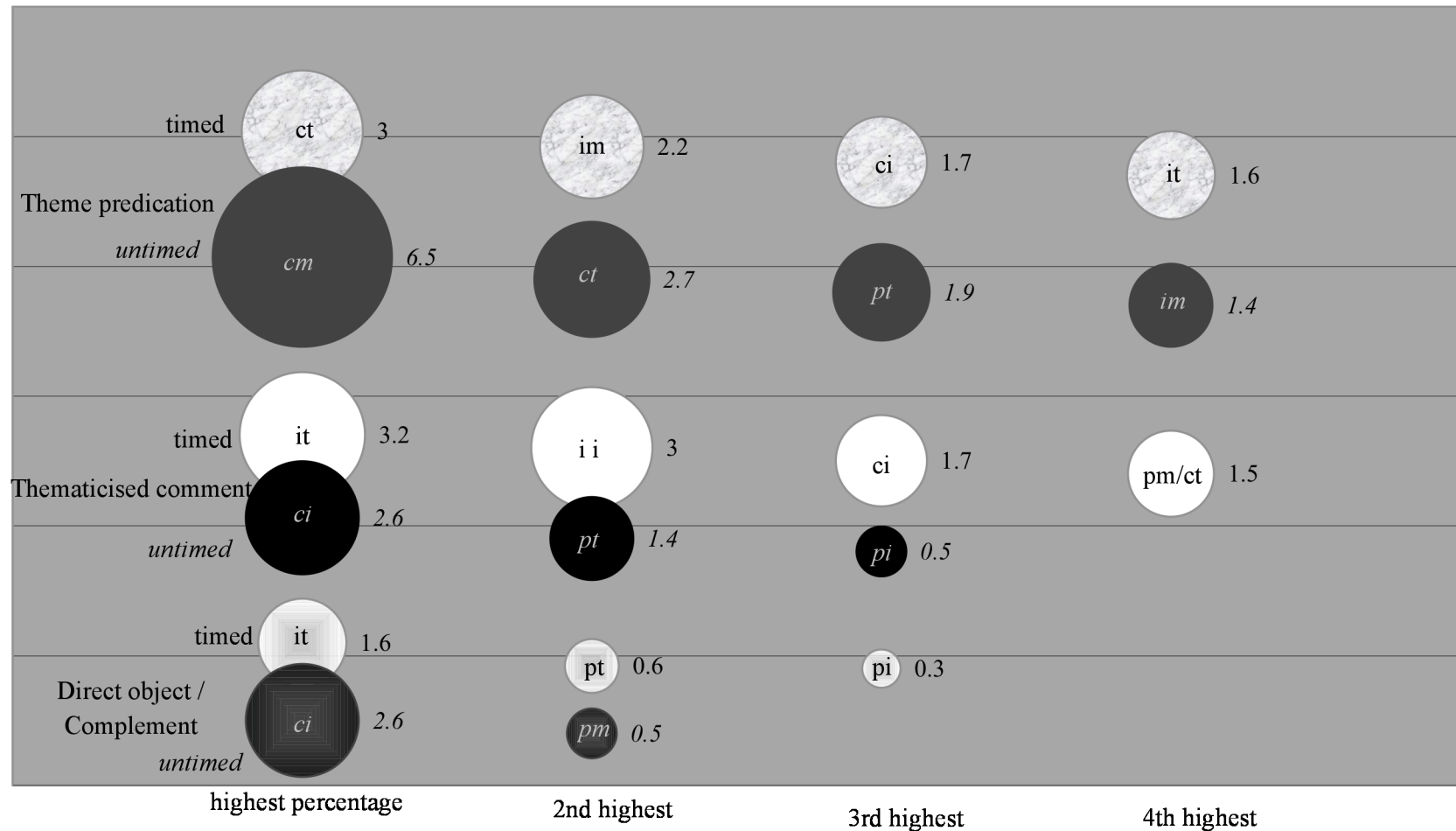


Figure 5.7: Bubble graph showing four locations with the highest percentage of Theme predication, thematicised comment and Direct object / Complement, as first element, for timed and untimed conditions

Commentary on Figures 5.5 – 5.7:

Points to note on Figure 5.5 (showing heavy nominal groups and Adjuncts) are that for both time conditions, paragraph initial is the location that produced the highest percentage of heavy nominal groups as first element and introduction terminal, the second highest, although conclusion terminal was equal to introduction terminal in the untimed condition. Similarly, for Adjuncts, there was a consistency between timed and untimed conditions with both having the highest percentage of Adjuncts as initial element in conclusion terminal position. Introduction initial was the location with the second highest percentage of Adjuncts as initial element, for untimed and conclusion initial second highest for timed (and third highest for untimed), all prominent boundary positions.

Figure 5.6 suggests that medial sentences are the most likely location for sentence initial subordinate clauses in the timed condition. While the highest percentage in the untimed condition was also medial (introduction), thereafter, terminals featured more strongly. Projecting clauses appear to vary more but a closer look reveals that apart from the large percentage in introduction initial in the untimed condition, paragraph medial, paragraph terminal, conclusion initial and conclusion terminal are the four locations that feature in both time conditions although the order varies slightly.

Figure 5.7 shows that for Theme predication, conclusions and introductions are the most common location. The one paragraph location that features (third highest in untimed condition) is a boundary position (terminal). Paragraph medial did not feature strongly as a location for this structure. Timed and untimed conditions were dissimilar in terms of thematicised comment in that introductions were the two locations that had the highest percentages in the timed condition whereas in the untimed, conclusions and paragraphs featured more strongly. However, boundary locations (initial and terminal) were represented more strongly in both time conditions. Little may be said regarding the use of Direct object or Complement as initial structure since so few were present. Nevertheless, the highest percentage was also found in boundary locations, introduction terminal and conclusion initial, for timed and untimed conditions, respectively.

5.2.3.1 *Key findings with regard to grammatical features of first sentence element:*

1. Students used more grammatically marked first elements under untimed conditions than under timed conditions.
2. Conclusion initial and conclusion terminal were the locations where most grammatically marked first sentence elements occurred, in both time conditions.
3. Introductions had the lowest number of marked sentence initial elements, for both time conditions.
4. In the untimed condition, in introductions and conclusions, boundary locations (initial and terminal) contained more grammatically marked first elements than medial locations. (This is only true for conclusions in the timed condition.)
5. Ranked from greatest number to fewest, in both time conditions, the structures were represented as first sentence element as follows: unmarked nominal groups, Adjuncts, heavy nominal groups, projecting clauses, subordinate clauses, Theme predication, thematicised comment, Direct object / Complement.
6. For both time conditions, most Adjuncts as first element were found in conclusion terminal location. The fewest were in introductions.
7. For both time conditions, most heavy nominal groups as sentence initial element were found in paragraph initial location. The fewest were found in conclusions.
8. For both time conditions, most subordinate clauses as first sentence element were found in medial locations and fewest, in boundary locations.
9. For both time conditions, most Theme predication as first element was found in conclusions. The fewest were in introduction initial location.

5.2.4 Results of grammatical analysis of all sentence initial elements in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions

The approach taken in this section is similar to that above except that the results are presented as the number of each structure found per 100 sentences, within sentence initial position (preceding the main verb of the main clause) in each of the nine locations, in timed and untimed conditions. This means that the focus here is not which structure appeared most frequently as the very first element in each location, but rather, on how many of each structure were used within the sentence initial elements overall, in each location. Again, timed and untimed results are separate but paired for comparison.

Although the method of counting differs for the first element and the overall count, the two sets of figures remain comparable since the first percentage is simply the number of sentences beginning with a specific structure per 100 sentences (a percentage) and this count is the number of each specific structure overall, per 100 sentences. For this reason, only those locations are highlighted for observation where a definite increase occurs (where a considerable number of a specific structure has been used in second to seventh elements) or where the addition of second to seventh elements clearly reinforces the result obtained by analysis of the first element.

Table 5.3, below, then, presents the results for all grammatical elements found within sentence initial position (potentially seven but rarely more than three), per 100 sentences in each location, for timed and untimed results.

Note on Table 5.3, below:

This table does not indicate marked and unmarked structures because marking is only relevant to the first element of the sentence and this analysis is a count of the structures listed in the top row of the table, if they preceded the main verb of the main clause in each sentence (all sentence initial elements), expressed as a number per 100 sentences.

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.3, below :

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal
pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal
ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Table 5.3 Number of each grammatical structure per 100 sentences, within sentence initial position, in each location, timed and untimed

	Heavy nominal group	Adjunct	Subordinate clause	Projecting clause	Theme predication	Thematicised comment	Direct object / complement
ii timed	13.6	33.3	1.5	6.1	0.0	3.0	0.0
<i>ii untimed</i>	5.4	59.5	0.0	10.8	0.0	2.7	0.0
im timed	5.5	29.7	3.3	4.4	2.2	1.1	0.0
<i>im untimed</i>	7.0	29.6	5.6	8.5	2.8	0.0	0.0
it timed	14.3	31.7	0.0	6.3	1.6	4.8	1.6
<i>it untimed</i>	10.8	62.2	10.8	13.5	2.7	0.0	0.0
pi timed	14.9	43.0	1.9	4.6	1.2	1.2	0.0
<i>pi untimed</i>	11.6	43.7	3.7	4.2	0.5	1.4	0.0
pm timed	7.7	41.5	6.5	9.9	1.2	1.9	0.3
<i>pm untimed</i>	4.7	43.7	5.1	12.1	1.4	0.0	0.5
pt timed	10.5	43.3	4.3	13.6	1.5	1.5	0.6
<i>pt untimed</i>	8.8	48.4	4.2	11.6	1.9	1.9	0.0
ci timed	5.2	46.6	1.7	13.8	1.7	3.4	0.0
<i>ci untimed</i>	5.3	55.3	2.6	10.5	2.6	7.9	2.6
cm timed	13.9	39.2	3.8	11.4	2.5	1.3	0.0
<i>cm untimed</i>	7.6	53.3	3.3	9.8	6.5	0.0	0.0
ct timed	6.1	51.5	0.0	9.1	3.0	3.0	0.0
<i>ct untimed</i>	13.5	48.6	0.0	8.1	2.7	2.7	2.7

Key observations on Table 5.3:

The presence of heavy nominal groups increased slightly in both time conditions. What was notable was that for timed writing, the most common location for heavy nominal groups remained paragraph initial position (15 per 100 sentences), whereas for untimed writing, it changed from paragraph initial to conclusion terminal (13.5 per 100 sentences). The latter was the second highest on the first element only analysis.

In keeping with the first element analysis, Adjuncts were by far the largest group represented in the count per 100 sentences. The number was also notably larger once second to seventh elements were added. Once again, the location with the highest number per 100 did not change for the timed condition, conclusion terminal (51.5 per 100), but in the untimed condition, the location featuring the highest number of Adjuncts per 100 sentences changed from conclusion terminal to introduction terminal (62 per 100). There were also notably more Adjuncts in introduction initial and conclusion initial locations for the untimed condition. This left conclusion terminal (highest for first element) only fifth highest once second to seventh elements were added.

There were few changes in the results for subordinate clauses. Again, in the timed condition, paragraph medial remained the location where the highest number was found. There was a slight rise to 6.5 per 100 sentences. Also once again, it was in the untimed condition that the location for the greatest number of subordinate clauses changed from introduction medial, to introduction terminal (11 per 100 sentences). In fact, the count doubled in introduction terminal location once second to seventh elements were added, whereas the number remained the same for introduction medial once the additional elements were included. The untimed condition also showed a larger number of subordinate clauses in paragraph medial and paragraph terminal locations.

Like the Adjunct category, the projecting clause category showed a larger number in every location, for both time conditions, with the result that it overtook heavy nominal groups as the second largest category. In the timed condition, the location with the highest number per 100 sentences changed from conclusion medial to conclusion initial location (14 per 100 sentences). In the untimed condition, the location with the highest count changed from introduction initial to introduction terminal (13.5 per 100 sentences). When counting the

first element only, an average of 4% and 5% of sentences used the projecting clause for timed and untimed conditions respectively. Once second to seventh position elements were added, this average doubled to 9 and 10 (per 100 sentences) respectively. This was the largest difference of all categories, including the Adjunct category.

Both the number and location of the highest count for Theme predication remained the same in timed and untimed conditions (respectively): 3.0 (conclusion terminal) and 6.5 (conclusion medial) per 100 sentences. However, there was a greater number present in paragraph initial and terminal and conclusion medial locations in the timed condition and a greater number present in introduction and paragraph medial and conclusion initial locations for untimed writing. This left introduction initial as the only location to have no instances of this structure at all for either time condition.

The location of the highest number of thematicised comment structures remained the same for both timed and untimed conditions when second to seventh elements were added. They were, respectively, introduction terminal (5 per 100 sentences) and conclusion initial (8 per 100 sentences). The latter was a notable rise from only 2.6% of sentences using thematicised comment as first element. There were additional instances of thematicised comment in the untimed condition in paragraph initial and conclusion terminal. This meant that whereas only three locations contained examples of this structure when first elements were counted, once all elements were included, five locations contained thematicised comments. Notably, no medial locations held any instances. Although in the timed condition, the thematicised comment structure was present in all locations, in introductions and conclusions, there were fewer in medial locations. In paragraph locations, this structure was limited in use for both time conditions (as first element and within all elements). This suggests that it is preferred for boundary locations (initial and terminal) and especially in introductions and conclusions.

The only change in the number of Direct object / Complement structures used once all initial elements were counted was in the untimed condition, where an additional example was found in the conclusion terminal location.

5.2.4.1 *Key findings with regard to grammatical features of all sentence initial elements:*

1. The number of heavy nominal groups in sentence initial position per 100 sentences rose for both conditions. In the untimed condition only, conclusion terminal featured as another location for large numbers of heavy nominal groups (in addition to paragraph initial which featured above as the most common location for this structure).
2. Adjuncts were once again the largest group (except for unmarked nominal groups) and there was a larger number once second to seventh positions were added. Again in the untimed condition only, the most common location changed, to introduction terminal (from conclusion initial).
3. Again, for the untimed condition only, for subordinate clauses, the most common location changed to introduction terminal (from introduction medial).
4. The average number of projecting clauses used within sentences initial position doubled for both time conditions, once second to seventh positions were included. This was the largest difference. The most common location changed for both time conditions but remained within conclusions (timed) and introductions (untimed), respectively.
5. For both time conditions, introduction initial remained the only location to have no instances of Theme predication once second to seventh elements were included.
6. Thematicised comment remained less common in all medial locations than boundary positions, for both time conditions.

5.2.5 Results for receptive voice sentences

The main verb in the main clause of each sentence was analysed as receptive (passive) or operative (active) voice. Table 5.4, below, presents the number of receptive voice verbs in each location, for timed and untimed samples.

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.4:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Table 5.4 Percentage of sentences using receptive voice verbs in the main clause, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions

Timed	Percentage	Rank	Rank	Percentage	Untimed
ii	12.1	9th	<i>2nd</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>ii</i>
im	22	3rd	<i>1st</i>	<i>29.6</i>	<i>im</i>
it	23.8	1st	<i>4th</i>	<i>18.9</i>	<i>it</i>
Average for introductions	19.3			<i>25.1</i>	<i>Average for introductions</i>
pi	22.6	2nd	<i>3rd</i>	<i>24.2</i>	<i>pi</i>
pm	13.3	7th	<i>7th</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>pm</i>
pt	12.4	8th	<i>8th</i>	<i>13.5</i>	<i>pt</i>
Average for paragraphs	16.1			<i>17.2</i>	<i>Average for paragraphs</i>
ci	17.2	4th	<i>5th</i>	<i>18.4</i>	<i>ci</i>
cm	15.2	5/6th	<i>9th</i>	<i>10.9</i>	<i>cm</i>
ct	15.2	5/6th	<i>6th</i>	<i>16.2</i>	<i>ct</i>
Average for conclusions	15.9			<i>15.2</i>	<i>Average for conclusions</i>
Overall Average	17.1	Range: 11.7	<i>Range: 18.7</i>	<i>19.2</i>	<i>Overall Average</i>

Key observations on Table 5.4:

What is noteworthy here, firstly, is the large discrepancy between timed and untimed conditions for the introduction initial location. A far greater percentage use receptive voice in the untimed condition, 27% compared to 12% (timed). Overall, there are slightly more receptive voice verbs used in the untimed condition and, considering the averages, the pattern appears to be, for both conditions, that more receptive verbs are present in introductions than paragraph locations, or conclusions.

Secondly, there is a consistent pattern for both time conditions for paragraphs and conclusions: paragraph initial and conclusion initial locations appear to have a greater number of receptive voice verbs than paragraph medial and terminal locations and conclusion medial and terminal locations.

Thirdly, the untimed condition range (18.7%) is considerably larger than the timed condition (11.7%).

The graph in Figure 5.8, below, illustrates the locational percentages for receptive voice verbs in the main clause as displayed in Table 5.4 and supports the observations above.

Key to abbreviations in Figure 5.8:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

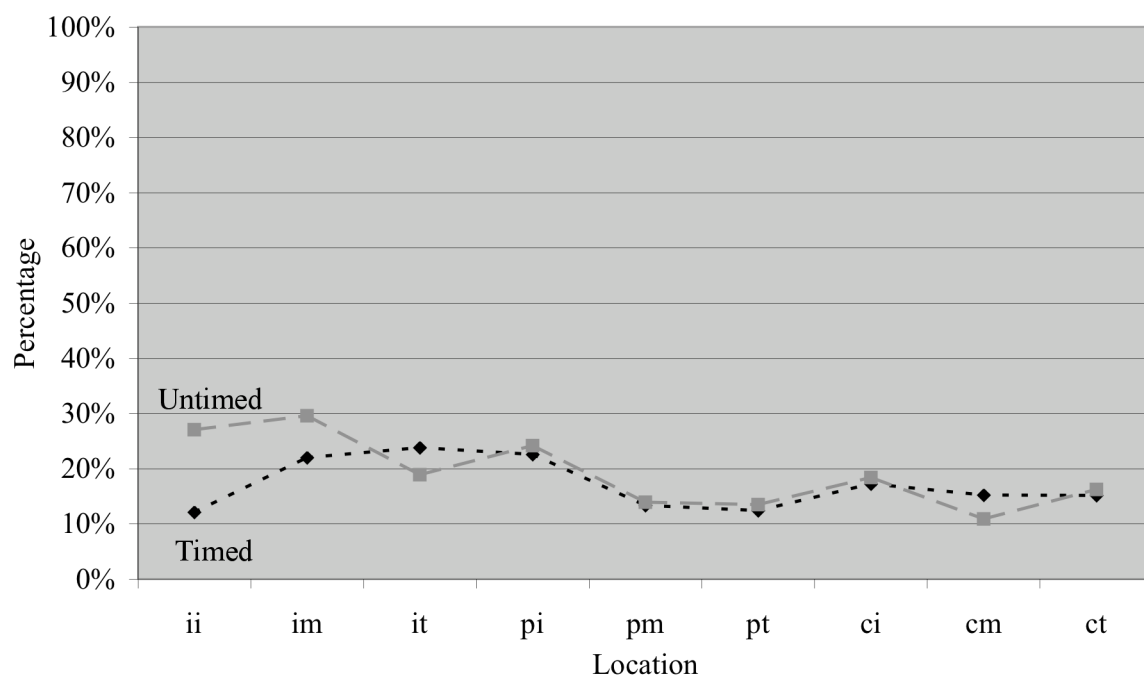


Figure 5.8: Graph comparing the percentage of receptive voice verbs in main clauses, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions

5.2.5.1 Key findings with regard to receptive voice analysis:

1. More receptive voice construction was used in the untimed condition.
2. The largest discrepancy between time conditions appeared in the introduction initial location, where untimed sentences used more than double the number of receptive voice constructions than timed sentences.
3. In both time conditions, the pattern for paragraphs and conclusions was that initial locations had more receptive voice constructions than medial and terminal locations. This was not so for introductions.
4. The untimed condition range was far larger than the timed condition range.

5.2.6 Results for equative type sentences

In the Methodology Chapter, section 4.6.1 (see chapter 4), the term “equative” was used to categorise sentences that have a particular structure. This was defined in Table 4.2 of that chapter as such:

The sentence takes the form of a “this = that” construction where the complement may be identifying or attributive in nature. Or, the complement may be a circumstantial element.

Examples:

- (1) *The mood of melancholy is the necessary means by which these contrary states can be united,*^{identifying} *as shown in Keats' analogy.* (pmu 355)
- (2) *'The Pianist' is an award winning film of intense realism and emotion.*^{attributive} (iiu 88)
- (3) *The film's plot itself is about the protagonist's mission to assassinate another member in his army.*^{circumstantial} *(The US Army).* (pit 157)

These structures are especially associated with formal registers of writing (Thompson, 2004, p. 96) and for this reason, were selected for analysis in this project. Table 5.5, below, sets out the results.

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.5, below:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal
pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal
ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Table 5.5 Percentage of sentences using the equative structure in each location, for timed and untimed conditions

Timed	Percentage	Rank	Rank	Percentage	Untimed
ii	48.5	3rd	<i>1st</i>	56.8	<i>ii</i>
im	48.4	4th	<i>3rd</i>	50.7	<i>im</i>
it	41.3	9th	<i>7/8th</i>	37.8	<i>it</i>
Average for introductions	46.0			48.4	<i>Average for introductions</i>
pi	58.5	1st	<i>2nd</i>	51.6	<i>pi</i>
pm	42.7	8th	<i>5th</i>	46.0	<i>pm</i>
pt	49.2	2nd	<i>4th</i>	46.5	<i>pt</i>
Average for paragraphs	50.2			48.1	<i>Average for paragraphs</i>
ci	48.3	5th	<i>9th</i>	31.6	<i>ci</i>
cm	44.3	7th	<i>6th</i>	44.6	<i>cm</i>
ct	47.0	6th	<i>7/8th</i>	37.8	<i>ct</i>
Average for conclusions	46.5			38.0	<i>Average for conclusions</i>
Overall Average	47.6	Range: 17.2%	Range: 25.2%	44.8	<i>Overall Average</i>

Key observations on Table 5.5:

First of all, what is most remarkable is the large number of sentences using this structure: just under half of all sentences. The untimed condition used slightly fewer on average and the range was wider. In the timed condition, the range of percentages across locations was 41.3% to 58.5%, (17.2%) whereas in the untimed condition, the range was 31.6% to 56.8% (25.2%).

Second, most equative structures appear to be located in introduction initial and medial and paragraph initial and terminal locations; these locations account for the top four percentages across both time conditions. Introduction terminal, paragraph medial and conclusion locations contain fewer although the distinction is not so great in the timed condition.

Lastly, there appears to be a pattern in the untimed condition where in introductions and paragraphs, the initial locations have a greater percentage of equative structures than medials and terminals while in the conclusions, the boundary locations (initial and terminal), have fewer than the medial. This pattern is displayed well in Figure 5.9, below. The timed condition replicates the pattern for introductions and paragraphs, albeit less

distinctly, but timed conclusions do not follow the untimed pattern. The graph in Figure 5.9, below, illustrates how similar the timed and untimed results were, apart from conclusion initial location.

Key to abbreviations in Figure 5.9:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

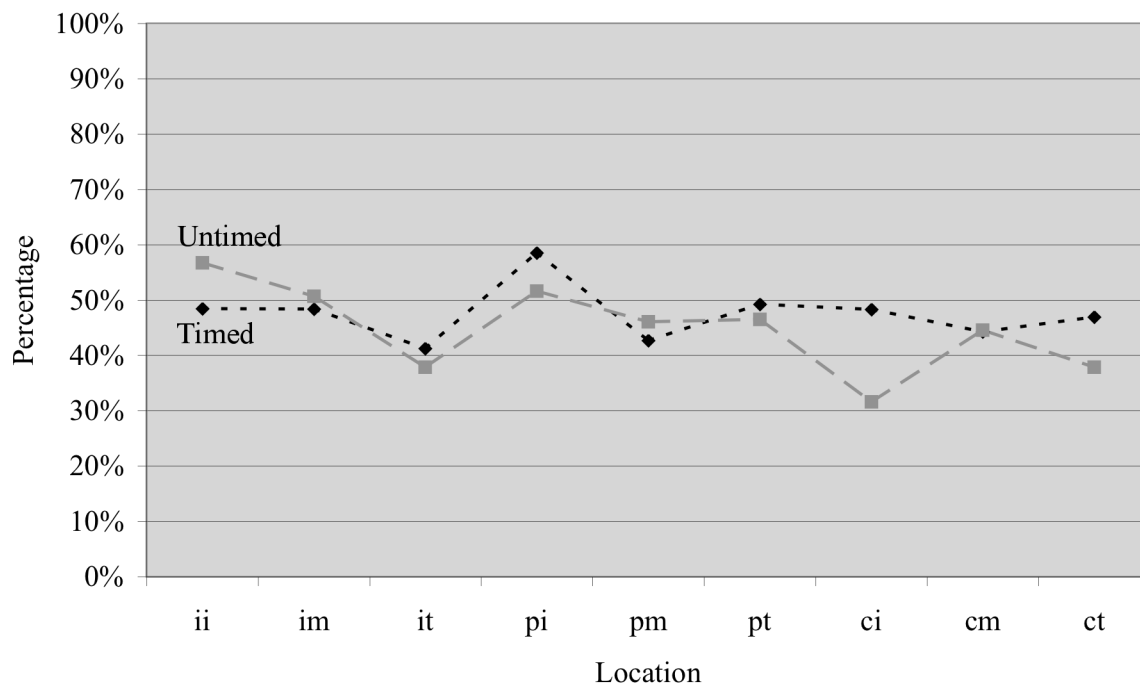


Figure 5.9: Graph comparing the percentage of equative sentence structures, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions

5.2.6.1 Key findings with regard to equative type sentences:

1. For both time conditions, just under half of all sentences used this structure.
2. The untimed condition contained fewer and the range was wider across locations.
3. The profiles for both time conditions are similar except for conclusion initial location, where the untimed condition contained fewer than the timed.

5.2.7 Results for analysis of nominal group constituents

In Chapter 4 (Methodology, section 4.6.1.3), a detailed analytical methodology for the analysis of the constituents of nominal groups was described. As a reminder, Table 5.6, below, briefly summarises the constituents that were identified. Thereafter, the results are presented in Table 5.7. They refer to the nominal group that constituted the Subject of the main verb, regardless of which sentence initial element it was (one through seven). The point of the analysis is to investigate which constituents are used within the nominal groups and, once again, if there is a difference among the nine locations and between timed and untimed writing conditions. Immediately below is a tabulated list of the different nominal group constituents and examples of each.

Table 5.6 Nominal group constituents and examples

	Constituent & Example	Abbreviation
1.	Preposed attributive: <i>Unable to lie and "ring the toll" on his moral integrity, Proctor ...</i> (ptt 237)	pa
2.	Premodification: <i>The full effects of this are ...</i> (ctu 86)	pm
3.	Definition: <i>The near complete breakdown of the hope of filial gratitude ...</i> (ctt 66)	def
4.	Elaboration: <i>By contrast, the sword, a recurring Roman image, is...</i> (pmu 474)	el
5.	Extension: <i>The opposites and inability of the two to understand each other, show...</i> (cmt 18)	ex
6.	Enhancement: <i>Women across time and space in literature are...</i> (ciu 95)	en
7.	Discoursal pronoun: <i>This, That, Those, Both etc</i> (without noun following)	pn
8.	First person personal pronoun: <i>I and We</i>	ppn
9.	Projection: <i>The idea that women are exploited and used as pawns by men is ...</i> (ptu 455)	pr
10.	Nominalisation¹¹: <i>This idea of social instability through the corruptness of war is...</i> (pit 56)	nom
11.	Embedded clause as nominalisation: <i>Leaving our tragic hero as disillusioned as ever at the end draws humour, yet ...</i> (cmt 25)	ecnom
12.	“What” nominalisation: <i>What this passage tells us about Desdemona and Othello's relationship is ...</i> (piu 425)	whnom
13.	“Fact” noun: <i>The fact that all of the central characters from the texts I selected had the desire to start new lives with men who truly loved them proves ...</i> (ptu 456)	fact

Notes on Table 5.7, below:

- (1) The abbreviations for locations in Table 5.7 differ slightly (first column on the left). In order to keep all the nominal group constituent results in one table on a single page, the timed and untimed sample labels for each location are abbreviated as below:

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.7, below:

iit = introduction initial (timed) ; imt = introduction medial (timed) ; itt = introduction terminal (timed)

iiu = introduction initial (untimed) ; imu = introduction medial (untimed) ;

itu = introduction terminal (untimed)

pit = paragraph initial (timed) ; pmt = paragraph medial (timed) ; ptt = paragraph terminal (timed)

piu = paragraph initial (untimed) ; pmu = paragraph medial (untimed) ; ptu = paragraph terminal (untimed)

cit = conclusion initial (timed) ; cmt = conclusion medial (timed) ; ctt = conclusion terminal (timed)

ciu = conclusion initial (untimed) ; cmu = conclusion medial (untimed) ; ctu = conclusion terminal (untimed)

- (2) Abbreviations for nominal group constituents are as in Table 5.6, above.

Table 5.7 Nominal group analysis showing number of each constituent type per 100 sentences, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions (see Table 5.6, above, for explanation of abbreviations of nominal group constituents, top row)

	pa	pm	def	el	ex	en	pn	ppn	pr	nom	ecnom	whnom	fact
iit	4.5	6.1	31.8	15.2	3.0	4.5	0.0	4.5	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>iiu</i>	2.7	21.6	45.9	2.7	8.1	2.7	0.0	5.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
imt	0.0	19.8	26.4	0.0	4.4	6.6	0.0	6.6	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>imu</i>	0.0	25.4	19.7	11.3	2.8	2.8	5.6	8.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
itt	0.0	27.0	33.3	9.5	7.9	9.5	1.6	6.3	0.0	1.6	1.6	0.0	0.0
<i>itu</i>	0.0	5.4	40.5	5.4	2.7	2.7	5.4	5.4	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
pit	0.0	20.1	31.0	8.4	5.6	11.1	1.2	5.3	0.9	2.5	0.3	0.9	0.3
<i>piu</i>	0.5	24.2	42.8	2.8	7.9	14.0	1.9	2.3	1.4	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.0
pmt	0.9	15.8	11.5	6.5	3.1	8.0	6.2	4.6	1.5	0.3	0.6	0.9	0.0
<i>pmu</i>	0.5	16.7	17.2	6.0	3.3	8.8	3.7	3.7	0.5	0.0	1.4	0.0	0.0
ptt	0.3	16.7	19.2	5.0	3.7	5.6	7.4	6.8	0.9	0.0	1.2	0.3	0.6
<i>ptu</i>	0.0	21.4	22.3	2.8	5.6	7.0	9.3	5.1	2.3	0.5	1.9	0.5	0.5
cit	0.0	13.8	27.6	3.4	5.2	8.6	5.2	5.2	0.0	1.7	1.7	0.0	0.0
<i>ciu</i>	0.0	5.3	13.2	5.3	5.3	21.1	0.0	7.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.0
cmt	0.0	25.3	24.1	6.3	10.1	6.3	3.8	7.6	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.3	0.0
<i>cmu</i>	0.0	16.3	16.3	7.6	5.4	12.0	4.3	9.8	1.1	1.1	0.0	1.1	0.0
ctt	0.0	15.2	24.2	4.5	4.5	6.1	4.5	9.1	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.5	0.0
<i>ctu</i>	0.0	27.0	21.6	5.4	5.4	5.4	13.5	8.1	2.7	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.0

Key observations on Table 5.7:

The most obvious result here is the high number of defining constituents and premodifiers used. Considerably fewer are enhancement, elaboration and extension constituents and sentences using a first person pronoun or a discursial pronoun as Subject of the main clause. Finally, there are the different kinds of nominalisation, few of which exceed 2 per 100 sentences.

A finer examination does show up a few interesting results. In terms of the less commonly used constituents (those registering on average across locations 1 per 100 sentences or less), it is worth noticing in which locations these emerge. The preposed attributive presented by far the most strongly in introduction initial location for both timed (4.5) and untimed (2.7) conditions. Projections appeared mostly in the boundary locations of introduction initial (timed, 3 per hundred) and paragraph and conclusion terminal (untimed, 2.3 and 2.7 respectively). Embedded clauses as nominalisations also appeared to be most strongly represented in boundary locations, such as conclusion terminal and paragraph terminal (untimed, 2.7 and 1.9 per 100 respectively) and conclusion initial and terminal and introduction terminal (timed, 1.7, 1.5 and 1.6 per 100, respectively). There were a small number of “what nominalisations” without any discernable pattern in both paragraph and conclusion locations, for both timed and untimed conditions. None appeared in introduction locations, however, in either time condition. “Fact nominalisations” were very few in number but those that did emerge were in boundary locations again: paragraph initial and terminal (timed) and paragraph terminal (untimed).

For the constituents that returned higher numbers, it is useful to consider patterns that emerged and were replicated in both time conditions. The following patterns were evident in both conditions, in paragraph locations: premodification, defining elements and extension were more prominent in initial and terminal locations and dropped off in paragraph medial location. Enhancing constituents, however, decreased from paragraph initial, through medial, to terminal. The opposite was true for the use of discursial pronouns, which increased in usage from initial through medial to terminal location.

Introduction locations showed the same pattern for defining constituents as mentioned in connection with paragraph locations above: more were used in initial and terminal locations

and fewer in the medial location, for both conditions. Also for introduction locations, the opposite pattern was present for the use of the personal pronoun: fewer were present in initial and terminal locations and more in medial, for both time conditions.

For conclusion locations in particular, it is more useful to pay closer attention to the untimed condition results since in the timed condition, understandably, due to the pressure of time constraint, many of the conclusions were limited and clearly hastily composed in comparison with the untimed condition in which much more effort appeared to have gone into the closing remarks of the piece. However, conclusion locations revealed a replicated pattern in both time conditions for the use of elaboration: greater use was made of this nominal group constituent in medial conclusion location than in initial and terminal locations. Another pattern that appeared quite strong in the untimed condition and was replicated, although only very slightly, in the timed condition, was a decrease in the use of enhancement from initial, through medial to terminal location. In the untimed condition, a few strong trends were noticed: premodification increased from 5.3 (initial) to 16.3 (medial) to 27 (terminal) per 100 sentences. Similarly, use of discursual pronouns in conclusion locations in the untimed condition increased from 0 (initial) to 4.3 (medial) to 13.5 (terminal) per 100 sentences. The inverse trend occurred in untimed conclusions for the enhancing constituents: they decreased from 21.1 (initial), to 12 (medial), to 5.4 (terminal) per 100 sentences. The latter three trends were not replicated in the timed condition.

It is also interesting to compare results for one constituent type, across introductions, paragraphs and conclusions. A notable result here was that in the untimed condition, the elaboration constituent clearly appears to occur more frequently in medial locations than in boundary locations. Defining constituents, however, were more common in initial and terminal locations (boundaries) than medial for introduction and paragraph locations. This was true for both time conditions but the trend changed for conclusion locations. In these, defining constituents increased from initial through medial to terminal for the untimed condition but declined slightly in the timed condition.

Equally interesting are the constituents that showed completely different trends in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions. Premodification is a good example. In the

untimed condition, in introductions, there is a clear drop off from 21.6 and 25.4 per 100 sentences in initial and medial locations, to 5.4 in the terminal, but, in the paragraphs in the body, it is the initial and terminal locations that climb (both over 20 per 100 sentences) while the paragraph medials drop to 16.7. In conclusion locations, there is another trend entirely: the number per 100 sentences increases dramatically from initial (5.3) to medial (16.3) to terminal (27). The timed condition did not replicate these trends at all. In fact, for introductions, the initial and terminal results are quite the opposite: 6.1 and 27 per 100 sentences, respectively. This means that introduction terminal timed is most similar to conclusion terminal untimed and introduction initial timed is most similar to conclusion initial untimed. It seems that under timed conditions, in terms of the use of premodification, introductions take on the characteristics of conclusions in the untimed condition.

Finally, some insights may be gained from examining a table showing averages for use of each constituent type, firstly, overall, then for timed and untimed conditions and lastly, within introductions, paragraphs and conclusions. Table 5.8, below, displays these results.

Key to abbreviations for nominal group constituents in Table 5.8 (top row):

pa = preposed attributive ; pm = premodification ; def = definition ; el = elaboration ; ex = extension ;

pn = discorsal pronoun ; ppn = first person pronoun ; pr = projection ; nom = nominalisation ;

ec nom = nominalisation with embedded clause ; wh nom = nominalisation using “what” ;

fact = nominalisation using “The fact that ...”

(Note that these are the same as used in Table 5.7, above, and exemplified in Table 5.6, above that.)

Table 5.8 Average number per 100 sentences for each constituent type overall, in timed and untimed conditions and for introductions, paragraphs in the body of the essay and conclusions

	pa	pm	def	el	ex	en	pn	ppn	pr	nom	ec nom	wh nom	fact
Overall average	0.5	17.9	26.0	6.0	5.2	7.9	4.1	6.2	0.9	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.1
Average: timed	0.6	17.7	25.4	6.5	5.3	7.4	3.3	6.2	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.5	0.1
Average: untimed	0.4	18.1	26.6	5.5	5.2	8.5	4.9	6.2	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.1
Average: introduction	1.2	17.5	33.0	7.3	4.8	4.8	2.1	6.1	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.0	0.0
Average: paragraph	0.4	19.2	24.0	5.2	4.9	9.1	5.0	4.6	1.3	0.6	1.0	0.6	0.2
Average: conclusion	0.0	17.1	21.2	5.4	6.0	9.9	5.2	7.9	0.6	0.5	1.2	1.1	0.0

Key observations on Table 5.8:

As noted above, defining constituents and premodifiers far exceed other nominal group constituents. The average number per 100 sentences of each, across all locations and both time conditions, is 26 and 17.9, respectively. The enhancement, elaboration and extension constituents fall well below at averages of 7.9, 6.0 and 5.2 per 100 sentences, respectively. The number of sentences using the personal pronoun as Subject also falls within this average range at 6.2 per 100 sentences. Finally, there are the different kinds of nominalisation which all register on average between 1 and 0.1 per 100 sentences and the preposed attributive, which scored an average of 0.5 per 100 sentences.

There is very little difference in the average numbers for the timed and untimed conditions. In the two largest groups, the numbers in the untimed condition do exceed the timed but there are cases in which the timed averages are slightly greater: preposed attributive, elaboration, extension, nominalisations and embedded clauses as nominalisations. The consistency is interesting if somewhat counter-intuitive, as one would imagine that significantly more complex nominal groups would be constructed when no time constraint was in place.

The averages for each constituent across introductions, paragraphs and conclusions produced a few results to note. Preposed attributives were more common in introductions (as pointed out earlier). Premodification increased slightly in paragraph locations. Definition and elaboration were greater in introductions than paragraphs and conclusions. Enhancement was the opposite, there being more in paragraphs and conclusions than introductions. Extension was fairly stable with only a slight incline in conclusion locations.

Use of a discoursal pronoun as initial Subject element, predictably, was low in introductions but increased in paragraphs and conclusions, once there were concepts to reference. Use of a first person pronoun, also predictably, was greater in introductions and conclusions (where writers are expressing their opinions directly) than in the paragraphs in the body of the essay. Little can be said with regard to the use of the variety of nominalisation constituents, except perhaps that the very limited use of these structures is surprising. This matter will be taken up in the Discussion of Results, chapter 6.

5.2.7.1 *Key findings with regard to nominal group constituents:*

1. There is little difference in nominal group constituents between time conditions.
2. For both time conditions, defining and premodifying constituents were the largest groups.
3. For both time conditions, nominal groups containing enhancement, elaboration and extension and those using a first person pronoun or a discursal pronoun were next most frequent.
4. For both time conditions, the various kinds of nominalisation, projection, embedded clauses, ‘what’ and fact, together with preposed attributives, numbered the fewest.
5. For both time conditions, projections, embedded clauses and fact nominalisations appeared mainly in boundary locations.
6. ‘What’ nominalisations did not appear in introductions in either timed condition.
7. For both time conditions, in paragraph locations the following patterns emerged: premodification, defining constituents and extension were more prominent in boundary locations and less common in medial location; enhancing constituents increased from initial through to terminal location and discursal pronouns decreased from initial through to terminal location.
8. For both time conditions, in introduction locations, the following patterns emerged: more defining constituents were used in boundary locations and fewer in medial; fewer first person pronouns were used in boundary locations and more in medial.
9. For both time conditions, in conclusion locations, the following patterns emerged: more elaboration was used in medial than boundary locations; enhancing constituents decreased from initial through to terminal location.
10. For the untimed condition only, in conclusion locations, the following trends were strongly evident: premodification and the use of discursal pronouns increased from initial through to terminal locations; enhancing constituents declined from initial through to terminal locations.
11. For the untimed condition, elaboration occurred more frequently in medial locations than boundary, across introductions, paragraphs and conclusions.
12. Defining constituents were more common in boundary locations than medial for introductions and paragraphs for both time conditions.
13. In the untimed condition, the use of premodification clearly follows completely different trends in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions.

5.2.8 Concluding statements on grammatical results

In light of the two research questions to which these results are relevant, the following statements can be made:

In terms of the use of grammatically marked sentence initial elements, there is a definite difference between timed and untimed conditions in the extent to which these are used: in all nine locations, more were used in the untimed condition.

With regard to the characteristics of sentence initial elements in each time condition, however, there is less distinction between timed and untimed writing. There are some discrepancies, which have been detailed above. One example is the fact that once all sentence initial elements were included the location of the highest counts for various structures changed mainly in the untimed condition. Another definite distinction is the number of receptive voice constructions in introduction initial location in the untimed condition considerably exceeding those in the same location in the timed condition.

But, overall, there are also many similarities. The frequency of usage for the different nominal group constituents is very similar across time conditions. The extent of the use of each type of grammatical element as first element follows, on averages, the same ranking order for both time conditions apart from thematicised comment and Theme predication, which swap rank order. When all initial elements are included, this order, including the one variation, remains fairly consistent, except for one element: in the untimed condition, on average, across locations, projecting clauses exceed heavy nominal groups.

The extent of representation of each grammatical structure in sentence initial position was, as referred to above, fairly clearly established as far as overall averages are considered. After the unmarked nominal group, (which by definition should and did constitute the largest group) Adjuncts were represented by far the most strongly. After that, heavy nominal groups (not marked), projecting clauses and subordinate clauses featured to a small extent. Theme predication and thematicised comment swapped ranks for the two time conditions, with Theme predication featuring slightly more strongly than thematicised

comment in the untimed condition and vice versa for the timed. Direct object / Complement was used the least.

However, this rank order was challenged frequently in individual locations for first element. The Adjunct remained the first element with the largest representation but there was a considerable amount of fluctuation among heavy nominal groups, subordinate clauses and projecting clauses for second largest representation. Furthermore, there were locations where Theme predication, for instance, exceeded subordinate clauses as initial element (conclusion medial untimed); subordinate clauses exceeded projecting clauses (introduction medial untimed) or projecting clauses exceeded heavy nominal groups (conclusion medial untimed and paragraph medial and terminal untimed).

Again, when all initial elements were included, there were frequent challenges to the rank order established by the averages. Examples include: subordinate clauses exceeding heavy nominal groups (paragraph medial untimed); heavy nominal groups exceeding projecting clauses (paragraph initial untimed: recall in the untimed condition, when all elements were included, on average projecting clauses exceeded heavy nominal groups); thematicised comment exceeding heavy nominal groups, subordinate clauses and Theme predication.

In total, of the 18 groups (nine locations / two conditions), 13 challenge the averages both in the case of first elements and when all initial elements are included. All of these challenges suggest that except for the Adjunct category, which remains the most strongly represented marked element, the averages are not that informative with regard to representation of each grammatical element in the different locations. It is perhaps clearer to group elements together and say that after Adjuncts, the heavy nominal groups, subordinate clauses and projecting clauses form the next most common sentence initial elements while thematicised comment and Theme predication are used to a lesser extent and Direct object / Complement very rarely. The slight shifting within these groupings makes the results extremely intricate and difficult to interpret. Results of statistical tests of significance on these findings are reported in section 5.6.3.

5.3 Results of metafunctional analysis

5.3.1 Relevant research questions

This section presents the relevant results in answer to the metafunctional aspect of research question 1, and in answer to research question 3:

1. To what extent, and in what sentence initial metafunctional characteristics, do essays written in a timed condition differ from those written in an untimed condition?

Since it could not be assumed that there was any difference between the metafunctional characteristics of sentence initial elements produced under different time conditions, this question was operationalised by keeping the timed and untimed samples separate in each of the nine locations whilst categorising the sentence initial elements according to their metafunction. The paired results (one timed, one untimed) for each location could then be compared easily and the extent of the differences observed. This is the way results are presented in all Tables and Figures, in this section (5.3.2 – 5.3.5), unless otherwise stated. Statistical testing was then carried out to ascertain which of the observed differences were significant (see section 5.6.2).

3. To what extent is each metafunction represented in the sentence initial elements in each of the nine locations in the skilled essays?

This question was operationalised by categorising and counting the first sentence element of each sentence, in each of the nine locations (keeping timed and untimed separate as mentioned above) according to the metafunctional types defined in the Methodology chapter (section 4.6.2), unmarked or marked topical (ideational), textual or interpersonal. The number of each was counted in each category and then expressed as a percentage since there were unequal numbers across the nine locations (section 5.3.2). Thereafter, all other initial elements preceding the main verb of the main clause were also categorised and counted. The number of these in each location was expressed as a count per 100 sentences, keeping timed and untimed separate again (section 5.3.3). For the metafunctional analysis, those elements that had dual metafunction or triple metafunction and sentences that had multiple elements preceding the main verb of the main clause (section 5.3.4) are also

presented in a separate section. The extent of the use of each metafunction in the first element could be observed in each location as well as the extent of the use of each metafunction before the main verb of the main clause (all initial elements). Statistical testing was then performed to establish whether the differences were significant among locations and, in some cases, between usage as first element or when all initial elements were considered.

5.3.2 Results of metafunctional analysis of first sentence element, in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions

Tables and Figures illustrate the results and highlight specific findings, where appropriate and key observations and/or commentary follow. As a reminder, an initial element may be considered unmarked in a metafunctional sense, if the first element simply represents the Subject of the main clause with an ideational metafunction (unmarked topical Theme) or, in the case of an initial subordinate clause, the Subject of that clause and the main clause are the same¹². If the initial element is another structure, which represents another metafunction, then it is considered marked, according to whichever metafunction is represented. A circumstantial element that introduces a topic different from the main Subject causes the initial element to be counted as a marked topical element (ideational metafunction); an organisational initial element is considered textual marking and an opinion conveying initial element is counted as interpersonal marking. Subjects of the main clause are also considered to have a marked metafunctional role if they involve a nominal group that has constituents that are of a discourse organisational (textual) or opinion-giving (interpersonal) nature. Table 5.9, below, presents the findings for first sentence element metafunctional analysis.

Note on Table 5.9, below:

The percentages do not add up to 100 due to the dual and triple metafunctional roles of some initial elements. That means that one element may perform two or (rarely) all three metafunctions. The percentages are to be read as follows: in the first row, 56.1% of first elements in introduction initial location in the timed condition were unmarked (consisted of the grammatical Subject, the unmarked topical Theme, ideational metafunction), 22.7% contained marked elements of a topical nature (ideational metafunction), 6.1% had textual elements and 19.7%, interpersonal elements. (This means that 7.6% [56.1 – (22.7+6.1+19.7)] of the sentences had dual metafunction and have been counted in two marked categories.)

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.9, below:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Table 5.9 Percentage of unmarked and marked topical, textual and interpersonal first sentence elements, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions

	Unmarked	Topical	Textual	Interpersonal
ii timed	56.1%	22.7%	6.1%	19.7%
<i>ii untimed</i>	40.5%	35.1%	10.8%	21.6%
im timed	47.3%	16.5%	25.3%	28.6%
<i>im untimed</i>	33.8%	22.5%	36.6%	15.5%
it timed	46.0%	9.5%	25.4%	27.0%
<i>it untimed</i>	48.6%	16.2%	29.7%	13.5%
pi timed	50.5%	16.7%	23.8%	17.6%
<i>pi untimed</i>	42.3%	16.7%	33.5%	14.4%
pm timed	44.3%	14.2%	30.7%	19.2%
<i>pm untimed</i>	41.4%	14.9%	28.8%	19.1%
pt timed	36.5%	13.9%	31.6%	26.3%
<i>pt untimed</i>	29.3%	12.6%	42.8%	25.6%
ci timed	44.8%	15.5%	29.3%	17.2%
<i>ci untimed</i>	36.8%	34.2%	21.1%	36.8%
cm timed	36.7%	13.9%	24.1%	31.6%
<i>cm untimed</i>	37.0%	27.2%	22.8%	19.6%
ct timed	31.8%	15.2%	33.3%	24.2%
<i>ct untimed</i>	16.2%	27.0%	59.5%	21.6%

Key observations on Table 5.9:

Unlike the grammatical results, it is not the case here that the timed results always have a greater number of unmarked first elements than the untimed. Although this is largely true, there are two locations where there are more marked first elements in the timed condition: introduction terminal and conclusion medial. In both time conditions and in all locations, between one third and just over one half of sentences are unmarked, except for the extraordinary case of conclusion terminal untimed where over 83% of the sentences had a marked first element. For timed sentences, conclusion terminal was also the location of the greatest number of marked first elements. The lowest number of marked first elements occurred in introductions for both time conditions: introduction initial (timed) and introduction terminal (untimed).

Some patterns are fairly distinct in these results. For marked topical elements (an ideational element that is not, or not the same as, the grammatical Subject), in both time conditions, there is a definite drop off within introductions from initial to medial to terminal location. In paragraph locations, however, there is a similar pattern but very little difference between the three locations. In conclusions, there are different trends. In the timed condition, the initial and terminal locations are similar and there is a slight drop off in the medial location but for the untimed condition, there is a drop from initial to medial and terminal is similar to medial. For both conditions, the greatest number of marked topical first elements is found in introduction initial location. The fewest occur in introduction terminal (timed) and paragraph terminal (untimed) locations.

Textual elements, in both time conditions, show two clear patterns. First, introduction initial location has fewer textual metafunction first elements than introduction medial and terminal locations. (Introduction initial is the location of the fewest textual elements of all locations, for both time conditions.) In paragraph locations, the time conditions have different trends: for timed sentences, there is an increase from initial to medial and a very slight increase again in terminal. In the untimed condition, there is a drop from initial to medial and then a notable increase in terminal location to a number greater than initial. Nevertheless, this still leaves paragraph terminal with the largest number (of the three paragraph locations) in both time conditions. The representation of textual elements in conclusions shows slightly different trends in each time condition but the second clear

pattern emerges here. The initial and medial locations range from 21% to 29% but there is a clear jump to 33% (timed) and 59.5% (untimed) in terminal location. This makes conclusion terminal the location with the most first elements with a textual metafunction for both time conditions.

In terms of interpersonal elements, introduction and conclusion locations show different trends while paragraph locations have the same pattern in the two time conditions. In introductions, for the timed condition, there is an increase in interpersonal elements from initial to medial location and then a slight decline in terminal but in the untimed condition, there is a steady decline from initial to medial to terminal. This decline results in the numbers of interpersonal elements in the untimed condition being noticeably lower in medial and terminal locations than the number in the timed condition. Paragraph locations increase steadily in first elements with an interpersonal metafunction from initial to medial to terminal, for both time conditions. This creates a clear pattern. Conclusion locations, however, have quite contrary trends in each time condition: the timed sentences increase in the number of interpersonal elements from initial to medial and decrease to terminal, while the untimed decrease from initial to medial and increase slightly to terminal (but remain lower than conclusion initial).

Figures 5.10 – 5.13, below, represent this information. Figure 5.10 compares percentages of unmarked first elements in each location, for each time condition. Figures 5.11 – 5.13 compare locations and time conditions for each metafunctional category separately. Since these findings have already been discussed under *Key observations on Table 5.9*, only brief statements rather than commentary accompany Figures 5.10 – 5.13.

Key to abbreviations in Figures 5.10 – 5.13, below:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal
pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal
ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Figure 5.10, below, shows that overall there were more marked elements in the untimed condition although the pattern is not replicated as closely as it is for both time conditions in the grammatical analysis.

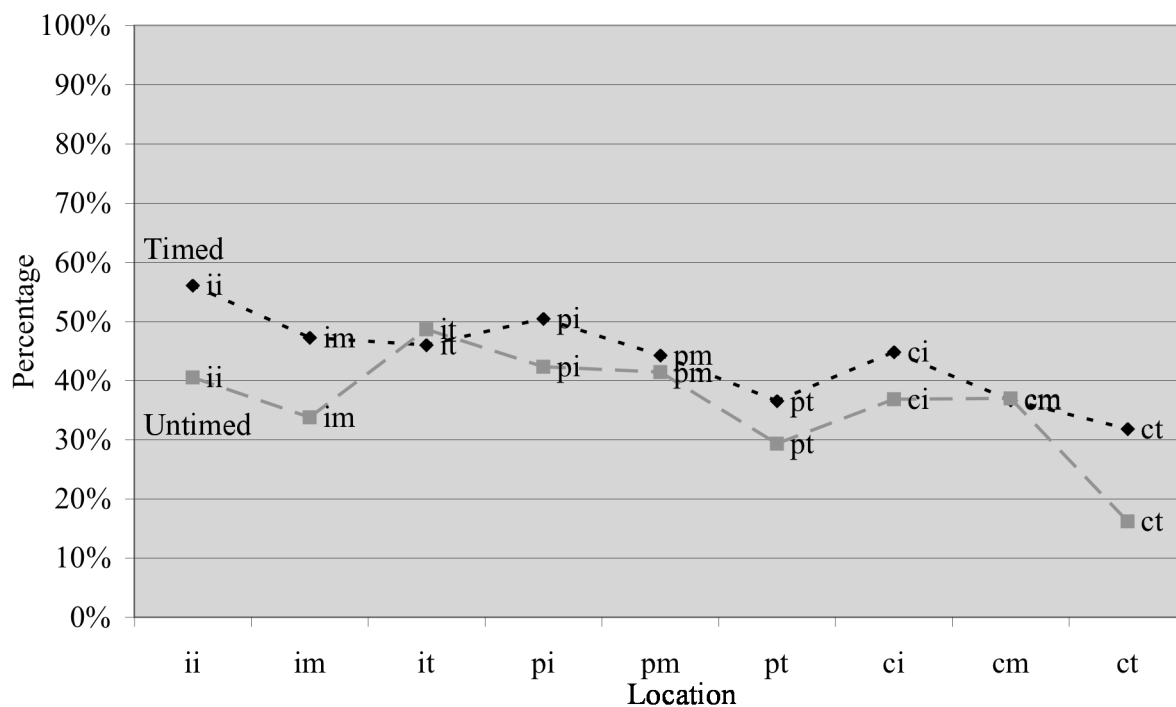


Figure 5.10: Graph comparing percentage of *unmarked* first sentence elements (topical element, that either is, or is the same as, the grammatical Subject, ideational metafunction) in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions

Figures 5.11 and 5.12, below, show that across both time conditions, for most locations topical elements and textual elements follow similar patterns. The exceptions are conclusion initial where there is a spike in marked topical elements and conclusion terminal where there is a dramatic spike in the number of textual elements. Both spikes are in the untimed condition.

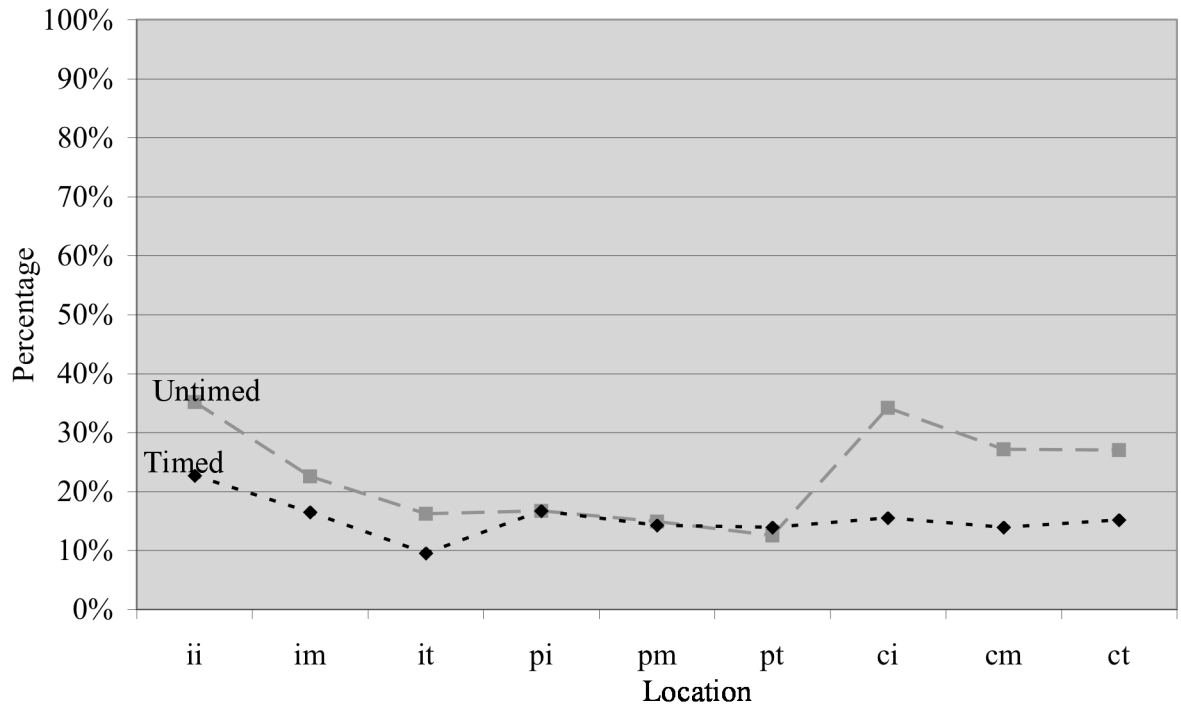


Figure 5.11: Graph comparing percentage of marked topical elements as first sentence element, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions

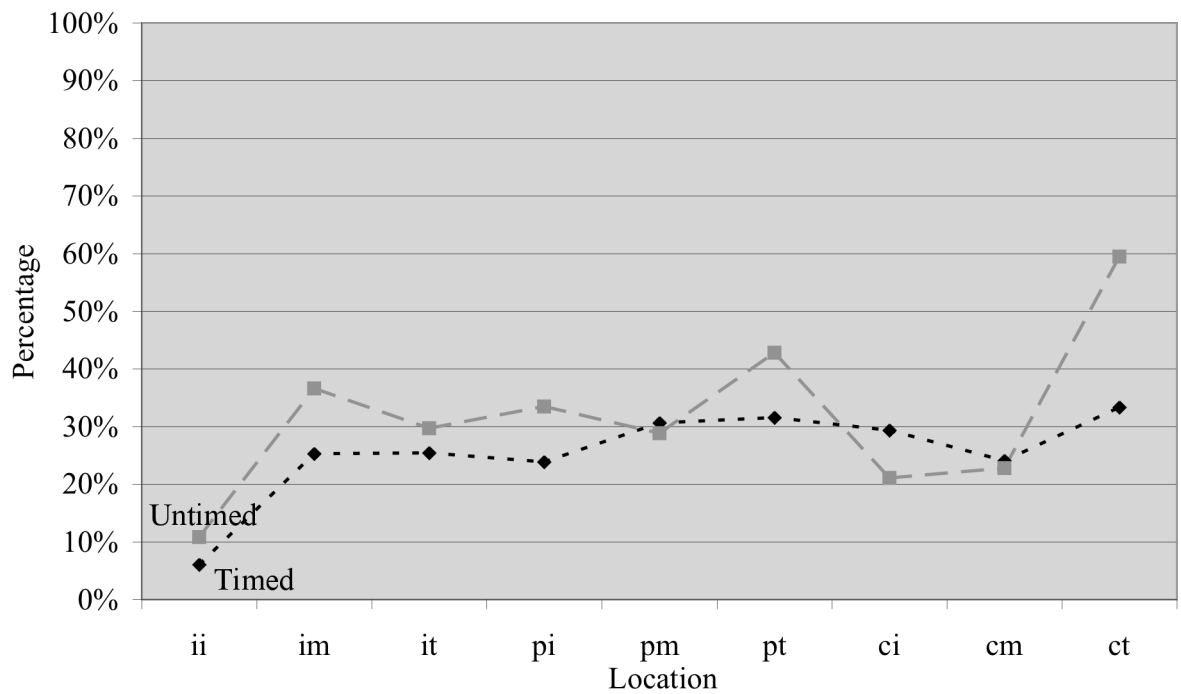


Figure 5.12: Graph comparing percentage of textual elements as first sentence element, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions

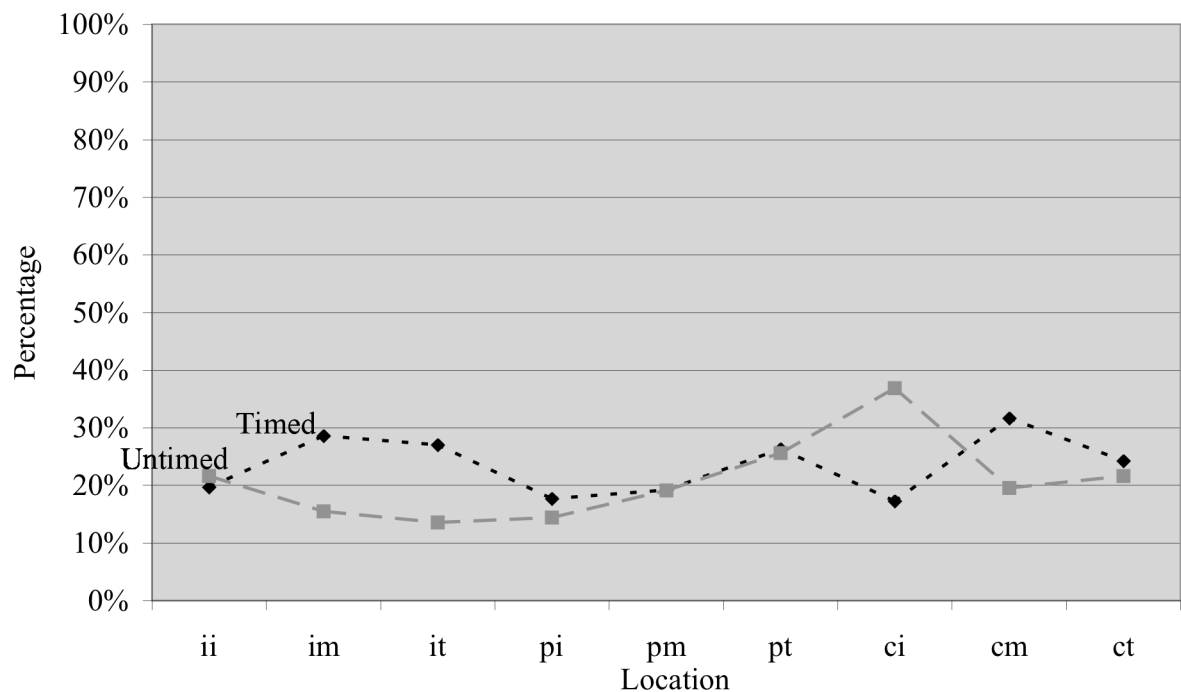


Figure 5.13: Graph comparing percentage of interpersonal elements as first sentence element, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions

Figure 5.13 shows paragraph locations following a remarkably similar pattern in the number of interpersonal elements for both time conditions but introductions and conclusions have quite different trends with a spike apparent in conclusion initial, for the untimed condition.

It is probably worth noting that spikes in all metafunctional categories occur in conclusions in the untimed condition. As mentioned in relation to the grammatical results, conclusions in the timed condition were clearly (and understandably, due to time constraint) less carefully constructed than in the untimed condition. This undoubtedly accounts for the more obvious deviations between time conditions occurring in conclusions.

The results in Table 5.9(a), below, extracted from Table 5.9, above, show the location of the highest and lowest percentages of the three varieties of marking for both time conditions.

The bubble graph following, Figure 5.14, displays the information in the shaded area of the Table 5.9(a) with the addition of the location of second to fourth highest percentages.

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.9(a) and Figure 5.14, below:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal
 pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal
 ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Table 5.9(a) Location of highest and lowest percentages for topical, textual and interpersonal elements, timed and untimed

Element / Metafunction	Location of highest percentage		Location of lowest percentage	
	timed	<i>untimed</i>	timed	<i>untimed</i>
Topical (ideational)	ii (22.7%)	<i>ii</i> (35.1%)	it (9.5%)	<i>pt</i> (12.6%)
Textual	ct (33.3%)	<i>ct</i> (59.5%)	ii (6.1%)	<i>ii</i> (10.8%)
Interpersonal	cm (31.6%)	<i>ci</i> (36.8%)	ci (17.2)	<i>it</i> (13.5)

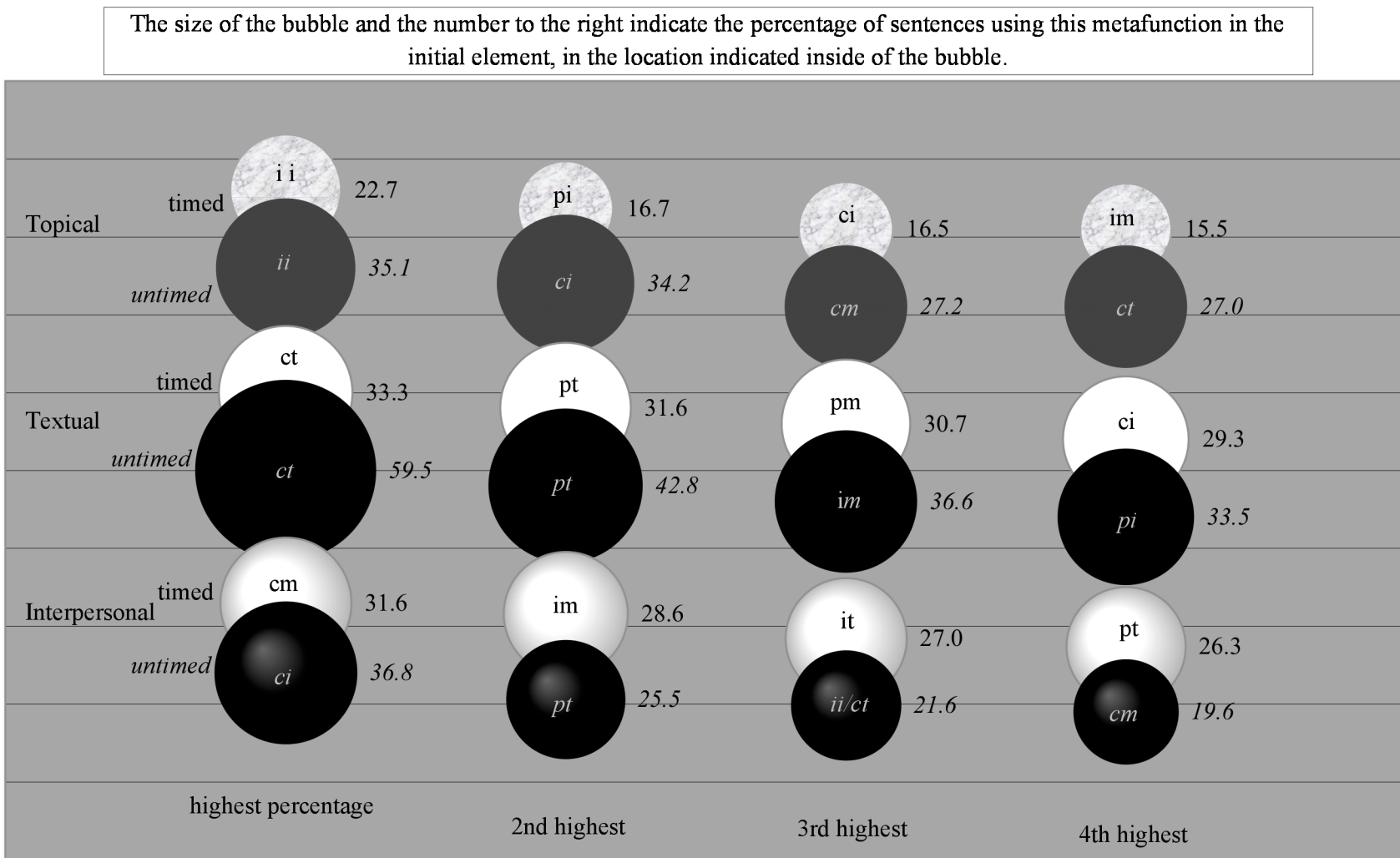


Figure 5.14: Bubble graph showing four locations with highest percentage of marked topical, textual and interpersonal elements in first sentence element, for timed and untimed conditions

Key observations on Table 5.9(a) and Figure 5.14 (both above):

First of all, top locations for marked topical (introduction initial) and textual (conclusion terminal) elements are the same for both time conditions and for interpersonal elements, the top location is in conclusions for both time conditions. The location of the fewest textual elements was introduction initial for both time conditions and the fewest marked topical elements were in terminal locations (introduction and paragraph for timed and untimed, respectively).

Note the predominance of initial locations (introduction, paragraph and conclusion) for marked topical elements: five of the top six locations across timed and untimed. Note also, the predominance of terminal locations for textual elements: conclusion terminal and paragraph terminal are the top two for both locations.

Interpersonal elements, however, show little locational patterning across time conditions. That conclusion medial and paragraph terminal both appear in the top four for both time conditions is the only consistency present. It seems that in the untimed condition, writers chose conclusions for interpersonal elements (all three conclusion locations appear in the top four), as well as two other boundary positions: introduction initial and paragraph terminals. On the other hand, in the timed condition, interpersonal first elements appear mostly in medials, although admittedly, they are introduction and conclusion medials, which gives them something of a boundary effect in the essay overall, and the other two top locations are definite boundaries: introduction and paragraph terminals. Perhaps more notable is the fact that unlike marked topical and textual elements, where the top four location percentages in the untimed condition exceed those in the timed in every case, for interpersonal elements, this is only true in the top location. In locations two through four, percentages in the timed condition exceed those in the untimed.

To investigate these findings further, Table 5.10, showing overall averages and averages for the broad locations of introductions, paragraphs and conclusions is presented below. Thereafter Table 5.11, comparing the use of each metafunction within initial, medial and terminal locations is presented. This gives two slightly different perspectives of the results and facilitates a fuller understanding of how the metafunctions are being put to use.

Table 5.10 Overall averages for marked topical, textual and interpersonal first elements and averages for introductions, paragraphs and conclusions, timed and untimed conditions

Averages	Condition	Topical	Textual	Interpersonal
Overall	timed	15.0%	25.5%	23.5%
	<i>untimed</i>	22.9%	31.7%	20.9%
Introductions	timed	16.2%	18.9%	25.1%
	<i>untimed</i>	24.6%	25.7%	16.9%
Paragraphs	timed	15.0%	28.7%	21.1%
	<i>untimed</i>	14.7%	35.0%	19.7%
Conclusions	timed	14.9%	28.9%	24.4%
	<i>untimed</i>	29.5%	34.4%	26.0%

Key observations on Table 5.10:

What stands out here is that whereas topical marking in the first sentence element is evenly spread throughout essays in the timed condition, there is a clear increase in introductions and conclusions in the untimed condition. For both conditions, use of a textual element as first element increases quite considerably in paragraphs and conclusions. Finally, overall, there are more interpersonal elements as first element in the timed condition: it is spread fairly evenly across introductions, paragraphs and conclusions, with only a small drop off in paragraphs. In the untimed condition, there is a steady increase from introduction locations, to paragraphs, and the highest percentage is in the conclusions.

Table 5.11 Averages for marked topical, textual and interpersonal first elements in initial, medial and terminal locations, combined (both time conditions) and for timed and untimed conditions

Averages	Condition	Topical	Textual	Interpersonal
Initial	combined	23.5%	20.8%	21.2%
	timed	18.3%	19.7%	18.2%
	<i>untimed</i>	28.7%	21.8%	24.2%
Medial	combined	18.2%	28.0%	22.3%
	timed	14.9%	26.7%	26.5%
	<i>untimed</i>	21.5%	29.4%	18.0%
Terminal	combined	15.7%	37.0%	23.0%
	timed	12.9%	30.1%	25.8%
	<i>untimed</i>	18.6%	44.0%	20.2%

Key observations on Table 5.11:

What we have above is a comparison of the representation of the topical, textual and interpersonal metafunctions by grouped location as initial, medial or terminal by adding introduction, paragraph and conclusion locations together in each case. So, for example, the figure 18.3% in the third column, third row, equals the percentage of sentences with a topically marked first element in introduction initial plus paragraph initial plus conclusion initial locations, in the timed condition. It is noticeable then, that topical elements are more prevalent in initial locations than medial or terminal, for both time conditions. Textual elements, on the contrary, are more prevalent in medial and terminal locations, also for both time conditions. The combined averages reflect these patterns. This is not the case for interpersonal elements. The combined averages misleadingly suggest that there are slightly more such elements in medial than initial locations and slightly more again in terminal locations than medial. In fact, neither time condition follows this pattern. In the timed condition, there are fewer interpersonal elements in initial locations and a similar number in medial and terminal. In the untimed condition, there are most in initial locations and least in medial locations.

Thus we can glean that it is easier to determine some patterns for the topical and textual metafunctional elements as first sentence element by way of introductions, paragraphs and conclusions as well as initial, medial and terminal locations than it is to do so with regard to the interpersonal metafunction. From whichever perspective the results are examined, it appears that the interpersonal metafunction shows the greatest variability.

A final way to examine Table 5.11 and thus conclude the analysis of the first element is to look across the rows rather than down the columns. This leads to the conclusion that in initial locations, there are more topical, fewer interpersonal and fewest textual elements, for the untimed condition. In the timed condition, the representation of each type of element is very similar, with a slight emphasis on textual. In medial locations, once again, there is not thorough consistency between time conditions. Both have more textual elements than topical or interpersonal but in the timed condition, there is a similar amount of textual and interpersonal while topical is used to a much lesser extent. In the untimed condition, in medial sentence locations, topical marking is slightly greater than interpersonal but both are

used to a lesser extent than textual. Finally, in terminal locations, for both time conditions, the emphasis is clearly on textual elements with interpersonal represented to a lesser extent and topical used the least.

5.3.2.1 Key findings with regard to metafunctional features of first sentence element:

1. Apart from two locations (introduction terminal and conclusion medial), the untimed condition produced more marked topical, textual or interpersonal elements than the timed condition.
2. In the untimed condition, 63.8% of sentences began with a marked topical, textual or interpersonal element. In the timed condition, 55.9% of sentences did so. (This is more than half of the sentences.)
3. For both time conditions, conclusion initial was the location of the highest number of marked first elements.
4. For both time conditions, introductions were the location of the lowest percentage of marked first elements: introduction initial (timed) and introduction terminal (untimed).
5. For both time conditions, the highest percentage of marked topical first elements was in introduction initial location.
6. In both time conditions, introduction initial was, predictably, the location with the lowest percentage of textual first elements; conclusion terminal was the location with the highest percentage of textual first elements.
7. For both time conditions, the percentage of interpersonal elements was very similar in paragraph locations and in introduction initial and conclusion terminal locations but varied greatly in introduction medial and terminal and conclusion medial and terminal locations.
8. Initial locations (introduction, paragraph and conclusion) featured strongly for marked topical elements for both time conditions.
9. Terminal locations featured most strongly for textual first elements, in both time conditions.

10. In the timed condition, marked topical and interpersonal elements were spread fairly evenly through introductions, paragraphs and conclusions whereas in the untimed condition, there was greater discrepancy. For both time conditions, textual first elements were more frequent in paragraph and conclusion locations than in introduction locations.
11. For both time conditions, on averages, marked topical elements were more frequent in initial locations than in medial and terminal. Textual elements were more prevalent in medial and terminal locations. The percentage of interpersonal elements, again, showed variability between the time conditions.
12. For both time conditions, on averages, initial locations had more marked topical, less interpersonal and the least textual elements; medial locations had more textual first elements than topical or interpersonal; terminal locations had more textual first elements, fewer interpersonal and fewest topical.

5.3.3 Results of metafunctional analysis of all sentence initial elements in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions

Table 5.12, below, is the metafunctional equivalent to Table 5.3 (Section 5.2.4) in the grammatical results section. It displays the total number of sentence initial elements per 100 sentences that may be counted as topical (an ideational element that is not, or not the same as, the Subject¹³), textual or interpersonal for all nine locations, and both time conditions (as opposed to the first element only). Only the locations that show a large difference and/or result in a change in the top location for a particular element type are highlighted for observation thereafter.

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.12:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal
 pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal
 ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Table 5.12 Number of topical, textual and interpersonal sentence initial elements per 100 sentences, in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions (with number for first element only in brackets)

Location	Topical	Textual	Interpersonal
ii timed	(22.7) 25.8	(6.1) 6.1	(19.7) 37.9
<i>ii untimed</i>	(35.1) 40.5	(10.8) 10.8	(21.6) 48.6
im timed	(16.5) 22.0	(25.3) 28.6	(28.6) 39.6
<i>im untimed</i>	(22.5) 23.9	(36.6) 40.8	(15.5) 32.4
it timed	(9.5) 12.7	(25.4) 34.9	(27.0) 39.7
<i>it untimed</i>	(16.2) 24.3	(29.7) 45.9	(13.5) 59.5
pi timed	(16.7) 21.7	(23.8) 35.9	(17.6) 31.3
<i>pi untimed</i>	(16.7) 21.9	(33.5) 42.8	(14.4) 26.0
pm timed	(14.2) 22.6	(30.7) 40.2	(19.2) 37.5
<i>pm untimed</i>	(14.9) 25.1	(28.8) 34.9	(19.1) 31.6
pt timed	(13.9) 21.4	(31.6) 40.6	(26.3) 43.7
<i>pt untimed</i>	(12.6) 20.9	(42.8) 54.4	(25.6) 42.3
ci timed	(15.5) 20.7	(29.3) 34.5	(17.2) 41.4
<i>ci untimed</i>	(34.2) 47.4	(21.1) 26.3	(36.8) 60.5
cm timed	(13.9) 19.0	(24.1) 34.2	(31.6) 51.9
<i>cm untimed</i>	(27.2) 34.8	(22.8) 32.6	(19.6) 51.1
ct timed	(15.2) 24.2	(33.3) 42.4	(24.2) 48.5
<i>ct untimed</i>	(27.0) 35.1	(59.5) 64.9	(21.6) 43.2

Key observations on Table 5.12:

For topical elements, there are additional instances (but fewer than 10 elements per hundred sentences) in several locations in both time conditions. The larger number of additions (more than 10 elements per hundred sentences) occurred in paragraph medial and conclusion initial, both untimed. This resulted in the location of the highest number of topical elements changing for the untimed condition, to conclusion initial (whereas before it was introduction initial). There was no change in the location with the fewest topical elements, for either timed condition.

There was no change in the location of the highest or lowest number of textual elements, for either time condition. (Conclusion terminal remained the top location and introduction initial had the fewest textual elements.) However, there were additional instances in nearly every location (with introduction initial the exception), for both time conditions. The greatest increments (over 10 elements per 100 sentences) came in introduction and paragraph terminals untimed and paragraph initial and conclusion medial, timed.

The clearest difference in results appeared for the interpersonal metafunction. Every location, in both time conditions, contained more than 10 additional elements per 100 sentences. Many locations, introduction initial (both time conditions), paragraph medial (timed), and all conclusion locations (both time conditions) climbed by 20 interpersonal elements or more per 100 sentences once all initial sentence elements were taken into account. Most remarkable of all was the introduction terminal location, untimed, which rose from 13.5% of first initial elements having or being interpersonal elements to 59.5 interpersonal elements per 100 sentences once all sentence initial elements were included. Having previously been the location with the lowest number of interpersonal elements, the dramatic change in introduction terminal location untimed meant that it was only one element per 100 sentences behind the top location, becoming the location with the second largest number of interpersonal elements.

Interestingly, none of these changes resulted in any change of the location of the highest number of interpersonal elements for either time condition. (That remained conclusion medial for the timed condition and conclusion initial for the untimed.) There was, however, a change in the location of the lowest number of interpersonal elements for both time conditions, once all initial elements were added. Previously, conclusion initial (timed) and introduction terminal (untimed) had the fewest interpersonal elements but once all initial elements were included, both time conditions changed to paragraph initial as the location of the fewest. Once again, it was the interpersonal metafunction that showed the greatest variation. And it is important to mention that once all initial elements were counted, the interpersonal metafunction became the one with the highest number of elements overall, whereas, when only the first element was counted, the number of textual elements exceeded the number of interpersonal. For this reason, the decision to analyse the sentence initial elements to greater depth (all elements preceding the main verb) rather than only the very

first element was justified, in light of the concept of a “unilateral conversation” being conducted within sentence initial elements. Further discussion on this point takes place in chapter 6.

Below is Figure 5.15, showing a line graph that traces the change in the volume of interpersonal elements from a count of first element only, to a count of all sentence initial elements, for both time conditions.

Key to abbreviations in Figure 5.15:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

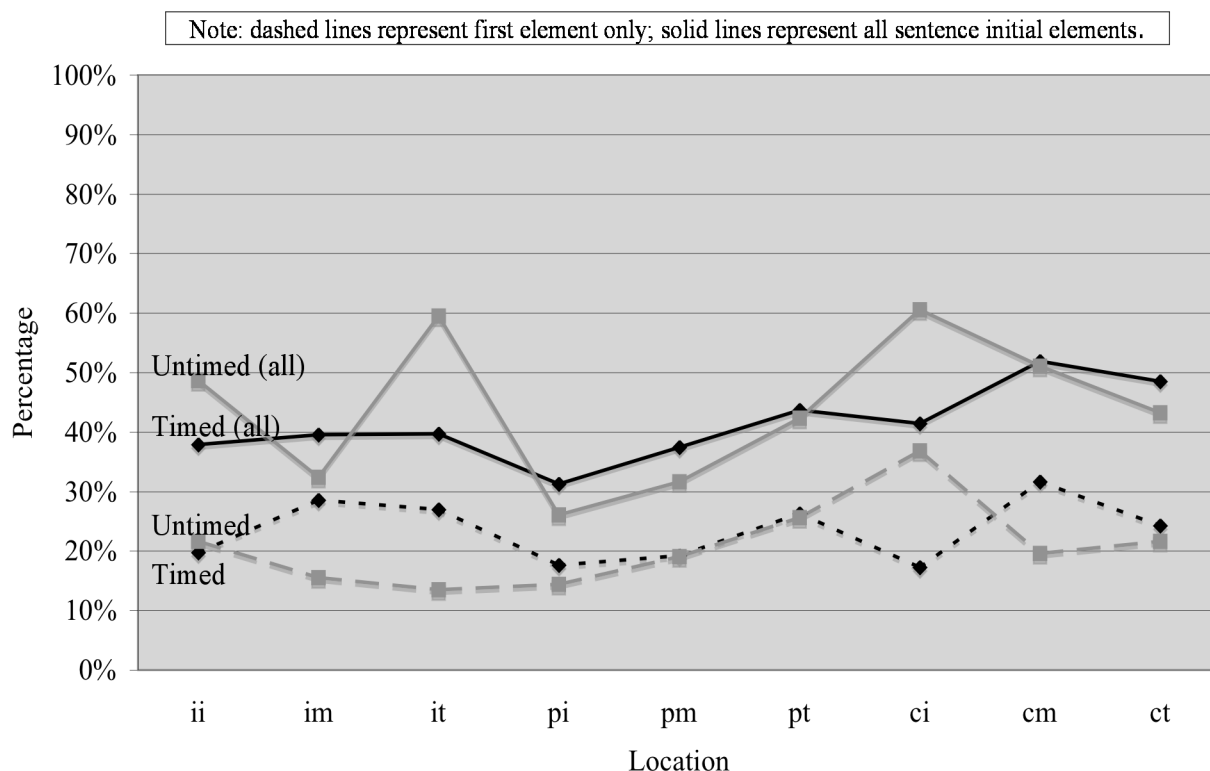


Figure 5.15: Graph showing difference in number of interpersonal elements from a count of first element only, to a count of all initial elements, in all locations, for both time conditions¹⁴

It was stated in the introduction to this section that where it seemed to add insight to the presentation of findings, locations would be grouped. Tables 5.13 and 5.14, below, show the above changes with the number of each type of element in first position shown in

brackets (as in Table 5.12) and the number for all initial elements alongside, grouping the results in different ways.

Table 5.13, below, specifically shows the overall average number of topical, textual and interpersonal elements within all sentence initial elements, per 100 sentences for all locations, and then averages for introductions, paragraphs and conclusions, for both time conditions.

Table 5.13 Overall average of each element type and averages for introductions, paragraphs and conclusions (showing the number for first element only in brackets)

Averages	Condition	Topical		Textual		Interpersonal	
Overall	timed	(15.0)	21.1	(25.5)	33.0	(23.5)	41.3
	<i>untimed</i>	(22.9)	30.4	(31.7)	39.3	(20.9)	43.9
Introductions	timed	(16.2)	20.1	(18.9)	23.2	(25.1)	39.0
	<i>untimed</i>	(24.6)	29.6	(25.7)	32.5	(16.9)	46.8
Paragraphs	timed	(15.0)	21.9	(28.7)	38.9	(21.1)	37.5
	<i>untimed</i>	(14.7)	22.6	(35.0)	44.0	(19.7)	33.3
Conclusions	timed	(14.9)	21.3	(28.9)	37.0	(24.4)	47.3
	<i>untimed</i>	(29.5)	39.1	(34.4)	41.3	(26.0)	51.6

Table 5.14, below, specifically shows the average number of topical, textual and interpersonal elements, within sentence initial position, per 100 sentences for initial, medial and terminal locations, for combined time conditions and then separately for timed and untimed conditions.

Table 5.14 Average number of each element type for initial, medial and terminal locations, for combined time conditions and for timed and untimed conditions (showing the number for first element only in brackets)

Averages	Condition	Topical		Textual		Interpersonal	
Initial	combined	(23.5)	29.6	(20.8)	26.1	(21.2)	41.0
	timed	(18.3)	22.7	(19.7)	25.5	(18.2)	36.8
	<i>untimed</i>	(28.7)	36.6	(21.8)	26.6	(24.2)	45.1
Medial	combined	(18.2)	24.6	(28.0)	35.2	(22.3)	40.7
	timed	(14.9)	21.2	(26.7)	34.3	(26.5)	43.0
	<i>untimed</i>	(21.5)	27.9	(29.4)	36.1	(18.0)	38.4
Terminal	combined	(15.7)	23.1	(37.0)	47.2	(23.0)	46.1
	timed	(12.9)	19.4	(30.1)	39.3	(25.8)	43.9
	<i>untimed</i>	(18.6)	26.8	(44.0)	55.1	(20.2)	48.3

Key observations on Tables 5.13 and 5.14:

With regard to Table 5.13, the changes that occur in average numbers of each type of element in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions once all initial elements are included are largely to do with the additional number of interpersonal elements that has been observed above in Table 5.12 and illustrated above in Figure 5.15. The additions are not limited to any group of locations but true of all locations; however, the locational grouping shows the difference to be more dramatic in conclusions for both time conditions and also apparent in introductions for the untimed condition.

Again, the changes displayed by the locational groupings in Table 5.14 relate to the greater volume of interpersonal elements; for instance, in both time conditions, terminal locations have more interpersonal elements than initials and medials (whereas for first element, most interpersonal elements were in medials for the timed condition and initials for the untimed). In addition, both time conditions have more interpersonal than topical elements in initial locations once all elements are included. The same is true for medial locations: interpersonal elements exceed both other types, whereas for first element, textual elements were most prevalent in medial locations. Similarly, in terminal locations there is a large addition to the number of interpersonal elements such that in the timed condition they exceed both other types, and in the untimed condition there is a much smaller difference in the number of textual and interpersonal elements than was the case for first element.

As the sentence initial metafunctional characteristics identified by the locational groupings above are more distinct in the untimed sample, to complement Tables 5.13 and 5.14 above, the three figures below (Figures 5.16 – 5.18), consisting of column stack graphs, are special inclusions in this section; the first shows the untimed averages for each element type in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions; the second does the same for initial, medial and terminal locations and the third shows the number of each type of element per 100 sentences in each location. The focus is on the untimed writing since, as mentioned earlier, it is very likely this writing would be of better quality than the timed writing, which was the reason for keeping the two separate, especially when the characteristics were demonstrated more strongly by the untimed sample. It is informative then, to examine the use of each type of element, on average in these locations of the essays, as well as in each location specifically.

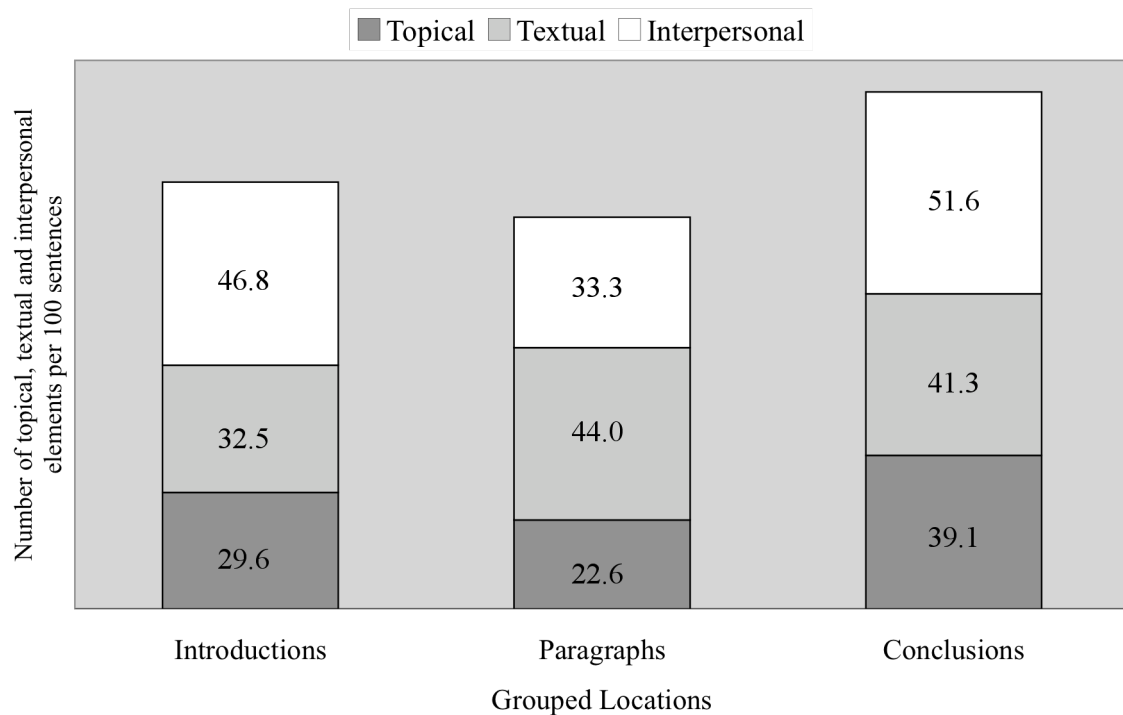


Figure 5.16: Graph showing the number of topical, textual and interpersonal elements per 100 sentences on average in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions in the untimed writing condition only

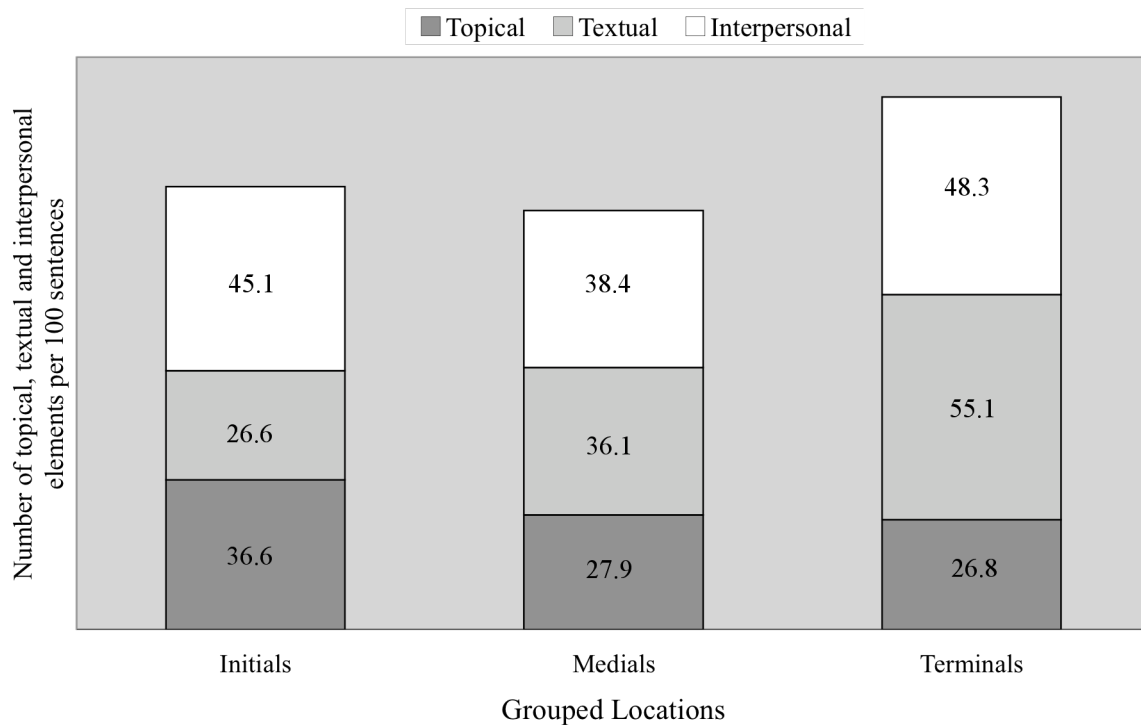


Figure 5.17: Graph showing the number of topical, textual and interpersonal elements per 100 sentences on average in initial, medial and terminal locations, in the untimed writing condition only

Key to abbreviations in Figure 5.18:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

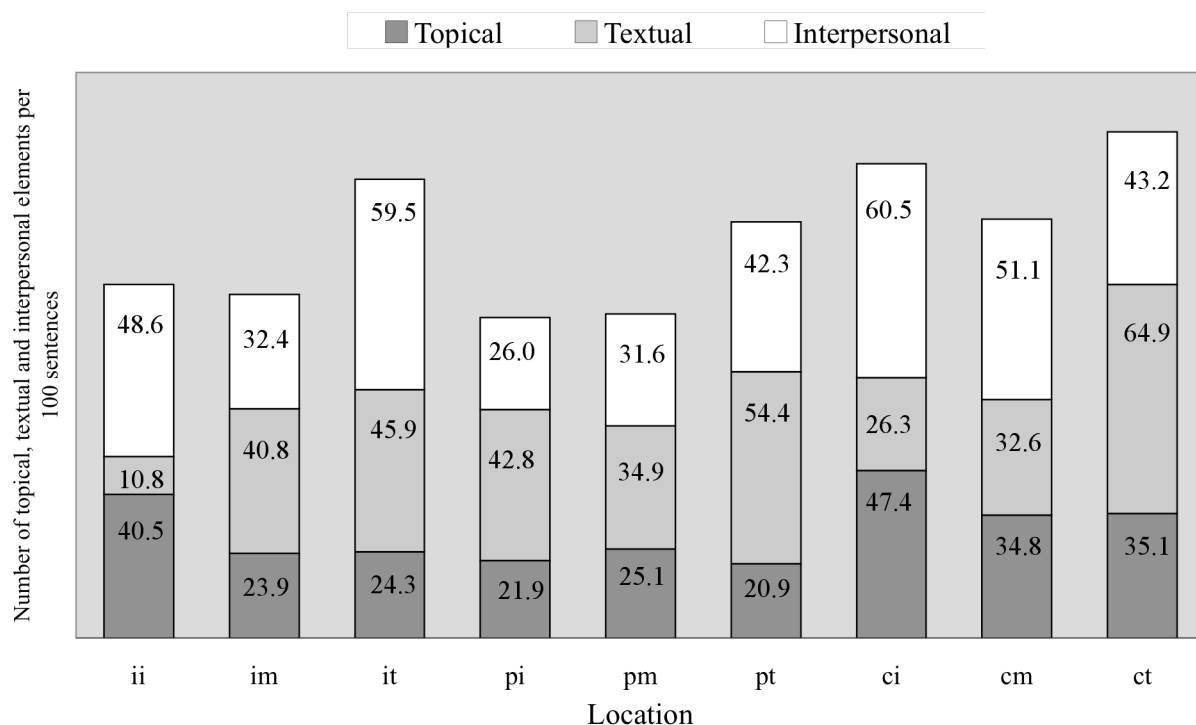


Figure 5.18: Graph showing the number of topical, textual and interpersonal elements per 100 sentences in each location, in the untimed writing condition only

Commentary on Figures 5.16 – 5.18:

While averages can never substitute for an examination of each location individually, it was stated earlier that where it seemed useful, locations would be grouped. Figure 5.16, which groups sentences in introductions, paragraphs and conclusions does highlight the fact that introductions and conclusions are the site of more elements overall than paragraphs in the body of the essay; quite considerably more in the case of conclusions. Quite interestingly though, paragraph locations have more textual elements per 100 sentences than introductions or conclusions. Figure 5.17 suggests that these must be in paragraph terminal location and Figure 5.18 confirms that, although it shows that they are also used to a considerable extent in paragraph initial location.

Figure 5.17 shows that medial locations have a more even distribution of the three types of elements while initial locations show a bias towards topical and interpersonal elements and terminal locations have a strong representation of textual and interpersonal elements. This finding is especially interesting because there was no particular expectation, either intuitive or by investigative precedent for this result.

Of course, Figure 5.18 is the most informative in terms of the details for each location. It reveals that no two locations are precisely alike. The locations where topical elements are used to the greatest extent are introduction initial and conclusion initial. Textual elements are strongly apparent in paragraph and conclusion terminals but also in introduction medial and terminal and paragraph initial. Locations showing a large amount of interpersonal elements were, very clearly, conclusion initial and introduction terminal but introduction initial, paragraph terminal and conclusion medial were also implicated.

Figure 5.18 reveals the pivotal roles for introduction terminal and paragraph terminal locations, each with their specific metafunctional emphases. It also shows the importance of conclusions in terms of overall volume of different types of elements within sentence initial elements as well as the particular emphases in each location within the conclusion. (This is especially valuable for teaching practice as conclusions are often limited or even incomplete in timed writing and plainly this would jeopardise a student's final result in an external examination.)

5.3.3.1 Key findings with regard to metafunctional features of all sentence initial elements:

1. In the untimed condition, there was a large increase in the number of topical elements in paragraph medial and conclusion initial locations, which resulted in conclusion initial becoming the location for the highest number of topical elements.
2. In the untimed condition, introduction and paragraph terminals showed the greatest increase in the number of textual elements; in the timed condition the greatest increase in textual elements came in paragraph initial and conclusion medial.

3. For both time conditions, the increase in the number of interpersonal elements once all initial elements were included was most dramatic: many locations increased by more than 20 elements per 100 sentences and introduction terminal (untimed) increased by more than 40.
4. For both time conditions, paragraph initial became the location with the fewest interpersonal elements once all elements were included.
5. The interpersonal metafunction became the one with the greatest number of elements once all initial elements were counted (whereas when only first element was considered, textual elements produced the highest count).
6. For both time conditions, on averages, grouped terminal locations contained the most interpersonal elements (grouped medials and grouped initials had the most for first element only, timed and untimed, respectively).
7. For both time conditions, on averages, grouped initial and medial locations had more interpersonal than topical elements and textual elements (whereas for first element, topical had been highest in grouped initials and textual in grouped medials).

5.3.4 Dual and triple metafunction, and multiple, sentence initial elements

As a reminder of what the terms “dual”, “triple” and “multiple” refer to, Table 5.15, below, gives examples. Further explanation follows.

Table 5.15 Examples of dual and triple metafunction elements and multiple sentence initial elements

	Example from sample	Metafunctions	Elements
Dual	<i><u>The most significant of these relationships</u> are between the protagonist Hamlet and other members of the court.</i> (imt 75)	1. Interpersonal 2. Textual	<i>most significant</i> <i>these relationships</i>
Triple	<i><u>After analysing these texts and gaining a greater understanding of the effects of war on humanity</u> it is clear that it is not something which should be taken lightly.</i> (ciu 107)	1. Textual 2. Topical 3. Interpersonal	<i>these texts</i> <i>texts ...effects of war</i> <i>analysing ...</i> <i>understanding</i> (writer is implied agent)
Multiple	<i><u>However in her</u> Othello sees a cure to the emptiness he feels within him, the sense of dislocation of not belonging.</i> (pmu 438)	1. Textual 2. Topical	<i>However</i> <i>in her</i>

Dual and triple metafunction refers to the situation where within one element two or three metafunctions are performed, respectively. In the example above of dual metafunction, *most significant* is clearly an expression of opinion within the nominal group and *these* makes reference to relationships already discussed. Hence the nominal group, in addition to its usual unmarked topical (ideational metafunction) element has interpersonal and discoursal textual metafunctions.

In the triple metafunction example, again we have the textual element *these*, which refers to the texts that are the subject of the essay and have been referred to all the way through it. Additionally, we have the topics *texts* and *effects of war* that are both topics that are different from the topic (Subject) of the main clause, semantically-speaking, which, after the thematised comment *It is clear*, is *it*, referring, presumably, to *war*. Thus, this initial element is also topically marked. Finally, since the reader understands that *analysing* and

gaining ... understanding must be performed by an agent, who is clearly, in this case, the writer, these constitute an interpersonal element.

Multiple refers to those sentences in which there are two or more separate, grammatically marked elements preceding the Subject of the main verb, both or all of which have a role different from the unmarked topical Theme. In the example of multiple sentence initial elements, *However* puts the statement in an adversative relationship to the one which came before; hence it is a textual element, and, *in her* refers to a different topic from the Subject of the main clause, *Othello*, which means the second Adjunct is a topical element.

Tables 5.16 and 5.17, below, display, respectively, the results for dual and triple metafunction, and, multiple sentence initial elements. Observations on results in both tables follow Table 5.17.

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.16 and 5.17:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Table 5.16 Number of dual and triple metafunction sentence initial elements per 100 sentences in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions, with element type indicated (T = topical; X = textual; I = interpersonal)

Location	Dual:	TX	IT	IX	Triple:	Type
ii timed	6.1	1.5	1.5	3.0	0.0	
ii untimed	10.8	0.0	5.4	5.4	0.0	
im timed	17.6	3.3	5.5	8.8	1.1	TXI
im untimed	5.6	4.2	0.0	1.4	2.8	ITX, XTI
it timed	9.5	3.2	0.0	6.3	0.0	
it untimed	5.4	0.0	0.0	5.4	2.7	IXT
pi timed	10.8	1.5	2.5	6.8	0.0	
pi untimed	7.0	2.3	0.9	3.7	0.5	IXT
pm timed	10.2	3.4	2.5	4.3	0.0	
pm untimed	5.6	1.4	1.4	2.8	0.0	
pt timed	8.4	1.2	2.2	5.0	0.3	XIT
pt untimed	11.6	2.3	2.8	6.5	0.5	XTI
ci timed	8.6	3.4	3.4	1.7	0.0	
ci untimed	18.4	5.3	10.5	2.6	5.3	TIX, XIT
cm timed	7.6	2.5	1.3	3.8	0.0	
cm untimed	10.9	4.3	3.3	3.3	0.0	
ct timed	9.1	0.0	3.0	6.1	0.0	
ct untimed	18.9	2.7	2.7	13.5	5.4	IXT, XIT

See observations on both Table 5.16 and Table 5.17, below Table 5.17.

Table 5.17 Number of multiple sentence initial elements per 100 sentences in all locations, for timed and untimed conditions, with element type indicated (T = topical; X = textual; I = interpersonal)

Location	Multiple (no. per 100 sentences)	Element types
ii timed	1.5	TI
<i>ii untimed</i>	0.0	
im timed	1.1	XT
<i>im untimed</i>	1.4	XT
it timed	1.6	XXT
<i>it untimed</i>	0.0	
pi timed	0.9	XX, XI, (TT) & I
<i>pi untimed</i>	2.8	XT, XT, XT, TX, TXT, TX
pm timed	1.5	XI, XT, XT, TX, XX
<i>pm untimed</i>	4.2	XT, IT, TT, TT, TX, XT, XT, TT, XT
pt timed	2.5	XI, XTT, XI, XT, TT, TX, TT, (XIT) & T
<i>pt untimed</i>	3.3	XT, IT, XTT, XT, XT, XT, XI
ci timed	6.9	XT, XT, XT, IX
<i>ci untimed</i>	0.0	
cm timed	1.3	XX
<i>cm untimed</i>	5.4	XX, TX, XT, TT, XT
ct timed	3.0	XT, XT
<i>ct untimed</i>	2.7	XT

Note: (TT) in pi timed and (XIT) in pt timed indicate that the first of the two elements, in each case, was dual or triple metafunction, respectively.

Key observations on Tables 5.16 and 5.17:

In the untimed condition, clearly conclusion boundaries (initial and terminal) were the most likely locations for both dual and triple metafunction sentence initial elements. In the timed condition, introduction medial had the highest number, again for both dual and triple metafunction sentence initial elements. This difference could well be attributable once again to the somewhat limited conclusions found in timed writing conditions: without the

time constraint, conclusions are more developed, including dual and triple metafunction elements within sentence initial position. In fact one of the key observations with regard to triple metafunction sentence initial elements, is the very small number found in the timed condition at all: 82% of those present in the sample were in the untimed condition.

The IX dual metafunction sentence initial elements, comprising interpersonal and textual elements, constituted the greatest number, 45.8 per 100 sentences in the timed condition and 44.6 per 100 sentences in the untimed condition. The topical/textual (TX) combination and interpersonal/topical (IT) combination scored approximately half that number, with slightly more IT in the untimed condition (27 per 100 sentences).

Table 5.17 shows that conclusions are the most common place for multiple sentence initial elements, in both time conditions: conclusion initial for timed and conclusion medial for untimed conditions. Introductions seemed to be the least common place for such structures in both time conditions. In the untimed condition, paragraph locations held a similar number overall to conclusion locations. Textual and topical elements featured far more strongly than interpersonal. The latter made up 9% of the multiple elements while textual and topical elements were both represented similarly and five times as frequently as interpersonal. A similar number of multiple sentence initial elements appeared in the different time conditions: 20.3 per 100 sentences (timed) and 19.8 (untimed).

It is interesting that no particular order of elements predominated. In other words, TX or XT, XI or IX, IXT or TXI, and so on, were all more or less equally likely.

5.3.4.1 Key findings with regard to dual, triple and multiple sentence initial elements:

1. There were a similar number of sentences with multiple initial elements in both time conditions.
2. In the untimed condition, conclusion initial and terminal (boundary) locations had the highest number of dual and triple metafunction initial elements.
3. In the timed condition, introduction medial was the location of the highest number of dual and triple metafunction initial elements.

4. Very few triple metafunction elements were found in the timed condition.
5. For both time conditions, the combination of interpersonal and textual metafunction was the most common for dual elements.
6. In both time conditions, the highest number of sentences with multiple initial elements was in conclusions: initial (timed) and medial (untimed); introductions held the least.
7. Textual and topical elements numbered five times as many as interpersonal in multiple sentence initial elements.
8. No particular ordering of elements predominated.

5.3.5 Concluding statements on metafunctional analysis results

In light of the two research questions to which these results are relevant, the following statements can be made:

There is a difference in timed and untimed writing, with regard to metafunctional characteristics: seven out of nine locations scored a higher number of marked first elements in untimed conditions.

For the first element, the locational pattern for marked topical elements is similar for both time conditions. The same is true for textual elements. This was not true for interpersonal elements. Time conditions did not make a difference to the location of the highest number of topical and textual elements but for interpersonal elements there was a difference. For the location of the lowest number, only the textual metafunction is the same for both time conditions.

Overall, the timed condition showed less variation across locations for different types of elements, whereas the untimed condition had greater discrepancies. This was the case for first element as well as all initial elements.

In terms of locational variations, there were some clear trends in the extent to which each metafunction was used. Topical elements were used to a greater extent in introduction

initial location, and for untimed, also conclusion initial location. Textual elements were more apparent in paragraph and conclusion terminals. The extent of the use of interpersonal elements appeared to be variable although once all initial elements were considered, the interpersonal metafunction largely showed gains in introduction and conclusion locations for the untimed condition: introduction terminal and conclusion initial were by far the most popular locations; for the timed condition, the locational trends remained the same for first element and all initial elements, although a large rise in the overall number of elements was noticed: conclusion medial remained the location where interpersonal elements were used to the greatest extent.

The locations with the most dual and triple metafunction sentence initial elements were conclusion initial and terminal for the untimed condition and conclusion medial had the most multiple elements. Entirely differently, for the timed condition, introduction medial scored the most duals and triples while conclusion initial had the most multiple sentence initial elements. While this shows that time conditions make a difference, in answer to research question 1, the lack of any consistency across conditions with regard to these structures means locational information (in answer to research question 3) is limited and it would have to be assumed the untimed results are more informative.

There was one very pertinent result with regard to the concept of a unilateral conversation proposed in this thesis: in the analysis of first elements, textual elements were used to a greater extent than interpersonal and topical the least; however, the extent of the use of interpersonal elements increased greatly in all locations for both time conditions, once all initial elements were counted, such that overall interpersonal elements exceeded textual, and topical remained the element type used to the least extent. Since variations appeared to be greater between time conditions for the metafunctional analysis than they were for grammatical, an additional analysis based on the untimed results only, showed that locations are quite specific in terms of their metafunctional nature. The pivotal role of introduction terminal and paragraph terminal locations was indicated in terms of larger numbers of both textual and interpersonal elements compared to in their initials and medials and the emphasis on conclusions for overall volume of elements was clear, with specific element types represented to a greater or lesser extent within conclusion locations. The results of the statistical tests for significance for metafunctional findings are presented

in section 5.6.4, together with the tests for grammatical findings (section 5.6.3), for reasons explained at the start of this chapter, section 5.1.2.

5.4 Combining grammatical and metafunctional results

5.4.1 Relevant research questions

This section presents a combination of grammatical and metafunctional results, which may make a useful contribution towards answering research questions 1 and 5:

1. To what extent, and in what sentence initial grammatical and metafunctional characteristics, do essays written in a timed condition differ from those written in an untimed condition?

Every element in the metafunctional analysis was also assigned to a grammatical structure category. Thus, it was possible to determine which grammatical structures contributed to the total amount of elements of each metafunctional type (topical / ideational, textual and interpersonal) and indeed, whether there were differences in the distribution, across locations and time conditions.

This was achieved by ascertaining which grammatical structures were entailed in the total number of topical elements, textual elements and interpersonal elements. Then the number of each grammatical structure-type making up the total volume of elements for each metafunctional type was counted and the percentage of the total number of “metafunctional elements” each grammatical structure represented was calculated. This was performed for topical, textual and interpersonal elements.

Since some grammatical structures performed two or three metafunctional roles and some “metafunctional elements” implicated more than one grammatical structure, the count of “metafunctional elements” did not always coincide with the count of grammatical structures. With the help of the dual and triple metafunction analysis, it was possible to identify these instances and make the necessary adjustments. (More details of this are given in the Methodology chapter, section 4.6.4.1 and commentaries on Figures 5.20 and 5.21, below, give examples in the case of Theme predication.)

Once the contribution of each grammatical structure to the total volume of elements for each metafunction type in each location had been established, the timed and untimed samples could be compared.

5. How may this study be used to improve the linguistic resources available for instruction in academic writing?

Discovering grammatical and metafunctional differences in the sentence initial characteristics of timed and untimed writing in isolation is not as helpful as discovering how the two sets of findings interact. The results of this study may be made more useful to both teachers and students, by ascertaining which grammatical structures were most used in connection with which metafunctions, in each location, and showing the differences between timed and untimed conditions. This section of the results is intended to provide this information in preparation for discussion in chapter 6, of how the findings of this study may be applied in academic writing instruction, particularly in the context of senior secondary English. It is assumed that the untimed condition rendered the most useful information in this regard; however, it is especially notable when both time conditions render consistent findings.

5.4.2 Grammatical structures contributing to metafunctional results, in the nine locations, for timed and untimed conditions

The findings in this section are presented in a series of column stack graphs similar to those used to show the metafunctional composition of sentence initial elements in different locations, in section 5.3.3 above. In this section, there are three figures (Figures 5.19 – 5.21). Each displays the information relating to one of the metafunctional element types (topical, textual and interpersonal) and contains two graphs, one for each time condition. The columns in the graphs represent the nine essay locations and sectors within the columns indicate the contribution each grammatical structure makes to the total volume of elements, which perform the metafunction type indicated on the figure. Observations follow the presentation of each pair and key findings are summarised at the end of the section.

Key to abbreviations in Figures 5.19 – 5.21 (below):

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal
pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal
ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

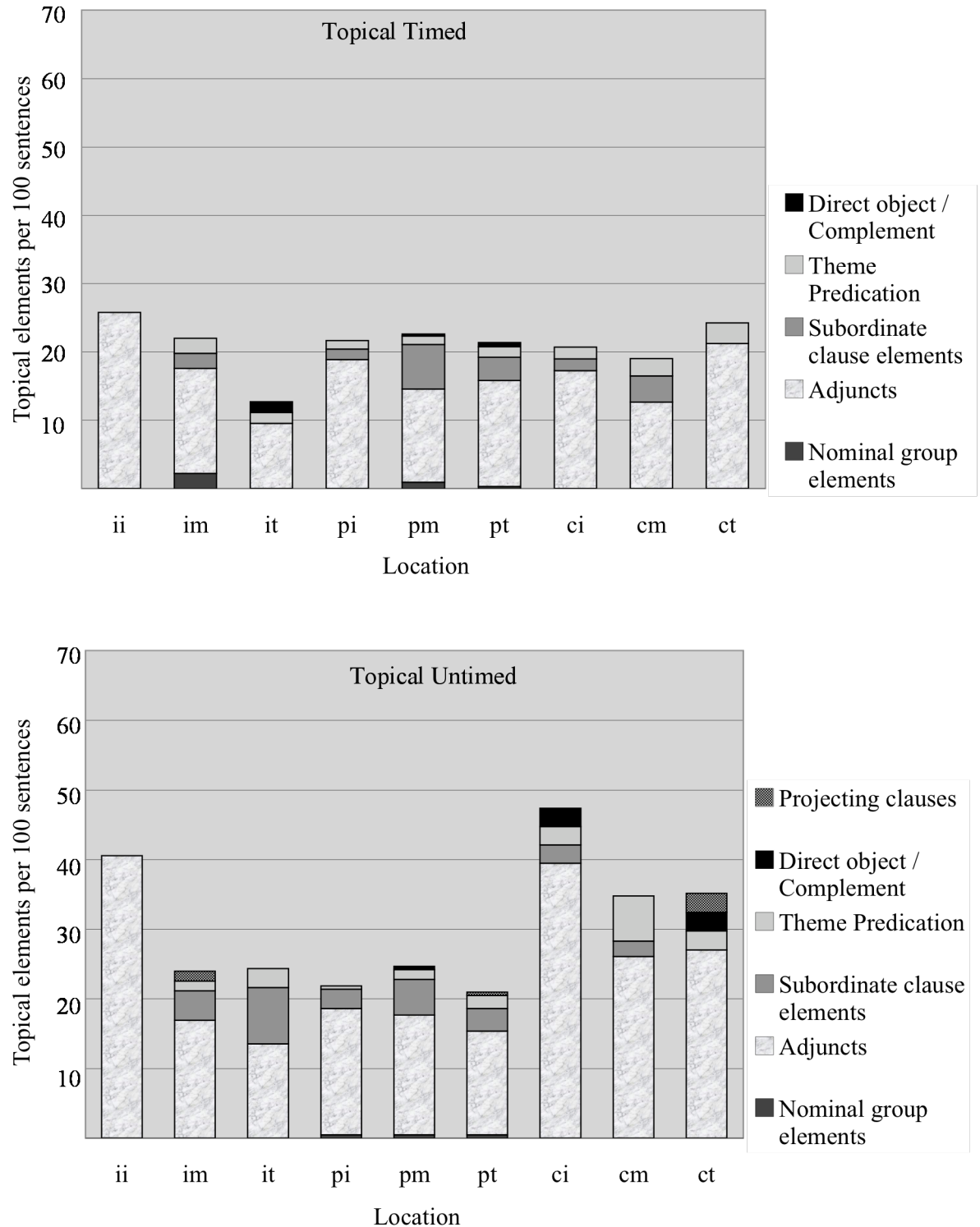


Figure 5.19: Grammatical structures contributing to total number of topical elements in each location, for timed condition (above) and untimed condition (below)

Key observations on Figure 5.19 (above):

Common to both time conditions was the dependence on Adjuncts as topical elements in every location. (In fact, in introduction initial, there were no other structures used as topical element.) This means that the sentence began with a circumstantial element, which helped to refine or define the topic in terms of time, place, manner, reason and so on. Subordinate clauses (those which had as Subject something other than the Subject of the main clause) were used to a lesser extent. Nominal group elements, Theme predication and Direct object / Complement were used to a small extent, and in the untimed condition, projecting clauses appeared in three locations. Of interest, is that for paragraph medial location, the contribution of the different types of grammatical elements to the total volume of topical elements was very similar across time conditions, although there were slightly more overall in the untimed condition.

What stands out clearly from the graphs, on comparison of time conditions, is the difference not so much in the number of topical elements but in the range of distribution. It appears that topical elements were more deliberately located, especially in introduction and conclusion initial, in the untimed condition. Once again, it was the conclusions that showed the greatest discrepancy, probably due to the time pressure under which these are often composed in the timed condition. The differentiation in the characteristics of topical elements in each location in the untimed condition may be useful for writing instruction and is discussed in chapter 6.

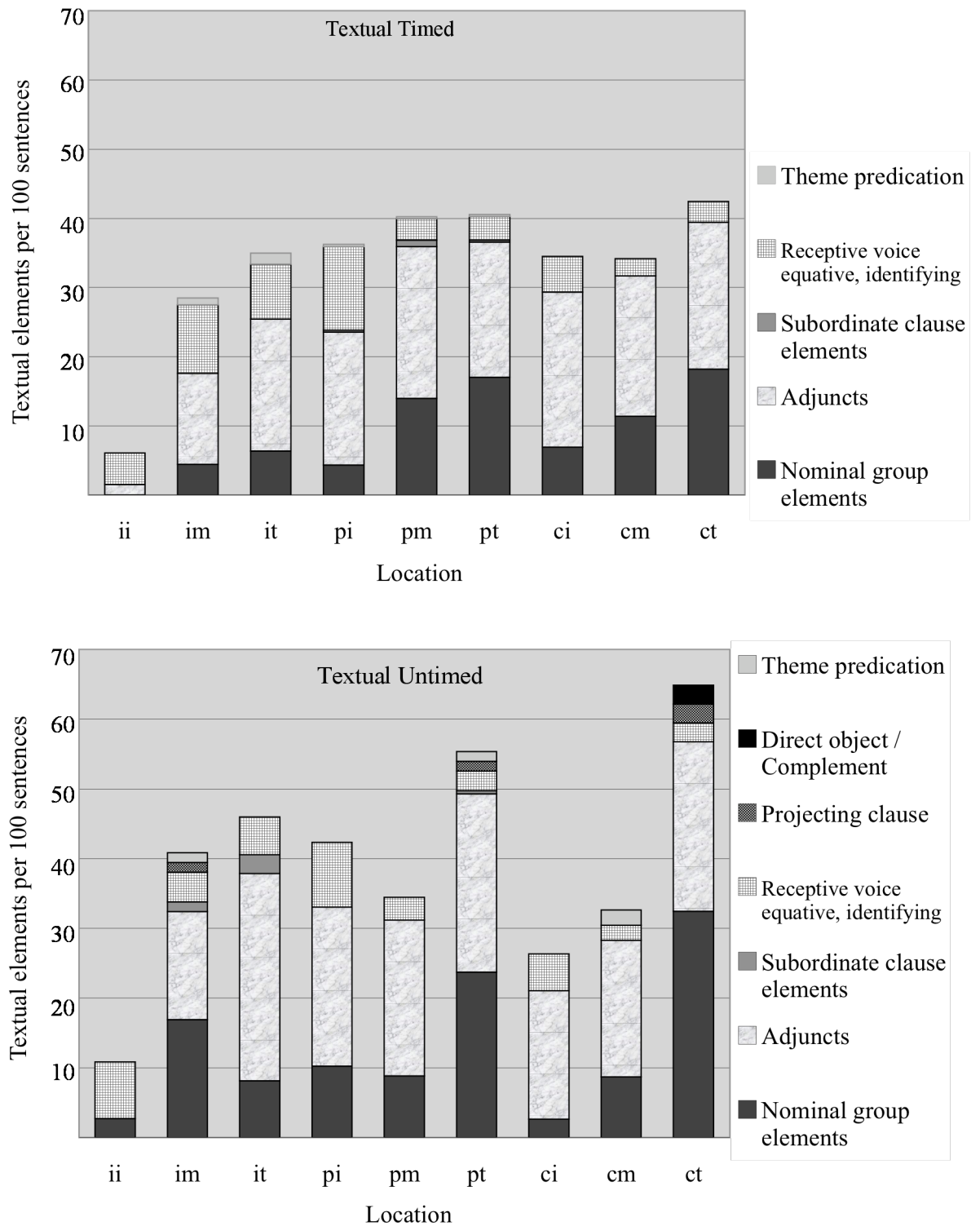


Figure 5.20: Grammatical structures contributing to total number of textual elements in each location, for timed condition (above) and untimed condition (below)

Key observations on Figure 5.20 (above):

An obvious difference here, besides the overall greater number of elements than for the topical analysis, was the reduced dependence on Adjuncts, although they do still feature strongly. Textual elements in or as nominal groups were also used quite extensively and in some locations in the untimed condition, equalled or slightly exceeded the Adjuncts (introduction medial and conclusion terminal).

Also, there was the emergence of the identifying equatives (the “this = that” structure, see Methodology, chapter 4, section 4.6.1.7 and section 5.2.6 of this chapter), which once in receptive voice, act as textual elements, by setting up a general category, which the reader expects to have filled by a specific instance and which may have been or become a concept for further reference in the text (Thompson, 2004, p. 98). The sentence below is an example:

Another technique Polanski uses to manipulate the audience is humour, through dialogue. (pit 74)

Another indicates that techniques have been the topic of discussion in previous paragraphs. The receptive voice equative structure, where the general category of “techniques used to manipulate the audience” is selected as the sentence initial element and *humour* (the specific instance) becomes the Complement, reinforces the general category as a referential item in the text. In both time conditions, paragraph initial was the location where this structure was used to the greatest extent and in paragraph and conclusion medials and terminals, the least.

Once again, there was both a greater variety of types of elements and greater differentiation between the number in each location, in the untimed condition. In both conditions, textual elements in introduction initial location were very limited but thereafter, in the timed condition, the range across locations was smaller than in the untimed condition. For introductions, in both time conditions, the pattern was the same, with the number of textual elements increasing from initial through medial to terminal but in the untimed condition, the pattern was exaggerated, and repeated in the three conclusion locations. In the timed condition, there were only small differences among the three paragraph locations but in the untimed, there was a clear drop off in paragraph medial and increase in terminal. A similar situation was true with regard to the use of different structures in each location: the untimed

condition appeared to exaggerate the differences among locations. For example, there was a growing number of textual nominal group elements in proportion to the Adjuncts across conclusion locations, for both time conditions, but in the untimed, the number of nominal group elements increased to the extent where it overtook the number of Adjuncts in the terminal location; the increase in textual nominal group elements from paragraph medial to terminal was also exaggerated in the untimed condition.

Theme predication appeared in this category even though it is generally used to highlight the Subject (or Complement, as in the case of the second example, below) by placing it as predicate in an initial clause, as explained in chapter 4, section 4.6.1.8. In these instances, the predicated nominal group happens to contain a textual element, thus performing the textual metafunction, as well as the topical / ideational:

It is this decision that, according to David Cecil, ultimately disrupts the equilibrium of other characters and causes events to be diverted from their natural courses, which compounds increasingly tragic consequences. (itt 31)

It is this insecurity that Iago latches onto so that Othello and Desdemona's relationship develops from blindingly intense love to murderous hate. (cmu 127)

Theme predication with the additional textual metafunction did not share similar patterns across time conditions. In the untimed condition they were limited to introduction and conclusion medial and paragraph terminal locations.

Use of textual elements in subordinate clauses was greater in the untimed condition and, of course, projecting clauses and Direct object / Complement as or containing textual elements were also apparent only in the untimed condition.

These characteristics once more suggest that the selection of location of textual elements, like the topical, is more deliberate in the untimed condition and, therefore, the trends in the untimed condition are more informative for instruction purposes.

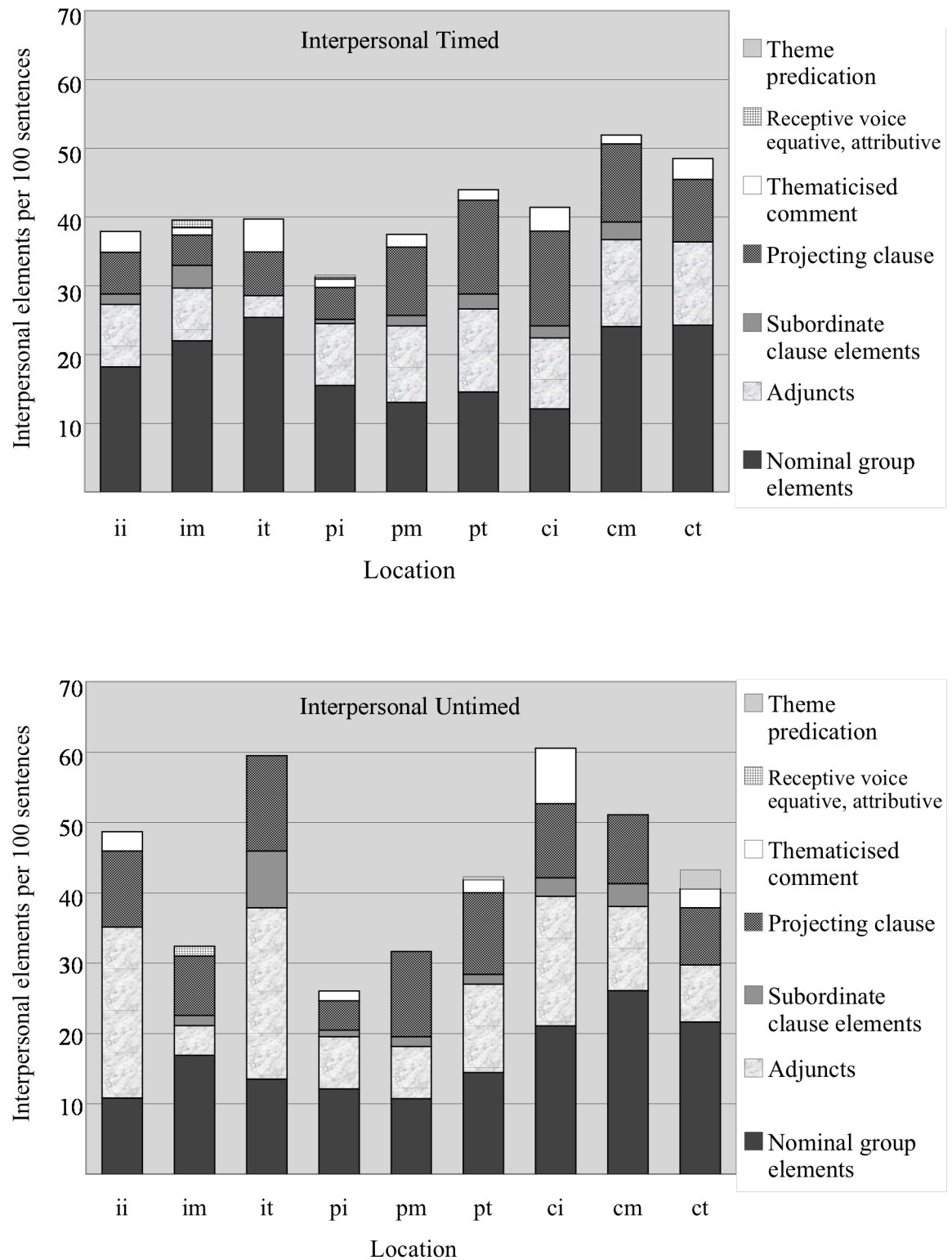


Figure 5.21: Grammatical structures contributing to total number of interpersonal elements in each location, for timed condition (above) and untimed condition (below)

Key observations on Figure 5.21 (above):

Predictably, again, there was greater differentiation among locations in the untimed condition, both in terms of overall numbers and individual types of structures used. Overall trends were completely different between time conditions for introductions and conclusions but the paragraph trend was fairly similar, in terms of the volume of elements in each location, and the structures represented. Two small differences were the lack of thematicised comment in paragraph medial location and the use of Theme predication in the paragraph terminal location both in the untimed condition.

As mentioned in the textual analysis, above, this latter phenomenon is quite noteworthy as Theme predication is generally used to highlight the Subject by making it the Complement of an initial clause (as explained in chapter 4, section 4.6.1.8). In two locations in the untimed condition (paragraph terminal and conclusion terminal), and one location in the timed condition (paragraph initial), however, the structure appeared with a definite added interpersonal role, effected thus:

It is we, here and now, who will decide the conclusion. (ctu 112)

It is the abysmal, meaningless relationships that emphasise the dystopian nature of the text's society. (ptu 527)

The writers have maximised the structure's emphatic potential by using it to highlight the displaced Subject, which in the first case is interpersonal by nature and in the second case, has an evaluation included in the form of premodifiers.

There was a greater reliance on interpersonal elements in nominal groups in the timed condition whereas in the untimed, there was more of a balance between nominal group elements and Adjuncts. Interestingly, the nominal group element pattern in paragraph locations was similar for both conditions: dropping slightly from paragraph initial to medial and then increasing again in paragraph terminal. The untimed condition showed the opposite pattern in introduction and conclusion locations with medial locations containing more interpersonal nominal group elements than boundary locations. Adjuncts, on the other hand, besides being represented to a greater extent in the untimed condition, were mostly located in boundary locations (apart from conclusion terminal) whereas in the timed condition, they were more evenly distributed across most locations.

In both time conditions subordinate clauses contained interpersonal elements to a very small extent but the untimed condition had a noticeably larger number in introduction terminal location; neither time condition used them in conclusion terminal location.

Interpersonal elements in the form of projecting clauses were represented in all locations in both time conditions; the location of its smallest representation was in paragraph initial location, for both time conditions. Unusually, in the untimed condition, there was a fairly even distribution of this structure across locations whereas in the timed, it was used to a greater extent in paragraph medial, terminal and all conclusion locations.

In line with most trends, the use of thematicised comment as an interpersonal element was more differentiated in the untimed condition, with boundary locations being favoured, none appearing in medial locations and conclusion initial being the location where this structure was used to the greatest extent. In the timed condition, boundary locations in introductions and conclusions were favoured for the thematicised comment but it did appear in all locations to some extent.

The structure Thompson (2004, p. 97) describes as “slightly unusual or mannered”, the receptive voice intensive attributive (or “receptive voice equative, attributive” as it is labelled in this study) appeared in introduction medial location, for both time conditions and in paragraph initial location in the timed condition. An example is:

Especially paramount is time and the social and historical context. (imu 142)

Although its appearance was rare, the structure itself is quite effective if used sparingly and the possibility of teaching it to students is discussed in chapter 6.

5.4.3 Summary of key findings with regard to the use of different grammatical structures as topical, textual and interpersonal elements, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions:

1. The most notable finding was the greater differentiation in distribution of structures across locations in the untimed condition. This was true for all three types.
2. A greater variety of grammatical structures were used as topical and textual elements in the untimed condition. Both time conditions made use of seven types of grammatical structures as interpersonal elements.
3. For both time conditions and in every location, Adjuncts were the structure used to the greatest extent to contain topical elements.
4. In addition to Adjuncts, nominal group constituents also featured strongly as textual elements in both time conditions.
5. For both time conditions, the receptive voice equative identifying structure emerged as a textual element in every location.
6. Patterns of textual elements apparent in both time conditions were more definite in the untimed condition; most notable was the increasing number of nominal group textual elements in conclusion locations, with these exceeding the number of Adjuncts in conclusion terminal, in the untimed condition.
7. In the timed condition, there was greater use of nominal group constituents as interpersonal elements whereas in the untimed, Adjuncts emerged more strongly as interpersonal elements.
8. Thematicised comment was used as an interpersonal element in all locations in the timed condition but only in boundary locations in the untimed condition (excluding introduction terminal).

9. Whereas paragraph locations were quite similar for both time conditions in the increasing trend of interpersonal elements overall (from initial through medial to terminal) and in the extent to which each type of structure was used, introductions and conclusions showed very different trends.

5.4.4 Concluding statements on combining grammatical and metafunctional results

In response to research question 1, it is clear from the different ranges of structures and the greater differentiation among locational uses of them in the three metafunctional categories that time conditions do make a difference to the grammatical and metafunctional characteristics of sentence initial elements. In terms of research question 5, it is assumed that in locations where the trends for both time conditions were similar, such as interpersonal elements in paragraph locations, the findings will be useful for instruction and where there are differences across time conditions, the untimed will be more useful, especially when the trends are highly differentiated and definite.

5.5 Results for “Other Sentence Type” analysis

5.5.1 Relevant research questions

Although it would be unnecessarily repetitive to restate them again here, the findings in this section make a small contribution to research questions 1-3 and 5. There is, again, a comparison between timed and untimed conditions, which adds to the findings for research question 1. These sentences present some grammatical sentence types and structures that were not so common in the sample or were particular to literature essays and these have particular metafunctional implications, which makes research questions 2 and 3 (respectively) relevant here also. Finally, since the results are informative and do demonstrate some clearly observable trends and patterns, they may be applied in an instructional context, which makes research question 5 relevant.

5.5.2 Findings for “Other Sentence Type” Analysis

Initially this section was included to account for sentences that did not fall into the indicative declarative mood category, which is the most natural one for academic writing. Hence, it consisted of interrogative and imperative mood structures. However, once analysis was underway, there arose certain other sentence structures and/or features which appeared frequently enough to be worth noting for interest and in case any useful insights could be drawn with regard to the extent and location of their usage.

Those other sentence features were: whole sentences or all sentence initial elements consisting entirely of a quotation from the text under discussion in the essay; sentences which began by using the name of the author of the text under discussion; sentences where the writer used “we” or “us” (first person inclusive of reader) and those in which “I” or “me” (first person, exclusive of reader) were used as initial element or as complement in the main clause, respectively; finally, sentences using the unmarked “existential There” structure which has been a topic of discussion in SFG, as documented in chapter 3, Literature Review Part II, of this thesis, were noted. Table 20, below, documents the results for this section and observations follow.

Key to abbreviations in Table 5.18:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

Table 5.18 Percentage of sentences using the structure or feature indicated, in each location, for timed and untimed conditions

	Inter- rogative	Impera- tive	Quota- tions	Author as Subject	We / us	I / me	Existential There
ii timed	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	19.7%	10.6%	4.5%	4.5%
<i>ii untimed</i>	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	13.5%	8.1%	5.4%	0.0%
im timed	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.2%	9.9%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>im untimed</i>	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	5.6%	4.2%	7.0%	0.0%
it timed	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.7%	9.5%	4.8%	0.0%
<i>it untimed</i>	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	16.2%	10.8%	5.4%	5.4%
pi timed	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	12.4%	9.0%	0.3%	1.9%
<i>pi untimed</i>	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	10.7%	6.5%	0.0%	3.7%
pm timed	0.3%	0.0%	3.1%	6.8%	6.2%	0.0%	2.8%
<i>pm untimed</i>	0.5%	0.5%	5.1%	6.0%	4.7%	0.5%	2.3%
pt timed	0.9%	0.0%	1.5%	7.7%	9.3%	1.2%	3.1%
<i>pt untimed</i>	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	8.8%	9.8%	0.9%	0.5%
ci timed	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	24.1%	12.1%	1.7%	3.4%
<i>ci untimed</i>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	18.4%	10.5%	7.9%	2.6%
cm timed	2.5%	0.0%	1.3%	15.2%	15.2%	1.3%	2.5%
<i>cm untimed</i>	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%	4.3%	14.1%	3.3%	0.0%
ct timed	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	1.5%	1.5%
<i>ct untimed</i>	0.0%	0.0%	2.7%	18.9%	16.2%	0.0%	2.7%

Key observations on Table 5.18:

What is very clear is that neither the interrogative nor the imperative moods are preferred to any great extent by the writers. Probably counter-intuitively, due to their impact in boundary locations to pose a question (initial) or leave the reader with one (terminal), the few interrogative sentences there were appeared mainly in medial locations (paragraph and

conclusion), for both time conditions, with a few in paragraph terminal for the timed condition. These findings have instructional implications with regard to writers' understanding of formal writing as opposed to the formal speaking context, where these moods may be more appropriate. Their placement in non-boundary locations would make their interpersonal, dialogical impact more subtle than it would be to use what is an uncommon mood structure for the context, in a highly noticeable location. (See further discussion in chapter 6.)

As was to be anticipated, the use of quotations in initial position was greater in the untimed condition, where writers would have had access to texts to quote from rather than quoting from memory, as in the timed condition. (It must be pointed out that these were sentences where either the elements preceding the main verb of the main clause, in other words the sentence initial elements as defined for this research, consisted of a quote, or, the entire sentence, was a quotation.) Certain locations appeared to be used to a greater extent than others for this, in both time conditions: introduction initial, paragraph medial and paragraph terminal. These are quite diverse locations and this suggests that the quotations may serve different functions in each. (Quotations were excluded from the grammatical and metafunctional analyses, as they were not constructions of the writer of the essay.)

Use of the name of the author of the text under discussion as Subject (sentence initial) featured more strongly in initial locations for the timed condition. In the untimed condition, initials and terminals were as commonly used for this and medials contained considerably fewer. Once again, it seems that the untimed condition has more clearly defined trends; in this case, the boundary locations are favoured.

'Existential There' produced completely contrary and not especially convincing results across time conditions, leaving very little to comment upon, except perhaps that introduction, initial for timed and terminal for untimed, appeared to be the most likely locations for this structure, but not introduction medial.

The two first person categories are discussed below, after Figure 5.22, which illustrates them.

Key to abbreviations in Figure 5.22:

ii = introduction initial; im = introduction medial; it = introduction terminal

pi = paragraph initial; pm = paragraph medial; pt = paragraph terminal

ci = conclusion initial; cm = conclusion medial; ct = conclusion terminal

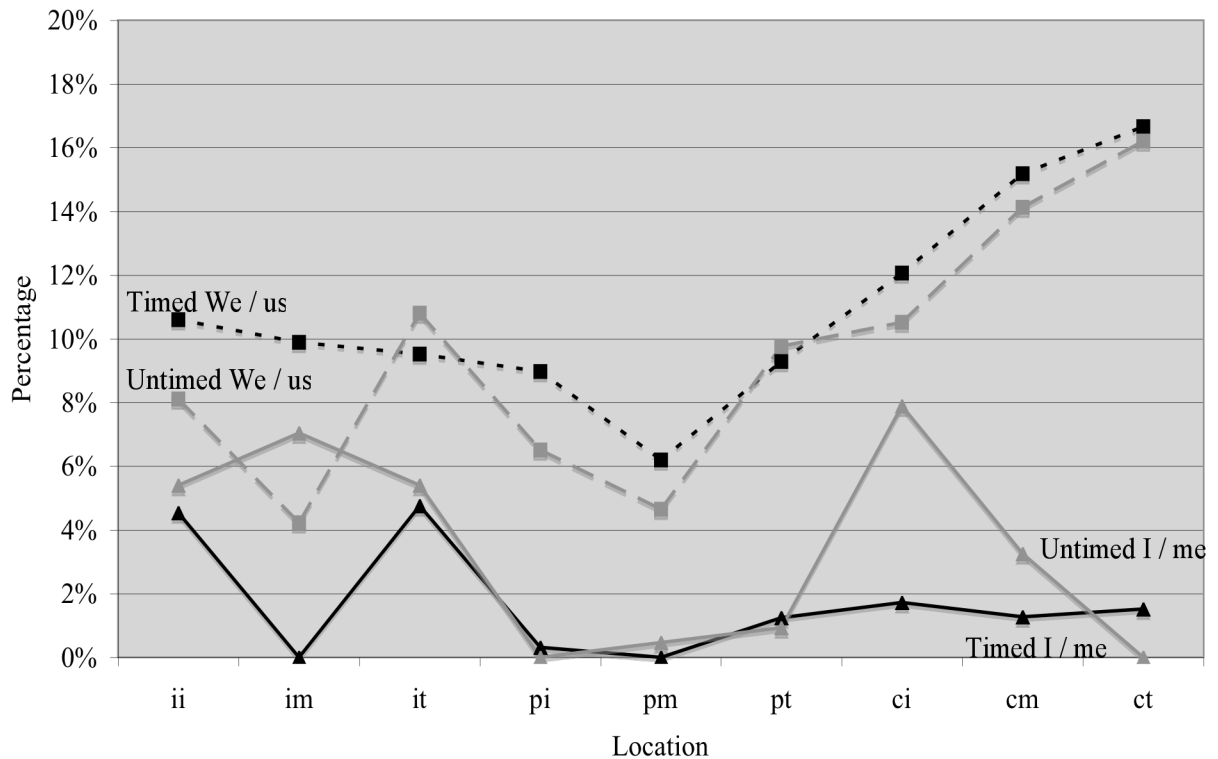


Figure 5.22: Percentage of sentences using first person plural (We / us) as Subject or Complement and first person singular (I / me) as Subject or Complement, for timed and untimed conditions

Commentary on Figure 5.22:

Table 5.18 and Figure 5.22 (above) reveal that the reader inclusive first person pronouns, “we” and “us” (the dashed lines on the graph) are, overall, used more extensively than the reader exclusive ones, “I” and “me” (the solid lines on the graph). Patterns in the use of “we / us” are similar across time conditions, for paragraphs and conclusions, although the timed condition has slightly more in most of these locations. In introductions, there is a clear drop off in medial location for the untimed condition and a steep climb to terminal, which the timed condition does not show. Conclusion medial and terminal, however, are definitely the most common locations for “we / us” in both time conditions.

“I / me” show little usage in paragraph locations for both time conditions. Interestingly, in introductions, although initial and terminal locations actually have quite similar scores both

to each other and across time conditions, medials are quite the opposite, with a very definite drop in the timed condition and an obvious rise in the untimed. In conclusions, whereas the timed condition meanders below 2% in all three locations, the untimed condition shows a strong climb in initial location and a definite drop off to medial and drops again, to 0%, in the terminal location.

These results on the use of first person could be helpful to teachers of academic writing because opinions have changed in this regard in more recent years; thus, before advocating the use of first person, in either form (reader inclusive or exclusive) it is beneficial to identify whether those scoring high grades are actually using these pronouns to any great extent.

5.5.3 Summary and concluding statements on “Other Sentence Type” analysis

Since this is a short section, the summary and conclusion are combined.

1. Moods other than the declarative are not used extensively by these writers and when they are, the impact is often diluted by their location.
2. Full sentence or sentence initial quotations are also rare and may serve different roles, depending on their location.
3. For both time conditions, boundary locations, particularly in introductions and conclusions are used most extensively for naming the author of the text under discussion.
4. Use of first person singular (I / me) is not extensive but appears mostly in introduction initial and terminal locations for timed conditions and introduction medial and conclusion initial locations for untimed conditions.

5. Use of first person plural (we / us) is more extensive than singular and peaks for both time conditions at conclusion medial and terminal locations; it has its lowest score in introduction and paragraph medial location (untimed) and paragraph medial (timed).

Despite the fact that this analytical category began only to account for sentences which would be excluded from the main analysis because they were in a different mood or were not the writer's own words, it has brought to light some findings worth noting and as such has been retained in the presentation of results.

5.6 Statistical analysis of results for significance

As this study is largely an exploration of the use of sentence initial elements by skilled writers in senior secondary English, the detail in the descriptive results is most informative. However, to demonstrate the value of that description in a broad sense (answering research question 4), to highlight some of the findings, and, to pursue the concept of a “unilateral conversation” within the writing, some inferential statistical testing was undertaken. It has been allocated to this section for reasons already explained in the Methodology chapter and recalled at the start of this chapter. It will become clearer while reading this section that in order to focus on the most relevant issues, it is more helpful to have the statistical testing reported for both grammatical and metafunctional analyses at this point in the thesis so that the results of each and their interaction remain plainly in view leading up to the discussion in chapter 6.

5.6.1 Relevant research questions

The results of the statistical analyses are relevant to research questions 4 and 5, stated below.

4. Are there any significant tendencies apparent in the above findings and if so, what are they?

The statistical significance of the results was tested using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test and one- and two-way Chi Squared tests as detailed in the Methodology chapter, section 4.6.4. The Mann-Whitney U test was chosen as it determines if two samples are similar enough to be regarded as representative of the same population. This means that the two time conditions could be compared to establish whether the samples were significantly different or not, on a number of characteristics (section 5.6.2). Also, grouped locations could be compared on a variety of grammatical and metafunctional characteristics to establish if the differences between them were significant (sections 5.6.3 and 5.6.4).

The two-way Chi Squared test enabled the broad testing for a relationship between location and grammatical characteristics and metafunctional characteristics (sections 5.6.3 and 5.6.4). This was performed for first sentence element as well as for all initial elements.

The one-way Chi Squared enabled the specific testing of particular grammatical structures for more frequent use than could be expected by chance to perform specific metafunctions in specific locations (section 5.6.4). This test was only applied to two structures for paragraph locations where the numbers were larger and where the descriptive statistics suggested that the usage was especially notable.

5. How may this study be used to improve the linguistic resources available for instruction in academic writing?

If the results obtained can be demonstrated to be significant, then it is worth considering how these findings may be included in academic writing pedagogy. For example, if it can be shown that the metafunctional characteristics of the initial elements of a sentence are linked to their location, then it is worth examining the descriptive detail of the metafunctional characteristics for each location. Or, for instance, if it can be shown that in untimed writing conditions the skilled student writers in this study used significantly more grammatically marked initial elements, then it is worth teaching those structures to students who are not using them at all. The pedagogical implications are pursued in chapter 6.

5.6.2 Statistical findings comparing timed to untimed writing

The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the timed sample to the untimed sample in terms of the use of a grammatically marked first sentence element because the untimed sample had a higher number of grammatically marked first elements in every location. It was found that the value of $U_2=14$, where the critical value for U when $n_1=9$ and $n_2=9$, one-tailed, $\alpha=0.05$ is 21. Since $U_2 < 21$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of grammatically marked sentence initial elements used in the untimed sample.

Undertaking parallel testing for the metafunction results, the Mann-Whitney U test was then used to compare the timed to the untimed sample in terms of the use of a marked first sentence element in the metafunctional analysis because the untimed sample had a higher number of marked first elements in seven of the nine locations. It was found that the value of $U_2 = 23$, where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_2 > 21$, the test indicated that there was not a significantly larger number of marked sentence initial elements used in the untimed sample. However, since the critical value (21) and the value of U_2 (23) were very close, this could be said to be approaching significance.

Furthermore, since there were more receptive voice main verbs in main clauses for the untimed sample (section 5.2.5), the extent of the use of receptive voice was compared in the timed and untimed samples, using the Mann-Whitney U test. It was found that the value of $U_1 = 31$, where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_1 > 21$ the test indicated that there was not a significantly larger number of receptive voice sentences used in the untimed sample.

Since the timed sample used more equative sentence structures, the extent of the use of the equative structure was also compared for timed and untimed writing samples, using the Mann-Whitney U test. The result showed that the value of $U_2 = 33$, where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_2 > 21$, the test indicated that the equative sentence structure was not used to a significantly larger extent in the timed condition.

5.6.2.1 Summary of statistical findings comparing timed to untimed writing

1. Essays written in timed conditions differ from those written in untimed to a significant extent, with regard to the use of marked grammatical elements in first position.
2. For marked elements in the metafunctional analysis, the difference between time conditions was approaching significance.

3. With regard to the use of the passive and equative sentence structure types, there was no significant difference in the timed and untimed samples.

From this point on, only the untimed results have been tested (unless otherwise stated and explained). This has been done for three reasons. First, the above tests indicate that timed and untimed writing are significantly different in some grammatical characteristics and may well be different to some degree in metafunctional characteristics. Second, the descriptive statistics indicate that there is greater differentiation between locational metafunctional characteristics in the untimed sample than the timed (section 5.3.3) and the distribution of metafunction types and the grammatical structures accounting for them is more distinct in the untimed sample (section 5.4.2). Thirdly, it avoids any blurring of results due to the time variable, keeping in mind the already stated likelihood that untimed writing is of a better quality than timed.

5.6.3 Statistical findings comparing grammatical characteristics of sentence initial elements in all locations and in grouped locations

Figures 5.2 – 5.7 in the Grammatical Results section (5.2) of this chapter showed by means of comparative profile graphs and bubble graphs, the extent of the use of each grammatical structure as first element, in each location, investigated in this research. Due to the small frequencies of some types, only the heavy nominal groups, Adjuncts and projecting clauses were able to be subject to statistical investigation to ascertain whether there was a significant difference in their representation across locations.

Using the two-way Chi Squared test for independence, the representation of the three above-mentioned structures as first element was compared across all nine locations with the result: $\chi^2 = 19.519$. The critical value of χ^2 for degrees of freedom (df) $(3 - 1)(9 - 1) = 16$, one-tailed, at $\alpha = 0.05$ is 26.30. Since $19.519 < 26.30$, $p = 0.242$, the test indicated that the representation of the three structures was independent of location. Similarly, when all initial elements were counted, the representation of heavy nominal groups, Adjuncts and projecting clauses across locations returned the result: $\chi^2 = 20.147$, $df = 16$. Since this is

smaller than the critical value at 0.05 (26.30), $p = 0.214$, again, the representation of each structure was not dependent upon location.

As some of the expected frequencies in the above two tests were borderline (around 4.7 and 4.8 when a minimum of 5 is required), the Chi Squared tests were administered for the two larger groups only: heavy nominal groups and Adjuncts. This did not change the statistical outcome, with $\chi^2 = 5.910$, $df = 8$, ($p = 0.657$) (first element) and $\chi^2 = 10.872$, $df = 8$, ($p = 0.209$) (all elements) when the critical value of χ^2 for $df = 8$, at $\alpha = 0.05$ is 15.51.

We can conclude then, that the representation of these three grammatical structures is independent of individual locations¹⁵. However, based on the descriptive statistics, there were a few structures that appeared to be more strongly represented either in boundary locations (initial and terminal) rather than medial locations or within conclusions rather than introductions or paragraphs. These apparent group location tendencies were tested by means of the Mann-Whitney U test. (See section 5.1.2 for two grouping-type tables.)

Firstly, to determine whether, in terms of the first element only, Adjuncts were more strongly represented in boundary locations (all grouped initial and terminal locations) than grouped medial locations, the Mann-Whitney U test returned the result of $U_2 = 0$, where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2. Since $U_2 < 2$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of Adjuncts used as first element in boundary locations than medial locations.

Among the grammatical structures with smaller overall frequencies, the representation of thematicised comment was also apparently stronger in boundary locations, taking into account all initial elements. A Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine if the difference was significant. The result was $U_2 = 1.2$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2. Since $U_2 < 2$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of thematicised comment structures in boundary locations than medial locations when all initial elements were considered.

Next, the Theme predication structure was tested using Mann-Whitney U, to determine if there was a significantly greater representation of these in grouped conclusion locations than in grouped introductions and paragraph locations. The test returned the result of $U_2 = 3.5$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 3$ and $n_2 = 6$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2. Since $U_2 > 2$, the test indicated that there was not a significantly larger number of Theme predication structures in conclusion locations than in introduction and paragraph locations, although, this could be said to be approaching significance.

Finally, the descriptive results suggested that both sentence structure types, receptive voice and equative would be worth testing for some differences between grouped locations. First, sentences in grouped introduction locations appeared to be more likely to be in receptive (passive) voice than sentences in grouped paragraph and conclusion locations. This was tested using Mann-Whitney U. The test returned the result of $U_2 = 1$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 3$ and $n_2 = 6$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2. Since $U_2 < 2$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of receptive voice sentences in introduction locations than in paragraph and conclusion locations. Secondly, it seemed that more sentences in grouped introduction and paragraph locations used the equative structure than sentences in grouped conclusion locations. This was tested using Mann-Whitney U and the test returned the result of $U_2 = 1.5$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2. Since $U_2 < 2$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of equative-type sentences in introduction and paragraph locations than conclusion locations.

5.6.3.1 Summary of statistical findings for grammatical characteristics

1. There is no significant relationship of dependence between individual locations and the three most common grammatical structures overall; however,
2. Some structures are represented to a significantly greater extent in some grouped locations:
 - a. Adjuncts are used significantly more frequently as first element in boundary locations (initial and terminal) than medial locations

- b. thematicised comment is also significantly more common in boundary locations, once all initial elements are included
- c. Theme predication is approaching significance in terms of being more strongly represented in grouped conclusion locations than in grouped introduction and paragraph locations but only small numbers were present and with greater frequencies, this may well show definite significance
- d. the receptive voice structure was used significantly more frequently in grouped introduction locations than in grouped paragraph and conclusion locations
- e. the equative structure was used more in grouped introduction and paragraph locations than in grouped conclusion locations.

5.6.4 Statistical findings comparing metafunctional characteristics of sentence initial elements in all locations and in grouped locations

Figures 5.10 – 5.18 in the Metafunctional Results section (5.3) illustrate the extent of the use of each metafunctional element type within sentence initial position, in each location by means of line, bubble and stack graphs. As the frequencies in each metafunctional category, topical (ideational), textual and interpersonal, were all adequate for statistical testing, this was undertaken to assess whether metafunctional characteristics were independent of location or not. In addition, comparative tests across locations for some element types were administered.

The two-way Chi Squared test for independence was used to investigate the representation of each metafunctional element type, as first element, across all nine locations, with the result: $\chi^2 = 63.285$. The critical value of χ^2 for degrees of freedom = 16, one-tailed, at $\alpha = 0.001$ is 39.25. Since $63.285 > 39.25$, ($p = 1.50E-07$)¹⁶ the test indicated that the representation of the three metafunctions was dependent upon location. Similarly, when all initial elements were counted, the representation of metafunctional element types across locations returned the result: $\chi^2 = 73.379$, ($p = 3.00E-09$)¹⁷. Since this is larger than the critical value at 0.001 (39.25), again, the test indicated that the representation of each

metafunctional element type (topical, textual and interpersonal) was dependent upon location.

Having ascertained the relationship between location and metafunctional characteristics, further tests were done to examine the extent of the representation of each type of metafunctional element in relation to the others and then, to identify specifically which element types were represented to a significantly greater extent in grouped locations.

Firstly, three Mann-Whitney U tests were administered to compare the overall extent of the use of each type of metafunctional element within sentence initial elements (all elements included). Comparing the topical elements with the textual returned the result $U_1 = 23$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_1 > 21$, the test indicated that over all locations there was not a significantly larger number of textual elements than topical; however, the result could be regarded as approaching significance. Comparing the topical to the interpersonal, the result $U_2 = 14$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_2 < 21$, the test indicated that over all locations, there was a significantly larger number of interpersonal elements than topical. Lastly, textual elements were compared to interpersonal, resulting in $U_2 = 35$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_2 > 21$, the test indicated that over all locations there was no significant difference in the number of textual and interpersonal elements.

Interestingly, when the Mann-Whitney U test was applied to see if the results held when the first element only was considered, it was found that when comparing textual to interpersonal elements, the outcome was $U_2 = 19$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_2 < 21$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of textual elements than interpersonal over all locations, for first element only.

To investigate this fact, that textual and interpersonal elements are used to a similar extent when all initial elements are counted but textual elements significantly exceed interpersonal when the first element only is counted, an exception was made with this statistic and the

timed sample was also tested. The outcome was slightly different yet had the same implication: for the first element only the Mann-Whitney U test returned the result $U_2 = 29.5$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_2 > 21$, the test indicated that there was not a significantly larger number of textual elements than interpersonal over all locations. However, when the test was applied for all initial elements, the result was $U_1 = 20$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_1 < 21$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of interpersonal elements than textual over all locations.

These tests mean that if one only considered the first element within sentence initial position, it would appear that the textual metafunction was either used to a similar extent as the interpersonal or was significantly predominant with regard to orienting the reader within the text, since, according to SFG, the initial element entails this function; however, once all elements that precede the main verb are considered, it is apparent that skilled writers include significantly more interpersonal elements and thus the interpersonal metafunction plays at least as great a role in orienting the reader within the text as the textual metafunction.

As would be expected in light of the above, a Mann-Whitney U test also showed that there were significantly more interpersonal elements once all initial elements were counted as opposed to the first element only: $U_2 = 3$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21. Since $U_2 < 21$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of interpersonal elements once all elements were counted.

Three further Mann-Whitney U tests were applied to determine if there were any groups of locations in which elements of a particular metafunctional type predominated. The extent of the use of the topical elements within grouped introduction and conclusion locations was compared to its representation within grouped paragraph locations. This showed that $U_2 = 2$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2. Since $U_2 = 2$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of topical elements in introduction and conclusion locations than in paragraph locations.

The extent of the representation of textual elements within grouped initial and medial locations, as opposed to grouped terminal locations was then tested. The result was $U_1 = 0$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2. Since $U_1 < 2$, the test indicated that there was a significantly larger number of textual elements in terminal locations than in initial and medial locations.

Last of all, the extent of the representation of interpersonal elements in grouped introduction and paragraph locations was compared to the extent of the use of interpersonal elements in grouped conclusion locations. This produced the outcome: $U_1 = 3$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2. Since $U_1 > 2$, the test indicated that there was not a significantly larger number of interpersonal elements in conclusion locations than in sentences in introduction and paragraph locations, however, this outcome could be regarded as approaching significance.

5.6.4.1 Summary of statistical findings for metafunctional characteristics

1. There is a significant relationship between location and the extent of the representation of each metafunctional element type. This means that the descriptive data relating to the metafunctional characteristics of the sentence initial elements in each individual location is definitely worth noting.
2. Topical elements are used to a significantly lesser extent than interpersonal, but not than textual.
3. There is no significant difference in the extent to which textual and interpersonal elements are used over all locations when all sentence initial elements are counted. The number of textual elements, however, significantly exceeds the number of interpersonal if only the first element is counted. There is a significantly larger number of interpersonal elements, therefore, once all sentence initial elements are considered.
4.
 - a. Topical elements are represented significantly more strongly in grouped introduction and conclusion locations than in grouped paragraph locations.
 - b. Textual elements are represented to a significantly greater extent in grouped terminal locations than grouped initial and medial locations;

- c. The greater representation of interpersonal elements in grouped conclusion locations than in grouped introduction and paragraph locations is approaching significance.

5.6.5 Statistical findings for combined grammatical and metafunctional results

As discussed in chapter 4, section 4.6.4.2, extensive statistical analysis has not been undertaken on the combined grammatical and metafunctional results. This is because the significance of the broader metafunctional analyses shows that the metafunctional characteristics within sentence initial position are not independent of the location of the sentence. If we know that the metafunctional characteristics of a sentence are influenced by where it is located in an essay, then it is useful to know what grammatical structures are used to fulfil those metafunctions. This implies that the grammatical / metafunctional descriptive detail of the combined section is worthwhile examining.

Nevertheless, although the descriptive detail of the combined analysis is interesting and informative in itself, two statistical tests were administered to the combined grammatical and metafunctional results, as examples of the level of detail that may be made available by deeper investigation and because the descriptive data revealed clear trends. The tests were administered on the samples of the three paragraph locations, which had larger numbers than the introduction and conclusion location samples.

The one-way Chi Squared test was used to compare sentences in paragraph initial location to sentences within grouped paragraph medial and terminal locations with regard to the use of the receptive voice equative structure as a textual element. The trend in the results, evident in Figure 5.20, is that the identifying equative in receptive voice form (the “that = this” structure) is used to a greater extent in paragraph initial location than in paragraph medial and terminal locations. Since the pattern was the same for timed and untimed writing the samples were simply added together for this test. The test result was $\chi^2 = 10.49$, where the critical value of χ^2 for degrees of freedom = 1, one-tailed, at $\alpha = 0.025$ is 5.02. Since $10.49 > 5.02$, ($p = 0.0012$), the test indicated that the contribution of the identifying equative structure in receptive voice as a textual element in paragraph initial location was

greater than could be expected by chance, considering the frequency of that structure across all paragraph locations.

Similarly, when it came to paragraph terminal location, nominal groups containing textual constituents seemed to be represented more strongly than in paragraph initial and medial locations. Once again, the pattern was the same across both timed and untimed samples and the two were added together. (See Figure 5.20 again.) The one-way Chi-squared test produced the result $\chi^2 = 4.23$, where the critical value of χ^2 for $df = 1$, one-tailed, at $\alpha = 0.05$ is 3.84. Since $4.23 > 3.84$, ($p = 0.04$), the test indicated that textual constituents within the nominal group made a greater contribution as textual elements in sentences in paragraph terminal location than could be expected by chance, considering the frequency of these elements across all paragraph locations.

The fact that the contribution of a specific grammatical structure in a specific metafunctional role in a specific location is significantly greater than it may be in other locations, suggests that skilled writing does not necessarily vary so greatly from writer to writer that the combination of grammatical and metafunctional characteristics can be considered random. In fact, skilled academic writing may well be able to be described in considerable linguistic detail that goes beyond the scope of this study and this is a possible direction for future research.

5.6.6 Concluding statement on the statistical analysis of results

Since summaries have been given under subsections, they will not be repeated here. Suffice then to answer the two research questions posed at the start of this section. The answer to question 4, clearly, is affirmative. There are some significant outcomes in the results of the analysis and these have already been described above. They relate to aspects of both grammatical and metafunctional findings. This means that question 5 may be addressed here briefly: the findings of this study which are significant, as detailed above, could be used to increase teachers' knowledge of the range of grammatical structures available as resources in sentence initial position and the fact that in untimed writing, the marked structures are used to a significantly greater extent must mean that these are worth teaching

to students who have not naturally acquired them. In terms of the metafunctional analysis of sentence initial elements, awareness of the significant differentiation in the extent of topical, textual and interpersonal elements across locations, and the predominance of certain metafunctions in specific grouped locations, could increase teachers' understanding of the orienting role of these elements. Especially notable is the fact that although textual elements are obviously essential with regard to organising text, when all elements within sentence initial position are considered, the interpersonal metafunction is equally represented. The potential use of these findings is elucidated more fully in the Discussion of Results, chapter 6.

5.7 Conclusion to Results

At this stage it is necessary to outline the relationship between the results of the analyses that have been undertaken and the argument of the thesis: “Unilateral conversations: the role of marked sentence initial elements in skilled senior secondary academic writing”. The intention of this grammatical and metafunctional investigation was to investigate how skilled writers (those potentially achieving an “Excellent” result on NCEA, Level 3, or an “A” grade on CIE, A-level in subject English) organise their writing through the initial elements of their sentences, the orienting part, defined in this study as all elements preceding the main verb of the main clause (as well as such structures as projecting clauses, Theme predication and thematicised comment). Detailed analyses of the grammatical characteristics of initial elements and the components of initial nominal groups were undertaken. Next, a categorisation of the initial elements in terms of their metafunctional type was completed. Thereafter, these two analyses were combined to ascertain to what extent the various grammatical structures contributed to the metafunctional types. Finally, where frequencies allowed for it and when it added to the weight of the thesis, statistical analyses were administered to determine whether there were trends of significance.

This exploration, besides rendering valuable descriptive insights in itself, was necessary to validate the first concept in the title of the thesis, “Unilateral conversations”, which is intended to suggest that skilled writers actually arrange their writing as a conversation, controlled by themselves but representing the reader as their interlocutor. The statistical analyses were undertaken to confirm that this is the case: there were no fewer interpersonal elements within the sentence initial position than there were textual. This would confirm Thompson’s (2005, p. 787) suggestion that there is a much more central role for the interpersonal metafunction in academic writing than has been recognised and would underpin Hyland’s view that linguistic literature may “show how various linguistic features contribute to this relationship [between a writer and his/her reader] as writers shape their texts to the expectations of their audiences ...” (2001, p.549). The details uncovered may even help towards making “characterising the path” of argument (Kaufer and Geisler, 1991, p. 118) less covert.

With this linguistic background in mind, it is reasonable now to return to the educational setting towards which this study is directed and apply the research results to the given context to discover what insights the concept of a “unilateral conversation” within academic writing might offer the teacher and what practical measures may be of value in teaching such a concept.

¹ The inferential statistical testing has been, somewhat unusually, allocated to a section at the end of the chapter for the reasons first laid out in the Methodology chapter: the nature of this research is largely descriptive and broad testing for significance was undertaken only to reveal the value of the descriptive results rather than for every analytical detail investigated. The parallel application of tests to both grammatical and metafunctional results is clearer when they are presented in tandem and their usefulness with regard to pedagogy can be signalled more effectively in the final stage of this chapter before moving directly to the Discussion chapter where this pedagogical application is more fully explored.

² As a reminder, the nine locations are: Introduction: initial, medial, terminal; Paragraph (sentences in the body of the essay, not the introduction or conclusion): initial, medial, terminal; Conclusion: initial, medial, terminal. They are abbreviated in the same way as stated in Chapter 4, for example ii = introduction initial, pm = paragraph medial and ‘t’ stands for ‘timed’ and ‘u’ for ‘untimed’ where these are abbreviated.

³ Research question 1 actually includes the grammatical and metafunctional differences between the timed and untimed writing samples but since this is the grammatical section of the results, only the grammatical differences are dealt with here and the metafunctional differences are dealt with in the next section (5.3).

⁴ See section 5.2.2, “Background to presentation of grammatical findings”, immediately below 5.2.1, for a reminder of the difference between first element and all initial elements.

⁵ *in the end* potentially has as its scope, both of the initial subordinate clauses, (if not the whole sentence); hence, it is categorised as a minor Adjunct whereas *to a degree* and *ironically* are clearly limited in scope to the subordinate clauses which they precede and, thus, these two are classified as subjuncts.

⁶ Analysis here is extended to the nominal group of the subordinate clause following the thematicised comment clause since the latter does not carry the main informational load of the sentence. For fuller rationale for this, see Chapter 4, Section 4.3.

⁷ Square brackets indicate a grammatical amendment in quotes from the sample; in this case *whom* has been amended to *who*.

⁸ This nominal group would be included in the heavy nominal group category.

⁹ Simple or “other nominal groups” which are not part of a heavy nominal group (with an embedded clause), projecting clause or thematicised comment have been excluded as further analysis is not focused on these but on the more complex structures mentioned.

¹⁰ The size is only relative within the figure, not across the three bubble graph figures. Percentages varied so greatly that the structures represented most (Adjuncts and heavy nominal groups) are grouped together and those with similar and smaller percentages are in different figures.

¹¹ The elements 9 through 13 are all nominalisations. The “nominalisation” category excludes the other types and was intended to identify all the unusual nominal formulations such as the one illustrated.

¹² For example: *If the audience wanted to see a war movie, they can anticipate what could happen.* (113 imu)

¹³ In this section, a topical element refers to one that has an ideational metafunction but is not the Subject of the main clause – that is – it supplies additional ideational material.

¹⁴ Please note that grey lines represent untimed results and black lines, the timed results. For the first element results (dashed lines), the labels appear slightly misleading since the lines cross directly after introduction initial.

¹⁵ It is important to remember that only the grammatical groups with large enough numbers could be tested using the Chi Squared test for independence. This means that the descriptive grammatical findings may well still be worth examining, especially when they showed consistency across both samples, timed and untimed, as was frequently the case. See subsection summaries 5.2.3.1, 5.2.4.1, 5.2.5.1, 5.2.6.1 and 5.2.7.1.

¹⁶ This figure is equivalent to $p = 0.00000015$.

¹⁷ This figure is equivalent to $p = 0.000000003$.

Chapter 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction to Discussion of Results

6.2 Application of the Linguistic Results to the Educational Context

6.3 Theoretical Relevance of the Results

6.4 Conclusion to Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction to Discussion of Results

Part I of the Literature Review (chapter 2) traced an historical record of instruction in academic writing at secondary level in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, including current national curricula objectives, examination requirements, descriptors and reports on recent examinations at final year secondary level. Some past and present efforts to improve the teaching of academic writing in all those countries, plus some from the US, were reviewed. The chapter concluded by contextualising this project with an outline of current practices in teaching academic writing within subject English at secondary level in New Zealand and the resources available to teachers and students. Thereafter, in Literature Review Part II (chapter 3), details on relevant aspects of the linguistic theory of SFG, and studies applying the concepts generated by it, to academic writing, were presented. Chapter 4 described a methodology based on the SFG concepts to be applied to the data collected for this study, which consisted of essays in English Literature written by Year 13 students and rated as “Excellent” or “A” - grade by teachers. Results, in chapter 5, displayed the findings of that application. This chapter attempts to bring together all of the above.

Although it may be unusual, the applied aspect of the discussion will be undertaken before the theoretical relevance is considered. The reasons for this are that the results documented in chapter 5 are complex and detailed and it would seem, therefore, preferable to show how they may be applied in a teaching context directly following their presentation and before returning to broader theoretical issues. Also, this research is largely directed towards using the linguistic findings to respond to research question 5 which has only received fleeting mention in previous chapters:

How may this study be used to improve the linguistic resources available for instruction in senior secondary academic writing?

This means that section 6.2, below, “Application of the linguistic research results to the educational context” forms the greater part of the discussion. But, thereafter, section 6.3 considers the theoretical relevance of this study and how it contributes to research into academic writing using SFG. This two part discussion effectively clarifies the title of the thesis: “Unilateral conversations: the role of marked sentence initial elements in skilled senior secondary academic writing”.

6.2 Application of the linguistic research results to the educational context

Literature Review Part I (chapter 2) reviewed research documenting the reluctance and difficulty many students are currently experiencing with academic writing, in New Zealand, Australia, the UK and the US (Christie & Dreyfus, 2007; Hawthorne, 2002; Limbrick & Ladbrook, 2003; Meyer, 2008a; Minos, 2007; Myhill, 2001a; Smagorinski, Augustine & O'Donnell-Allen, 2007; Woods & Homer, 2005). These papers either suggest or directly state that this difficulty applies equally to students of all socio-economic backgrounds, including those whom teachers expect to have less trouble with this skill. The difficulty then is widespread in the sense that it has been recognised in many countries and in students from a variety of backgrounds.

As a reminder to the reader, the challenges and difficulties associated with academic writing at senior secondary level, as defined in the examination boards' objectives and descriptors and the examiners' reports, from the UK, parts of Australia and New Zealand, given in detail in chapter 2, are outlined here in three lists. List A condenses the key writing objectives at senior secondary level to six common factors; List B details the examiners' most frequent criticisms of student writing from examination reports and List C comprises the top five difficulties mentioned by New Zealand teachers of English at Year 13 level (from interviews conducted by the researcher). What is to be noted is the overlapping in these lists, in three general areas, which relate to the linguistic metafunctions of SFG: organisational factors (textual metafunction), quality and depth of thinking (ideational metafunction, translating to topical elements) and what may be called a "personal presence" factor (interpersonal metafunction).

6.2.1 Challenges and difficulties identified in academic writing

The list of six factors, below, captures the essence of the writing objectives and descriptors in the current national curricula of the UK, New Zealand, parts of Australia (NSW, Victoria and Western Australia) and CIE. (See Section 2.2.4 of chapter 2 and Appendix D for an account of how this summary was developed from curricular and examination board documents):

List A:

1. Fluency, organisation and accuracy at the level of grammar, sentences and whole text
2. Logical, consistent and controlled reasoning emerging through writing
3. Sustained complexity of thought informing insightful/perceptive writing
4. Persuasion through evidence and linguistic devices
5. Flexibility and breadth of style to fulfil a variety of writing situations/conditions/audiences
6. Flair, creativity and originality in expression

In counterpoint, below is a list of the most common criticisms examiners from the same examination boards have made in their reports on student writers sitting their examinations (also re-iterated from chapter 2, section 2.2.5).

List B:

Four issues emerged in all of the reports considered. These were that some candidates:

1. had difficulty moving beyond simple story re-telling, description of plot or listing of examples from texts
2. presented “inelegantly expressed” ideas, “variable language control”, “a quality of expression that compromised the ability to communicate complex ideas”, even in high-scoring essays, expression was “not without its problems”
3. failed to engage with the question or wording of the topic, failed to relate details to the question or lost sight of the main thrust
4. lacked structural direction in their writing, produced randomly structured writing, could not link ideas to form patterns and “should be aware of the importance of developing a coherently structured piece of prose”

Other frequently mentioned problems were:

5. students were “not confident with unpractised topics” and therefore “rehashed answers to the previous year’s questions” or “referred to previous years’ topics” to suit a “rote learned” response or wrote about what they wanted the topic to be.
6. candidates produced responses and language that were too “generic” or “over-generalised” with superficial understanding, simplistic observations and a lack of evidence of thought processing and development of ideas.
7. students did not demonstrate the “personal engagement” and “consistent voice” sought by examiners.
8. some candidates had difficulty with formal writing that used analysis and evaluation in building and sustaining an argument.

To these lists it may be useful to add the five areas that New Zealand teachers identified as needing attention in a series of interviews undertaken by the researcher in 2006 and 2007 (Meyer, 2008a, pp. 50 - 51; see also chapter 2, section 2.2.1):

List C:

1. Creating and sustaining a clearly structured argument
2. “Weaving in” specific detail as background information or justification
3. Extrapolation from quotes as opposed to “quote dumping”
4. Stylistic issues: recommended vocabulary and language structures and qualities of essay models “awkwardly” included in / translated into students’ essays; writing not “dense” enough
5. Balancing objectivity with personal response

The obvious overlap in these lists shows that teachers are perfectly aware of what the writing objectives and requirements are but are not always successful in finding ways of helping some students to meet them. The point of this exercise is to show that there is a place for the findings of this research in academic writing pedagogy in secondary education in New Zealand and possibly elsewhere. (Lists A, B and C will be referred to later in this discussion.)

6.2.2 The potential role of selected SFG concepts in addressing the writing difficulties

It is reasonable to ask why functional grammar would have any role to play in addressing this writing problem. There is precedent for this as SFG and its associated concepts have been and are being used in connection with teaching secondary academic writing (Achugar, Schleppegrell & Oteíza, 2007; Christie, 2004; Christie & Dreyfus, 2007; Christie & Macken-Horarik, 2007; Martin, 2007; McCarthy, 1991; Schleppegrell, 2004). However, the approach taken differs in this research project. So far, skilled academic writing as identified by teachers at senior secondary level in subject English has been investigated using selected aspects of SFG, in particular, specific grammatical and metafunctional elements in sentence initial position, and their interface. The role of these elements in such writing may then be brought to light and in the following discussion the intention is to consider how the findings may be applied to the teaching context. In this way, it is hoped that the application of selected SFG concepts to teaching academic writing will be soundly underpinned by the research findings.

Teaching traditional grammar in isolation, although it may have a valuable role in developing understanding of the complexities of language, is less likely to have an impact upon writing itself. Designing carefully worded descriptors of what merit-worthy writing is like, which is what national curricula developers and examination boards have done over the last few decades, as presented in chapter 2, also, in itself, does not seem to have helped less able students to comply with those descriptors. This is apparent from the criticisms the examiners and teachers make of students' writing as detailed in Lists B and C, above, as well as the difficulties the literature in chapter 2 presents.

What functional grammar can offer is a marrying of the two in that it takes account of both the grammatical form and the metafunctions of language. It is the metafunctions that align more obviously with the qualitative writing descriptors that students are given, but, it is the grammatical structures that perform the metafunctions. Teachers could impart to their students a concept of academic writing as producing a text that needs to perform certain metafunctions: it needs to show in-depth knowledge of some content or topic (the ideational metafunction, expressed in topical elements that are not the same as the grammatical Subject). It needs to be clearly organised into a discussion or argument (the textual metafunction) and it needs to persuade the reader of its value or relevance (the interpersonal metafunction). Teachers can also offer students some linguistic resources to perform those metafunctions by way of the grammatical structures identified by SFG. And, most helpful of all, especially for those students who struggle with written argument at discursual level, they may even be able to suggest to students particular locations in their writing where particular types of elements should be represented to a greater or lesser extent.

In connection with discourse markers that perform the textual metafunction Sloan (2002) states, "*It is very rare to find these very important aspects of texts being taught in schools. Yet an understanding of them can bring significant changes to reading and writing improvement*" (p. 35, italics in original). He then says, "they are relatively easy to teach, although not widely done, and once internalised bring immediate improvement to a writer's work" (p. 36). It is clear from Meyer's 2008a publication that Sloan's claim that discourse markers are not widely taught (published in 2002) is no longer valid. However, there are other linguistic features, serving metafunctions other than the textual, that are still not

widely taught and teaching them may well also be easy and also bring rapid and significant improvement to students' writing. Topical and interpersonal elements, included in this research, may have been somewhat neglected thus far in the teaching of academic writing, certainly in New Zealand and certainly at this level and possibly beyond.¹

Topical elements clearly have a role in addressing some of the most damaging criticisms of student writing in the lists above with regard to complexity of thought and expression (see discussion in section 6.2.3.1). And, the volume and types of interpersonal elements identified within sentence initial position in this research project perhaps indicates that they do need more attention in academic writing pedagogy. Recall that the results of this research showed that within sentence initial position (the reader-directional part of the sentence) there was no significant difference in the number of textual and interpersonal elements (chapter 5, section 5.6.4: on the Mann-Whitney U test, $U_2 = 35$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21).

Section 6.2.3, below, undertakes a systematic matching of the findings of this research with examination requirements (List A) and criticisms and problems associated with student academic writing (Lists B and C). Thus, the findings of research questions 1 – 4, are put to work in answer to research question 5: How may this study be used to improve the linguistic resources available for instruction in academic writing?

6.2.3 The interface of academic writing requirements (challenges and difficulties) and the linguistic findings of this research project

In section 6.2.3.1, below, reference is made to key grammatical and metafunctional results of the analysis of first and all sentence initial elements (chapter 5, sections 5.2.3.1, 5.2.4.1 and sections 5.3.2.1, 5.3.3.1, respectively) but particular results highlighted throughout chapter 5 as worth pursuing in this discussion for their potential instructional value and especially those in the combined grammatical / metafunctional section (chapter 5, section 5.4) are discussed in greater depth. Thereafter, section 6.2.3.2 presents some insights from the receptive voice, equative structure analyses (chapter 5, sections 5.2.5 and 5.2.6) and “Other sentence type” analysis (chapter 5, section 5.4) and in section 6.2.3.3 insights from

the nominal group constituent analysis are discussed (chapter 5.2.7). This is undertaken in light of the key requirements and challenges in academic writing at senior secondary level. To facilitate this, reference will be made to Lists A, B and C, above, in section 6.2.1. List A presented six factors that contribute to skilled academic writing in subject English (the summary of examination boards' requirements lists); List B contained eight criticisms of students' writing commonly mentioned in examiners' reports from the same examination boards; and List C mentioned five problematic areas of secondary academic writing in subject English stated by New Zealand teachers in interviews conducted by the researcher.

6.2.3.1 Application of findings related to grammatical and metafunctional results and combined grammatical / metafunctional results

To start, it needs to be pointed out that untimed essays showed a significantly larger number of grammatically marked elements in initial position than timed essays (chapter 5, sections 5.2.3 and 5.6.2). This suggested that without the time constraint, skilled student writers draw on more sophisticated sentence constructions than when they are under time pressure. (This is probably inevitable and it would only be more practice under time pressure that may address this matter for such students.) More importantly, though, for students who have not acquired the grammatically marked structures, it is impossible to use them at all. Christie (2002b & 2008) points out that many students do not acquire adequate levels of academic literacy in primary years to participate successfully at secondary level. The first step then, is to examine lower achieving students' writing and identify which of the structures are conspicuous by their absence. This may be different for each student and is one way of giving personalised feedback to a student, but no harm would be done by teaching the marked structures in a whole class context and getting students to examine their own writing as part of the process of learning to identify them. Those structures are: Adjuncts (of all varieties), the initially placed subordinate clause, Theme predication and the initially placed direct object or complement. (Naturally, thematicised comment, projection and receptive voice equatives may also be taught as thematic resources even though they are not necessarily "marked" structures.)

In addition, the concept of linguistic metafunctions as they relate to the examination boards' requirements and criticisms, and the potential of the grammatical structures, mentioned above, to perform the metafunctions, could be pointed out to students, as well

as, their most common locations in the top rated writing. Testing of the metafunctional results showed that location was not independent of metafunction (chapter 5, section 5.6.4: $\chi^2 = 73.379$, $p = 3.00\text{E-}09$ where the critical value of χ^2 at $\alpha = 0.001$, is 39.25), and some grammatical structures and metafunctions were more strongly represented in some grouped locations (see several tests, chapter 5, sections 5.6.3 and 5.6.4). Thus, these findings may be instrumental in addressing the challenges students face in improving their academic writing to a standard that achieves a higher grade in their examinations.

Most students know what their writing lacks in a qualitative sense from descriptive feedback from teachers. Drawing on the lists referred to above, students are frequently told that their writing needs “organisation”, “logical, consistent and controlled reasoning” (List A, no. 1 and no. 2), “structural direction ... [as they] could not link ideas to form patterns”, and that they “Had difficulty sustaining an argument” (List B no. 4 and no. 8), and, their writing lacked “a clearly structured argument” (List C no. 1). But they are not necessarily given the linguistic means to achieve these textual effects or told whereabouts in their essay they are most prominently required.

Results from this study showed that the three terminal locations (conclusion, paragraph and introduction) held most textual elements per 100 sentences (see Table 5.14 and Figures 17 and 5.18, chapter 5). The coverage of teaching resources in New Zealand (chapter 2, section 2.2.7) showed that the initial Adjunct with textual metafunction has been introduced to perform the function but is perhaps being overworked in this role and other linguistic devices could be suggested, such as textual elements of the nominal group.

Recall that the statistics showed that in skilled, untimed writing, the use of textual elements in the nominal group was greater than could be attributed to chance in paragraph terminal location (chapter 5, section 5.6.4: $\chi^2 = 4.23$, $p = 0.04$, where the critical value of χ^2 at $\alpha = 0.05$ is 3.84). Teaching this would necessarily involve teaching students how to construct a nominal group with textual elements in it and possibly teaching the receptive voice equative structure, which the results showed also featured prominently in this textual metafunctional role (see Figure 5.20, chapter 5), especially in paragraph initial location (where its use was significantly greater than could be expected by chance in comparison to

paragraph medial and terminal locations, see chapter 5, section 5.6.4: $\chi^2 = 10.49$, $p = 0.0012$ where the critical value of χ^2 at $\alpha = 0.025$ is 5.02). Some contained explicitly textual elements such as “Another” in the first example but others operated by implying comparison, such as the second example (which also includes an interpersonal element):

Another role of Septimus is to show the social conventions of the time and ...
(pit 22)

The most important similarities, however, are those between the journeys that the individual characters take. (pit 94)

Use of discoursal ‘This’ (also a nominal group with a discoursal textual metafunction, see definition chapter 5, Table 5.6) was highest in conclusion terminal location and also featured in paragraph terminal location (see ‘pn’, Table 5.7, chapter 5). Below it is used to reference the entire argument of the essay it concludes:

This is evidence to show the clash of opposites in use, and I fully agree ... (ctu 84)

Textual elements in subordinate clauses were employed to a limited extent. The largest percentage was in the pivotal introduction terminal location in the untimed condition (see lower graph in Figure 5.20, chapter 5) but others were evident in introduction and paragraph locations in both time conditions, but not conclusion locations.

The above discussion links specific grammatical structures performing the textual metafunction to specific locations but in terms of grouped locations, terminals held more textual elements than initials or medials. This was true whether first element only was considered or all initial elements and, for both time conditions (chapter 5, Table 5.14). Statistical tests showed that there were, in fact, significantly more textual elements in terminal locations (chapter 5, section 5.6.4: on Mann-Whitney U test, $U_1 = 0$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2). Figure 5.18, showed more specifically that in the top three locations for textual elements, the number of textual elements increases from introduction terminal, to paragraph terminal and the most are in conclusion terminal. Actually, the latter is true even when only first element is considered and for both time conditions. Interesting, when we consider that paragraph initial is often imagined to be the key place for textual signalling. In fact, paragraph initial was only fourth

highest location for this function, for both time conditions when all elements were considered, and for first element in the untimed condition. (It did not feature in the top four at all for first element, timed). This is an especially key point because the NCEA Level 3 Assessment Report for English, 2008, very clearly distinguished writers who achieved the standard “with excellence” from those who did not achieve the standard by saying that the former “wrote superbly structured essays” (p. 5) while the latter “lacked the ability to structure an essay” (p. 3) (NZQA, 2009).

Imparting to students this knowledge regarding textual organisation as a metafunction and how and where it may be effectively achieved would expand their grammatical and functional knowledge of language and increase their choices for “organisation” (List A) and “structural direction” (List B) of their writing. Then, pursuing the claims of Thompson and Zhou (2000) and Thompson (2005), it could be pointed out to students that interpersonal elements can also control the organisation of their writing by “evaluative coherence” (Thompson and Zhou, 2000, p. 123). Arranging ideas in order of significance or through evaluative comparison, for example, may involve teaching them to use dual metafunction structures. Table 5.16 (chapter 5) showed that introduction initial, paragraph terminal and conclusion initial and conclusion terminal locations were most commonly used for dual metafunction initial elements. These are all boundary locations, where the writer is directing the reader’s attention as to the path of the argument, whether it is initiating one, pursuing further, changing direction or closing off. How to go about creating a dual metafunction element could be taught, whether by Adjunct, or nominal group (as in the examples below), subordinate clause or another structure.

Sentences 1 and 2, below, are consecutive. The initial Adjunct in sentence 2, *Indeed* seems like a modal one but its conjunctive influence is clear as it tells the reader to expect strong confirmatory substantiation for the preceding sentence. Without it, the coherence between sentences 1 and 2 would be diminished. Thus, it functions in textual and interpersonal metafunctional roles.²

- (1) *True humane justice cannot be administered and the central characters are vulnerable to despair.* (cmt 43)
- (2) *Indeed, the lasting image of this play is that at the end, where it alludes to the beginning with a division of the kingdom.* (cmt 44)

- (3) *This well constructed subtlety is perhaps more effective than the explicit and violent imagery of The Womb, for the discerning reader at least.* (ptt 185)

In the third example, the writer has discussed the elements of the *subtlety* in the preceding paragraph and has then made it a single referential item, highlighted by calling it *this...subtlety* but includes an interpersonal element, which is an evaluation of it, *well constructed*. This closes the paragraph with a single grammatical element that succinctly paraphrases what the writer has been arguing in one element and allows him/her to set up a comparison with the other text explored previously in the essay: *This well constructed subtlety* as opposed to *the explicit and violent imagery of The Womb*. Thus, the dual textual/interpersonal metafunctions in the sentence initial nominal group facilitate a very neat tying up of the discussion point and the writer's opinion, combined.

On the note of interpersonal elements and again referring to the above lists of examination requirements and problematic features, students are frequently told that "personal engagement" is required (List B, no. 7) but "balancing objectivity with personal response" is essential (List C, no. 5). Now a common plea from students to teachers is how to achieve the personalised quality without using the first person pronouns "I" or "me" (Meyer, 2008a). These are no longer censured as harshly as they may have been in the past but "One group of teachers also suggested that the 'I' 'does not lend itself to sophisticated argument'" (Meyer, 2008a, p. 53). In other words, it may be acceptable but it is often still read as indicative of slightly less skilled writing. This research revealed that the number of first person singular pronouns used by the skilled writers was quite limited, ranging across locations from zero to 7.9 % at maximum (see chapter 5, section 5.5, "Other sentence types", section 5.5.2 and section 5.5.3, Table 5.18 and Figure 5.22).

Quite interestingly, use of "I" or "me" was more extensive in the untimed condition. This perhaps suggests that skilled student writers are using it more deliberately because they have been told that it is acceptable but that when writing under time pressure, they unconsciously avoid it. It may be that when writing assignment pieces, they are writing for teachers known to them and feel more relaxed about using first personal singular but when writing for an examination, they are thinking of an unknown examiner and are not sure of the reception "I" or "me" may receive. It could just be that there is a greater number of

interpersonal elements overall in the untimed condition and the first person singular pronoun is one of the options. Whatever the cause, it still does not feature strongly and alternatives would be of benefit to students.

What alternatives are there? Within the essays analysed for this project, the use of the plural “We” and “us” far exceeded the singular personal pronoun. It ranged between 4.2% and 16.7% across locations, which is just more than double the singular count (see Table 5.18 and Figure 22, chapter 5). The more subtle, inclusive and, therefore, more discreetly persuasive effect of “We can see that” or “We realise that” and “This suggests to us”, rather than “I think that” or “This shows me that” is not lost on skilled writers. The use of first person plural was clearly more frequent in conclusion locations than elsewhere, although introduction locations also featured a number of them. Paragraph locations had somewhat fewer. All of this information could be useful to student writers who are not achieving top grades and being told that their writing either lacks a personal element or their personal presence is too blatantly direct as in the “balancing objectivity with personal response” problem listed above (see no. 5, List C).

Another aspect of the interpersonal metafunction is the required skill of being persuasive: “Persuasion through evidence and linguistic devices” (List A, no. 4). The structures involved are many and varied. Figure 5.21 (chapter 5) showed that for both time conditions, seven structures contributed to the representation of the interpersonal metafunction. Particularly strong in all conclusion locations (initial, medial and terminal) for both time conditions (and also in introduction locations, in the timed condition) was the interpersonal element within the nominal group. These most commonly would be premodifying elements, adjectives with intensifiers or comparative elements included, but may involve some post-modifying elements such as defining, *One of these important human truths is ...* (pit 255) or elaborating *The main victims whom we are led to pity ...* (iit 9). Once more, students may have to be taught to generate these structures but they would help to create the “dense” writing of which teachers commented that they do not see enough (see List C, no. 4, List B, no.2) and they would impart some contextually relevant grammatical knowledge at the same time.

The thematicised comment may also be considered a “linguistic device” for persuasion (see

List A, no.4). In untimed writing, statistical testing showed that this was used significantly more commonly in boundary locations than elsewhere (chapter 5, section 5.6.3, on the Mann-Whitney U test: $U_2 = 1.2$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2). Table 5.2(a), Figure 5.7 and Figure 5.21 (chapter 5) showed that conclusion initial was its most prominent location in untimed writing (and introduction terminal in the timed condition). This sentence:

It is true that the piano and its music give Szpilman hope ... (ptu 375)

is both more subtle and sophisticated than its hypothetical agnate: “I think that the piano and its music give Szpilman hope ...”. Thematicised comment is a particularly easy device to teach and the range of adjectives that may be inserted is enormous, giving students a wide choice as to precisely the message they want to convey by its use. As with all devices, however, it should not be overused. Teachers interviewed for the Meyer (2008a) report complained that some language structures their students are given by writing aids or models are included awkwardly (see List C, no. 4); hence it would be important to mention the fact that thematicised comment use is rare, relative to nominal groups or Adjuncts in initial position.

More commonly used as an interpersonal element than thematicised comment, was the projecting clause. This was shown in Figure 5.21 (chapter 5), which also indicated that the structure was distributed fairly evenly across all locations apart from paragraph initial, which showed fewer than all other locations (untimed sample). As in Charles’ study of “reporting clauses” (2006), presented in chapter 3, section 3.2.5, the projecting clause appeared in a variety of forms. They were used for attribution with the author of a text, a critic or a character in a literary text as Subject (see third example, below); they were used for direct self-averral, with ‘I’ or ‘We’ as Subject (or indirectly, see second example below, *the audience ...*) and for hidden averral, where the projecting Subject was not a person as such but had human connection and the projecting verb was a verb of speech (see first example, below, *Jungian theory expresses ...*).

Charles (2006) explored the reporting (or projecting) clause as a dialogical element enabling the writer to take a stance towards the material presented because it may be manipulated to carry a variety of interpersonal inferences, either strengthening or weakening the truth-value of the projected clause, as the following examples from the

sample show:

Jungian theory expresses that ... (pit 146)

This convinces the reader by giving the opinion in the complement clause the weight of external authority.

... the audience will see how these inescapable human truths permeate even modern society today. (itt 57)

The second example more subtly persuades the reader to *see* the same thing by association with the audience.

The messenger says Octavia 'creeps' and that she shows 'a body rather than a life'.
(pmu 344)

Here the reader is invited to sympathise with Octavia and question the messenger's opinion because of his low status (and in this case, loyalty to his mistress who despises Octavia); thus, in this last example, the opposite effect is achieved and the truth-value of the projected clause is weakened rather than strengthened. Training in this may give students greater insight into the interface between the grammatical and functional facets of language.

Depending on their type, subordinate clauses also contributed to the interpersonal metafunction. The types identified were temporal, concessive, reason, conditional, comparative and dismissive (chapter 4, section 4.6.1.5). Three of these, concessive, conditional and dismissive were considered to have an interpersonal role. In the untimed results, most were located in introduction terminal location but apart from introduction initial and conclusion terminal, they were represented to a small extent in all other locations (see Figure 5.21, chapter 5). Thus, it may be suggested to students that in the pivotal terminal sentence of their introduction, they could impart their opinion on the topic by recognising the limited weight of a counter argument or adding a condition to their main argument or dismissing an alternative explanation to the one they are planning to argue in the remainder of the piece of writing. This would help with “controlled reasoning” (List A, no. 2), “evaluation in building and sustaining an argument” (List B, no. 8) and “creating and sustaining a clearly structured argument” (List C, no.1).

The role of the Adjunct as textual element is well known and has made its way into secondary academic writing pedagogy already but its alternate role as interpersonal element

perhaps needs emphasising. In the sample, its volume of use was similar to that of the projecting clause (see Figure 5.21, chapter 5). In the untimed sample it was most common in introduction initial and terminal and conclusion initial locations. Some variations on its use were:

Surely, then, Othello's true self has been reversed by his placement in Cyprus.
(cit 19)

It certainly appears true that Shakespeare's Othello is a play where ... (iit 21)

In an ironic turn, Offred is not the only person with this need ... (pit 258)

Occasionally, the Theme predication structure, usually highlighting the topic, also operated as an interpersonal element merely by virtue of the elements it contained. Two instances were given in the commentary on Figure 5.21, chapter 5. A third was:

Finally, it is the corruption of power and authority which we see in the play, and also evident in real life, which allows such events to play out. (pit 240)

The point of the Theme predication is the placement of the nominal group that would usually be Subject, in the predicate position of an initial main clause, which increases its impact and when its metafunction is also interpersonal in nature, this too is further stressed, such that the above sentence makes a stronger impression than its hypothetical agnate would: “The corruption of power and authority which we see in the play ... allows such events to play out.”

Another rare but very effective device in the interpersonal role is the attributive equative structure in receptive voice. Examples from the sample are:

Especially paramount is time and the social and historical context. (imu 142)

Central to the plot is the pharmaceutical tests on Kenyans with those dying as a result having their very record of existence being denied. (pit 134)

As already mentioned in chapter 5, Thompson (2004, p. 97) suggests that although “in certain contexts, the Attributive may come first, ... this typically sounds slightly unusual or mannered”. Of course, he is correct and to use it frequently would be decidedly idiosyncratic. There were only three instances of this structure (in the receptive voice) in the sample but they stand out as striking and as such, meet not only the requirement of a linguistic device for persuasion but also the requirements of “breadth of style” and “Flair,

creativity and originality in expression” (List A, no. 5. 6), and perhaps help to develop more elegant, controlled expression (List B, no. 2).

It would be important to stress the fact that any linguistic device should be used with discretion and naturally students’ early attempts to include them may seem awkward (List C, no. 4) but practice would bring fluency. The NCEA Level 3 Assessment Report for English, 2008 states that “candidates who achieved with Excellence ... wrote with a commanding, fluent and eloquent style” (p. 3) and “introduced a personal response that commanded attention.” (p. 5) (NZQA, 2009). Sophisticated structures with high impact, carefully chosen and placed, surely contribute to this impression of eloquence and commanding style.

Specific locations have been mentioned in connection with particular structures entailing the interpersonal metafunction, above, but overall, the metafunctional analysis showed that, in terms of grouped locations, conclusions had the largest number of interpersonal elements per 100 sentences and, in fact, that was true for timed and untimed writing (chapter 5, Table 5.13, Figure 5.16). However, since there were a large number of interpersonal elements in introduction locations also, this result was only approaching significance when compared to introduction and paragraph locations (see chapter 5, section 5.6.4: on the Mann-Whitney U test, $U_1 = 3$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2). What is clear from Table 5.13 and Figure 5.16 is that in paragraph locations as a group the interpersonal metafunction featured less than in introduction and conclusion locations. This is especially relevant since the NCEA Level 3 English Assessment Report, 2008 (p.2) stated that “candidates invariably needed to make better use of introductions and conclusions in addressing and reflecting on the question” (NZQA, 2009). The interpersonal metafunction would be entailed in the skill of “reflecting on the question”.

Terminal locations were implicated only slightly more than initial in this metafunction (chapter 5, Table 5.14 and Figure 5.17) and the top two locations for interpersonal elements, introduction terminal and conclusion initial, were very closely matched with around 60 interpersonal elements per 100 sentences each (chapter 5, Table 5.12 and Figure 5.18). Since the statistical testing showed that metafunction and location were not independent (see test statistic above), these findings may be considered a helpful guide for

teachers and students to know where it is most appropriate to offer elements of personal engagement or reflection in their writing.

We have considered textual and interpersonal elements, the locations where they most frequently appear and the grammatical structures used to convey them. The third metafunction is the ideational, expressed in topical elements. This operates slightly differently as the ideational metafunction (experiential component) is the unmarked function of the sentence initial element and it is only when this is marked, that is, some ideational/experiential element different from the Subject of the main clause, precedes it, that it has been noted. This means that the writer is adding complexity by beginning with a concept that is not the main Subject, but is in some relationship with it, with the connectors in the sentence indicating what that relationship is. This may well be fulfilling the second requirement on List A, namely, “complexity of thought” and solving the second problem on List C: “weaving in specific detail as background information or justification”, as well as addressing the sixth complaint on List B, “superficial understanding, simplistic observations and lack of evidence of thought processing and development of ideas”. Certainly it means that the writer is adding definition and refinement to the main Subject, which is one of the indicators of advancing literacy (Christie, 2002a).

Figure 5.19 (chapter 5) reveals that Adjuncts were, by far, the most commonly used grammatical structure for this purpose. These, of course, would be the Adjuncts adding circumstantial information as background to the main Subject. They appeared in every location for both time conditions but the distribution was far more diverse in the untimed condition. Introduction and conclusion initial locations contained the most circumstantial Adjuncts, which suggests that these are the locations where skilled writers deem it necessary to add most topical background or development, such as in the following examples:

As an actor and playwright, Shakespeare naturally had a fascination with acting which he expressed in many of his plays and particularly in 'Hamlet'. (iit 55)

Through the power of his creative imagination he has made a transient experience pleasurable and because beauty can be equated with pleasure, it therefore becomes beautiful. (ctu 82)

Unlike Iago, she is not able to adapt to situations. (pmt 104)

By his last soliloquy, Hamlet has learnt to accept the order of the universe and the way things happen in life. (ciu 101)

The sentence initial Adjuncts here add complexity and depth by suggesting a reason, means, comparison, and temporal information (in this case, of an evaluatory nature), respectively. Thus they could be said to make a contribution to the “insightful, perceptive writing” (List A, no. 3) and the “background information” (List C, no. 2) needed. In fact, adding reasons, manner, comparisons and other circumstantial information may help develop the writing of students criticised on List B (no. 1) as not “moving beyond simple story re-telling, description of plot”.

Subordinate clauses also involved topical elements. They were used in all locations apart from introduction initial for both time conditions. In the untimed sample, introduction terminal was the location with strongest representation of subordinate clauses with a topical role (see Figure 5.19, chapter 5). Below is a good example of how two topical elements in subordinate clauses provide a depth of background information in the form of reasons for the main statement:

Therefore, because Claudius has disrupted that order, and, because in Elizabethan times, the King is the most important person, second to God, every action Claudius takes will affect the entire state of Denmark in a negative way. (pmt 295)

This sentence reflects the claim presented in chapter 3, section 3.2.8, that in contrast to terminal placement, where causal clauses are used to provide an important and previously unknown reason for an assertion, “*causal clauses occur sentence-initially because ... [they] are often used to provide a common ground for a subsequent conclusion*” (Diessel, 2005, p.463). Thus the initial placement is for functional reasons and manipulates the discoursal role of the clause.

And, a second example shows how a writer can use the initial subordinate clause to concede a counterpoint to a degree before making a claim so that the reader does not object to the latter:

However, while the play to a large extent illustrates that Rome and Egypt differ greatly, it also suggests they are inextricably interlinked as presented through the couple's relationship. (itu 96)

In this way the writer downplays the reader’s own possible “elaborative inferences” (see

Eysenck and Keane, 2005, discussed in chapter 3, section 3.2.8) in an initial concession clause, before they become entrenched, and clears the way for his/her point to hold the key position in the final clause.

This skill of manipulating the initial subordinate clause shows the writer's careful intent and perhaps fulfils the "complexity of thought informing insightful / perceptive writing" requirement (List A, no. 2). It shows sufficient "quality of expression ... to communicate complex ideas" (List B, no. 2) and avoids the criticism of being "too generic or overgeneral with superficial understanding" (List B, no. 6). And, it addresses List C, no. 2, again, interweaving "background information or justification" within the sentence.

An entirely different role of topical elements from the depth and complexity one, is the highlighting of a concept by means of different grammatical structures, namely, Theme predication and the initially placed Direct object or Complement (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 95-98 & p.73, respectively). Such elements did not appear in introduction initial location for either time condition but Theme predication structures were scattered across all other locations in both time conditions, with most in the three conclusion locations. (See chapter 5, Table 5.3, Figure 5.7 and Figure 5.19; this result was approaching significance, see chapter 5, section 5.6.3: on the Mann-Whitney U test, $U_2 = 3.5$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 3$ and $n_2 = 6$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2.) But they also featured in introduction medial (timed) and introduction terminal (untimed).

Theme predication has been discussed above with reference to its dual use (interpersonal and topical) when the displaced Subject contains elements of an interpersonal nature. In the examples below, the function is to highlight a topical element (what would have been the Subject in the first example and an Adjunct in the second) by relocating it within an initial clause:

It is fear at the very start of the play, which prompts the girls to cry out against their neighbours ... (pmt 243)

It is through J.M. Barry's total faith in his fantasy world that we come to realise the power of our imagination. (cmu 172)

Even more powerful in highlighting a topical element is the fronting of a sentence Complement, or part thereof. This is a rarely used construction (Halliday & Matthiessen,

2004) but a few instances did appear in the sample, even in the timed condition. With so few examples, it was not possible to test for significance for location but most were in boundary locations (initial and terminal sentences). (See chapter 5, Table 5.3 and Figure 5.7.) These examples demonstrate the impact of the construction:

What matters most, Gee seems to be saying, is whether we can accept these things.
(ptt 98)

Ophelia's madness in 'Hamlet' I do believe served an important function in the play to help further develop ideas. (ciu 98)

Students using either Theme predication or the fronted Complement skilfully, for emphasis, must be achieving some level of “Fluency”, “breadth of style”, “Flair, creativity and originality in expression” (List A, no. 1 and 6); they could not be accused of “variable [poor] language control” (List B, no. 2) or having “lost sight of the main thrust” (List B, no. 4), since they are deliberately selecting to use a highly emphatic construction for a specific sentence element.

There were a few projecting clauses that were considered to be marked topical elements because the projecting structure was actually a subordinate clause and the Subject of the projecting clause differed from the Subject of the main clause. (In most projecting clauses, the Subject of the main clause was also the Subject in the projecting clause; therefore, there was not any topical marking.) The example below shows how the subordinate projecting clause frames the projected clause with background associations attaching to the Subject, that add depth to the main clause:

As Roosevelt remarked, this monster, which we have created, will continue to exist until we learn to show love and appreciation for all human life. (ctu 114)

This structure did not appear in the timed sample; it was evident in medial and terminal locations in the untimed sample, but not initial locations. (See lower graph, Figure 5.21, chapter 5.)

Statistical testing revealed that there were significantly more topical elements in introduction and conclusion locations than in paragraph locations in the untimed condition (see chapter 5, section 5.6.4: on the Mann-Whitney U test, $U_2 = 2$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2). Figure 5.19 (chapter 5) showed that introduction initial and conclusion initial were especially favoured for topical elements,

with the other two conclusion locations (medial and terminal) following. This perhaps indicates that skilled writers are ensuring that they define, refine and/or highlight their topic at the start and conclusion of their writing. Again, this links to the NCEA Level 3 Assessment Report for English, 2008 (p. 2, emphasis added): “make better use of introductions and conclusions *in addressing* and reflecting on *the question*” (NZQA, 2009).

There is no doubt that both teachers and students could benefit from learning about both the concept of linguistic metafunctions and how they are achieved through different grammatical structures. Knowing the most common locations of various structures and metafunctions is an additional bonus. Teachers would thereby increase their resources for assisting their students with academic writing and students would deepen their understanding of language both grammatically and functionally in a highly motivational context: developing their writing and thereby improving their grades.

6.2.3.2 *Application of findings related to receptive voice, equative structures and “other sentence types”*

Findings with regard to the use of the receptive voice would probably be quite fascinating for teachers since this particular structure has caused consternation of late to the extent that the most popular word processing application, Microsoft Word, queries every usage of it that it is able to recognise and suggests that we revise! The main issue, of course, is that it may be used to obscure the Subject (or Agent) in a sentence but it is also regarded as causing writing to sound unnaturally formal. The teachers in this study may be surprised to know then, that writing which they have graded as “Excellent” or A-grade has just less than one fifth of its sentences in the receptive voice (see chapter 5, Table 5.4). (In fact, this is in line with the expected percentage; see Givón, 1979, p. 59.)

Results of the analysis showed that in the untimed condition, which actually had a higher percentage of receptive voice sentences, one quarter or 25% of sentences within introduction locations were in receptive voice, with the percentage declining to 17% of sentences in paragraph locations and rising to 19% in conclusion locations. The timed results revealed a similar pattern but with fewer overall (although not statistically

significantly fewer). Some of these, of course, take the form of receptive voice equative structures, which teachers (and Microsoft Word) would not recognise as receptive. Without them, writers would not be able to set up organisational terms and place them in sentence initial position so that they become textual reference items in their writing, as in the following example of consecutive paragraph initial sentences:

The most obvious example of 'good' acting in 'Hamlet' is the play 'The Mousetrap'.
(pit 259)

A secondary example of 'good' acting is Hamlet's feigned madness in some situations.
(pit 260)

But this is not their only role. Some sentences would actually seem less fluent in operative (or active) voice, such as those below:

He is led by his own personal selfishness and acts in a manner ... (imt 15)

Hypothetical agnate: His own personal selfishness leads him and he acts ...

The mercenary nature of Goneril and Regan is represented by their reduction of the number of knights allowed to Lear. (cit 38)

Hypothetical agnate: Their reduction of the number of knights allowed to Lear represents the mercenary nature of Goneril and Regan.

Statistical testing showed that the number of receptive voice sentences in introduction locations was significantly greater than in paragraph and conclusion locations. (See chapter 5, section 5.6.3: on the Mann-Whitney U test, $U_2 = 1$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 3$ and $n_2 = 6$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2; only the untimed sample was tested, but recall although numbers were fewer, the pattern was the same for the timed sample). The reasons for this finding were not the subject of investigation of this project and can only be surmised. Obviously, the receptive voice equative structure contributes to this with regard to its use in the initial location to set up categories of reference but if that were the only reason, then initial sentences in paragraphs and conclusions would also have higher percentages. Although paragraph initial and conclusion initial do have higher numbers than medials and terminals in those groups, introduction *medial* actually has the highest percentage of all (29.6%).

It is interesting that in the timed condition, introduction initial location has less than half

the percentage (12.1%) of receptive voice verbs that the same location in the untimed condition has (27.0%). Perhaps without time constraint, writers feel the need to sound more formal at the start of the essay and have the opportunity to think about how this may be achieved. That is not to say that they specifically think that they should use receptive voice, but that the more formal-sounding structure has time to emerge. It is likely that the opening sentence of an essay is reconsidered and rewritten several times in the untimed condition, which would not be the case in time-constrained test or examination conditions.

Apart from in introduction locations and conclusion medial location, the similarity of the percentages of receptive voice verbs for each location across time conditions is remarkable. Figure 5.8 (chapter 5) illustrated this clearly. List A (no.5) recognises the need for “flexibility and breadth of style”, which means that no language structure should simply be discarded. The point is that it is not any particular grammatical form or structure that is inherently elegant or otherwise but where it is used, and for what purpose, that needs consideration.

Similarity between time conditions is also apparent for sentences using the equative structure. Figure 5.9 (chapter 5) showed that the trajectory is the same for both time conditions (and indeed the percentages are not dissimilar) until conclusion medial is reached, when the timed condition declines slightly while the untimed climbs notably (yet, they actually almost meet at 44.3 and 44.6, respectively) and then the untimed declines again while the timed rises slightly. The repetition of this pattern suggests that location may well have an influence on the use of this structure. In fact, in the untimed condition (which had a greater range, and therefore showed trends more definitely) introduction and paragraph locations did have statistically significantly more equative structures than conclusion locations (see chapter 5, section 5.6.3: on the Mann-Whitney U test, $U_2 = 1.5$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 6$ and $n_2 = 3$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 2.). For both time conditions, introduction initial and medial and paragraph initial and terminal accounted for the top four locations for equative structures, and, conclusion locations and introduction terminal all featured among the lowest percentages (see Table 5.5, chapter 5).

In the equative “this = that” form, the focus is on the relationship between Theme and Rheme, rather than on a process. It could be that the structure, which is often used for definition, to say “this is that” (identifying) or for elaboration, “this is about that” (circumstantial) or for description, “this is like that” (attributive) is more useful early on in the essay, whereas in conclusions, definition, elaboration and description are required less. This sounds like a feasible explanation and yet, even in locations which have the fewest equative structures, still around or over a third of the sentences take this form. It may be interesting then to have a look at some of the equatives used in the locations with the lowest percentages and see what role(s) they appear to serve:

1. *But the bleak end of the play reveals the workings of the dipolarities that exist within the play in microcosm.* (itt 40)
2. *Margaret Atwood's success in showing important human truths through these supposed robots is then what makes this novel so "powerful".* (itt 53)
3. *Contrasts and opposing elements are plentiful in 'Antony and Cleopatra'.*
(ciu 72)
4. *The battle between the values of society and the morals, personal values and personalities of the individual has long been a conflicting factor in our world.*
(ciu 93)

The first two examples, (from the timed sample) terminate the introductions in which they appear. Example 1 seems to set up the topic of *the workings of the dipolarities ... within the play* to be pursued as an organisational concept for the remainder of the essay. Example 2 (a thematic equative structure, using the ‘wh’ nominalisation) by contrast, is clearly a direct response to the topic and uses the quotation marks around *powerful* to ensure that the reader notices the contingency. The topic to be pursued here would presumably be the use of the robots to show *important human truths*. Example 3, initiating the conclusion of an (untimed) essay, seems to sum up what has been discussed and illustrated in the essay, while example 4 (also conclusion initial, untimed), is used to generalise what has been the topic of the essay across both time and space.

There seem then, to be as many roles for this structure as there are locations, if not, more! Far from being alarming and suggesting that it is therefore pointless to try to link the equative with a location or a role, what this does, is open a range of possibilities for students as to what they can do with this structure in the different locations. This means that

there is no lockstep process of what to say and how it should be said in any one location, but rather a widening of choices and a deepening of understanding of grammatical structures and their roles. This contributes towards “flexibility”, “Flair” (List A, no. 5 & 6) and “language control” (List B, no. 2).

There are a few observations to be made from the ‘Other sentence type’ category (chapter 5, section 5.5), which started out as a way merely to account for non-declarative sentence types but ended up capturing some unexpected but enlightening details.

Firstly, extremely few interrogative and imperative forms were used: out of the 2349 sentences analysed, there was one sentence in imperative mood and eight rhetorical questions. The asTTle Indicators presented in chapter 2 (section 2.2.7, Table 2.3) offer “rhetorical questions” and “imperatives” as possible means of persuasion (the interpersonal metafunction) but this research has shown that writers graded as (NCEA) “Excellent” or A-grade, barely use these at all. In chapter 5, section 5.5.2, *Key observations on Table 5.18* it was observed that when these did occur in the sample they were located in medial locations. This could suggest that skilled writers are aware of the strongly dialogical nature of these structures and the fact that they impart a more oral or spoken character to writing. By locating them in medial rather than boundary locations, their impact as rhetorical devices is reduced and the more formal and subtle nature of the writing is maintained. This may be important for instruction when attention-grabbing devices are considered for initial or terminal placement since, in writing, interrogatives and imperatives in such locations may shout too loudly and detract from the sophistication of the text overall, making it seem “inelegant” (List B, no.2).

Secondly, the fact that use of the first person singular was also very limited was noted when discussing interpersonal elements and that use of first person plural was preferred (section 6.2.3.1). Trends for the latter were fairly clear, especially in the untimed sample. Introduction medial and paragraph medial locations showed a definite decline in the use of “we / us” whereas introduction terminal, paragraph terminal and all conclusion locations had a far stronger representation of “we / us” in initial position or as object in the main clause. The terminal and conclusion locations seem logical: the writer needs to have discussed an idea before saying, inclusive of the reader, that “we” can “see” or “learn”

something, or, that what has been said, either by themselves or the text they are discussing, suggests something to “us”, “encourages us”, or even compels “us” to do something, which is what seems to be the role of these sentences, as demonstrated by these examples:

These relationships encourage us to examine the difference between outward appearances and the truth that lies within, ... (itt 47)

Subsequently we learn that warfare destroys innocent lives and families, raising serious questions on morality and the value placed on human life. (itu 111)

We see through her both the background to his state of mind as well as his flaws and faults of his character. (ctu 105)

This paralysing pessimism causes us to act against the social trends expounded by the authors of the text. (ptu 545)

The inclusive “we” then, is as definitely, but more discreetly, persuasive than the first person singular, which may sound authoritarian or rather tentative, as shown in the examples below, respectively:

Without a doubt I can say the theme of blindness is central in 'King Lear'. (cit 40)

Through the texts I have studied I have come to understand more about human nature through the emotional and 'personal' content. (ciu 82)

Over 16% of writers in both time conditions closed their essays with “We / us” as Subject or object. In contrast, use of “I” or “me” never reached above 7.9% (conclusion initial untimed, and this was a spike) and 4.8 % (timed). (See chapter 5, Table 5.18 and Figure 5.22.)

A third key observation on Table 5.18, chapter 5, was that whole sentence or sentence initial quotations appeared most strongly in quite diverse locations: introduction initial, paragraph medial and paragraph terminal. Two of these are boundary locations, with introduction initial being a location of especially high impact, and one is medial, where the sentence probably has the least impact. It is likely that the function of the quotation would be different in each of these locations. As introduction initial, the quotation would become a statement containing important thoughts or themes for discussion, such as the following:

"The whole of life was like that, sitting in the dark watching and waiting sometimes it happened and you came out into the light..." (iiu 89)

Here the writer makes it clear that the essay will focus on one of those life experiences of

coming *out into the light*, using the quotation to set up that expectation in the reader.

As paragraph medial, it is more likely to be substantiation for a specific point. Here the writer offers the quote as proof of the ghost's manipulation of Hamlet:

"If thou ever was thy father's son, avenge his most foul and unnatural murder".
(pmt 268)

In paragraph terminal location, the quote would perhaps be a mixture of the two: embodying thematic ideas but also acting as proof for a key argument:

"Hamlet will himself take on moral responsibility for the murder." (Wiggins, 1994, p.223) (ptu 480)

The writer here uses the quotation both as proof – by the outside authority of a critic's comment - as well as summing up what has been argued: Hamlet's taking responsibility. In all of these roles, sentence initial quotations would possibly, although only implicitly, serve both textual and interpersonal roles. Giving students a more complete understanding of how quotations work in these different roles and locations will better enable them to see how they may be used for "organisation ... at the level of whole text" (List A, no.1), "persuasion through evidence" (List A, no. 4), "moving beyond simple story retelling" (List B, no. 1) and perhaps prevent "quote dumping" (List C, no. 3).

Lastly, for the "Other Sentence Type" analysis, using the author of a text's name as, or within, the Subject group of the main clause occurred most in boundary locations. The untimed sample had the clearest trends, with medial locations having far fewer (maximum of 6%) than initial and terminal (conclusion initial and terminal over 18%, or three times as many).

In introduction initial location, there is the effect of presentation of the author as the wellspring of broad ideas within the text, thereby both presenting those ideas and making them worth discussing because of the reputation of their source:

In his novel, Catcher in the Rye, author Jerome Salinger challenges the values of post-World War II America. (iit 2)

John Keats in many of his poems seems preoccupied with giving life's transient experiences a level of transcendence and beauty through art. (iiu 82)

In paragraph initial location, the ideas presented are more specific but the validation effect of using the author's name is the same:

Shakespeare showcases Hamlet's inner struggles throughout the soliloquies forcing us to contemplate the possible reasons for Hamlet's delay. (piu 506)

Salinger explores the condition of depression through the symbol of the museum which also provides for us the turning point in the novel. (pit 12)

In conclusion initial locations, the ideas become broader again and, in fact, introduction initial and conclusion initial can seem almost interchangeable but there is a key element of evaluation of the author's work in the conclusion initials, absent in the introduction initials (above), that differentiates them, as displayed by comparing the examples below:

Miller has utilised social setting and characterisation to effectively translate many human truths into his play; (cit 43)

Keats in his poetry successfully seeks to preserve beauty, by giving transient experiences enduring value. (ciu 74)

Since the texts studied are invariably those of well known, merit-worthy authors, use of the author's name in the conclusion initial location helps validate the positive evaluation coming later in the sentence and thus, consolidates what has been argued in the essay.

Usage in the terminal locations has the effect of stepping back from the details and stating implications to the argument, again using the author as backing for claims:

Perhaps Shakespeare is suggesting that the most prized and honest relationship should be, and is, one between mutual friends. (itt 63)

Albee gives hope that with truth there can be meaningful people and from them, meaningful relationships. (ptu 421)

Although these are not all projecting clauses, there nevertheless seems to be an interpersonal effect similar to that of reporting clauses used for attribution in the academic discourse studied by Charles (2006), discussed in chapter 3, section 3.2.5; instead of another researcher, in this case, the writer wishes to have the author standing behind what they are choosing to write about or what they have admired about the texts. This occurred especially in the higher impact boundary locations and is a strong device for "persuasion" (List A, no. 4) and "evaluation in building an argument" (List B, no. 8).

Drawing attention to specific sentence structures, such as receptive voice and the equative, and the different elements which may be used initially in a sentence such as the first person and the author's name or a quotation increases awareness of the linguistic options available and the roles or functions each can perform. This would give teachers greater resources in their teaching and more confidence in the breadth and depth of their own knowledge on the subject of academic writing, making their teaching more effective for students.

6.2.3.3 *Application of findings related to nominal group constituents*

Cognitively speaking, perhaps the most damaging criticism apparent in all three lists relates to students' inability to convey or construct complex ideas:

Sustained complexity of thought informing insightful / perceptive ideas
(List A, no. 3)

... a quality of expression that compromised the ability to communicate complex ideas ... in high-scoring essays expression was "not without its problems"
(List B, no. 2)

... writing not dense enough (List C, no. 4)

Schleppegrell (2004, p. 72) states that, "The dense structure of academic texts is partly a result of nominalisation." By nominalisation, she is referring to the transforming of congruent expression into non-congruent by taking processes (usually expressed in verbal groups) and embedding them in nominal groups to form complex or heavy nominal groups (as described and analysed in this research). She paraphrases Halliday's ideas on the development of complex nominal groups as a textual resource in scientific enquiry, which enables researchers to "distill the results of scientific enquiry into a set of nominal terms [from which] they can develop chains of reasoning ... presenting a line of argument that leads clearly from one step to the next" (Schleppegrell, 2004, p. 73).

Christie (2002a, pp. 64 - 65) mentions "noncongruent realizations" as one of the "features of developing maturity in literacy". Martin (2007, p. 49) actually talks about the construal of congruent processes as non-congruent nominalisations (or "grammatical metaphor") as a "gatekeeper", giving or denying students "access to vertical discourse", "which in western societies students are expected to master in secondary school." (p. 55).

Exactly how this linguistic phenomenon works cognitively was explained in the Psycholinguistic research reviewed in chapter 3, section 3.2.8. According to Gundel, Hegarty and Borthen (2003), to raise the salience of a proposition so that it can become the focus of attention requires that it be rankshifted from clause to nominal group. This means that it can become an entity in focus rather than merely activated background information. Thus, the writer can maintain tight control of what the reader's attention is focussed on and thereby direct him/her along the intended chain of reasoning.

Schlepppegrell (2004) explains that linguistic features associated with this rankshifting from clause to nominal group (nominalisation) include "many pre- and post-modifiers" and "the use of embedded clauses" (p. 72). In section 5.2.7 of the Results (chapter 5) it was mentioned under *Key observations on Table 5.7* (the analysis of nominal group constituents), that students used by far more defining and premodifying elements than any other type within the nominal group. Next most common were enhancing and elaborating elements (post-modifying). Least apparent was the embedding of clauses (rankshifts) in their various forms.

This means that students used a reasonable number of linguistic features associated with nominalisation, such as these:

And finally the element of sound^{defining}, *which heightened Fowler's emotions*^{elaboration}, *and*^{extension} *in effect*^{enhancement} *those of the audience*^{defining}, was ... (cmu 124)

The greatness of the characters^{defining} *in a political sense*^{enhancement} *makes their reckless actions* ... (imu 116)

Insignificant^{premodification} *details such as this*^{elaboration} *are misinterpreted by Othello* ... (ptt 32)

But, there was a paucity of actual rankshifting to form heavy nominal groups, in which the nominal element contains an embedded clause, evidenced by the verbal material within it. Such elements fell into four nominal constituent categories in this research: projections, embedded clause nominalisations, wh-nominalisations and fact-nominalisations. They are illustrated below:

Again, *the notion that Catherine is Heathcliff's life*^{projection nominalisation} *is conveyed* ... (pmt 147)

That 'King Lear' is a world of inversions ^{projection nominalisation}, where convention is thrown ... (iit 38)

Presenting a more limited range of male characters ^{embedded clause nominalisation} serves to communicate ... (itt 46)

What is so artistically noticeable ^{wh-nominalisation} about the film's treatment of voyeurism, however, is that ... (pit 122)

The fact that Goneril and Regan feel that they have no real duty to their father ^{fact nominalisation} prompts his madness. (pit 317)

All of these types of nominalisation avoid the writer having to include an additional clause by embedding it in reduced form within the nominal group itself. Actually, Christie and Derewianka (2008, pp. 26 - 27) distinguish between “nominalisation” and “grammatical metaphor” on these grounds: the former merely involves “construing various meanings in the nominal form” while the latter specifically involves selecting the option of metaphor over congruent expression, or construal as a nominal group rather than a clause. This makes the text denser by the construction of complex concepts, where a proposition becomes an entity that can then become part of a chain of reasoning. Halliday (2004, p. 71) particularly discusses the wh-nominalisation (or thematic equative, see fourth example above) as “having evolved ... as a thematic resource, enabling the message to be structured in whatever way the ... writer wants” and contributing “to the meaning of the message ... [the] feature of exclusiveness”. The connection between this and the control of a reader’s attention by rankshifting a clause to create a salient nominal group Gundel et al. (2003) is plain to see.

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 (chapter 5) showed that heavy nominal groups, in their different forms, ranged in representation as first element, in any one location, from merely 3% (conclusion terminal, timed) to at most 13.3% (paragraph initial, timed) and that the count did not increase much once all initial elements were included: 4.7 per 100 sentences (paragraph medial, untimed) to 14.9 per 100 sentences (paragraph initial, timed).

What this implies is that even those writers considered skilled at senior secondary level have not yet fully acquired these constructions. Interestingly, Christie (2002a, p. 47) observes, “for many students it [non-congruent expression] emerges in adolescence, and

even then very unevenly.” But, since examiners and teachers are criticising students’ writing for not being dense or complex enough, perhaps non-congruent expression in the form of the heavy nominal group, could be taught just as the other structures discussed above. As it makes a proposition an entity, the metafunction of a heavy nominal group, of course, remains largely ideational/experiential although, as with all nominal groups, textual and interpersonal elements may be contained within it. (Example 4, above, *What is so artistically noticeable ...* (pit 122) is such an instance, where the inclusion of *artistically* could be read as a positive evaluatory term.)

6.2.4 Concluding remarks on application of findings to educational context

The linguistic findings of this research project have been applied in a form that is directed towards using the information in the classroom and in response to examination requirements and criticisms of student writing. This is in answer to research question 5, regarding the usefulness of the findings to instruction in academic writing. Most teachers of English would require basic training in the three metafunctions, ideational (topical elements), textual and interpersonal although they would have understanding of the textual metafunction in terms of the discourse organisational markers they already teach, which would make acquisition of the other two metafunctions easier. The majority would require some training in identifying the grammatical structures and this would involve beginning with whatever traditional grammatical knowledge they have and building onto it. This knowledge would ideally be acquired in pre-service training but could be formulated as material for in-service workshops. Once this training was completed they could confidently begin to use the findings discussed above for instruction.

This concludes the application of the findings to the educational context. In answer to research question 5, it seems quite clear that this study may be used to improve the linguistic resources available for instruction in senior secondary academic writing by the inclusion of basic metafunctional and a limited number of selected grammatical concepts in teacher education, which may then be conveyed to students. This would increase teachers’ confidence in their ability to help students improve their writing and deepen both teachers’

and students' linguistic knowledge and skills. The idea aligns well with Myhill's comments quoted in chapter 2 (section 2.2.6) that,

we need to develop and extend our ability as teachers to recognise and articulate the features of good writing, and *to make connections for students between linguistic features and the effects they have on readers*. (2001a, p.16, emphasis added)

teachers might ... highlight the many ways in which sentence structure can support meaning ... Writers have choices but they may have limited awareness of those choices and the effects they create. (2001a, p.17)

The role of marked topical, textual and interpersonal sentence initial elements, as well as the representation of these three metafunctions within all sentence initial elements have been investigated and described in this study. It has been demonstrated how they contribute to achieving the quality of writing required at senior secondary level. If these findings were to become part of academic writing pedagogy at secondary level it may better enable teachers to recognise and articulate some of the linguistic features of skilled writing, and, increase not only students' awareness of the linguistic choices available to them, but their ability to make effective use of them. This would, undoubtedly, develop their cognitive skills and better prepare them for tertiary studies.

6.3 Theoretical Relevance of the Results

Having answered the five research questions posed in this thesis, it remains in this section of the Discussion to consider how the findings may make possible, relevant observations on the theoretical basis of the research. This includes a revisiting of the theoretical concept of Theme in SFG, and, some ideas on the increasingly recognised role of the interpersonal metafunction in academic writing. The latter underpins the key term coined for the title of this thesis, “unilateral conversations”.

6.3.1 Observations on the theoretical concept of Theme

Part II of the Literature Review (chapter 3, sections 3.2.2 – 3.2.5), entailed a consideration of the concept of Theme in SFG, as it has developed from being defined as “the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; ... that with which the clause is concerned” (cited in Fries, 1995, p. 318 from Halliday’s *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, first edition) to the third edition version, “the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 64). Although Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 58) still describe the Theme as “the element the speaker selects for ‘grounding’ what he is going on to say”, which implicates the ideational metafunction³, it was noted in chapter 3 that, in development, the actual definition of Theme (as is evident from the two definitions above) has leaned towards the organisational (textual metafunctional) role of Theme. However, it still has, as its only *obligatory* constituent, an experiential/ideational element: “the Theme of a clause is the first group or phrase that has some function in the experiential⁴ structure of the clause” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 66).

This would be tenable if it were recognised that the experiential/ideational thematic element is actually also the element that may function as a textual element, being traceable in some form from the previous sentence and thus creating cohesion between sentences. If this were not the case, then there would have to be some other element with a textual metafunction that created that coherence. Consecutive sentences that contain no experiential/ideational

element that is traceable in the other, in any form, and no textual marker of connection could not be said to be cohesive except by inexplicit inference, which may be characteristic of creative writing but certainly not common in academic writing. Hence it may be more appropriate to define Theme differently, according to the type of text under consideration.

For academic writing, perhaps it would be more accurate to specify the Theme as including the first element that entails the textual metafunction. This may be an experiential/ideational element that is also textual in metafunction (dual function) or an experiential/ideational element plus a separate textual element. (This would be preferable to identifying only the experiential/ideational element and labelling that as the Theme, without elucidating its entailed role as a textual marker when that is the case.) Since the Theme / Rheme partition is the means of analysing the sentence as a message, emphasising the textual function (see chapter 3, section 3.2.4 for theoretical details), recognition of the necessity of some kind of textual element would seem essential. The definition of Theme may then extend slightly to “the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which *experientially and textually* locates and orients the clause within its context”.

To exemplify the above argument, some consecutive sentences have been extracted from the sample. They are used to show how the element that creates textual cohesion is essential to the very concept of Theme, by its definition, and, that, therefore, it needs to be included as part of the Theme. This would mean extending the Theme boundary beyond the SFG definition of the first element with an experiential/ideational metafunction.

*'The Handmaid's Tale' described by critic Joyce Johnson as Margaret Atwood's "most powerful novel" is set in a **dystopia** - Gilead.* (iit 54)

*Through **this military, monotheocratic oppressive regime**, citizens are treated and expected to behave as emotionless and unquestioning robots.* (imt 77)

Margaret Atwood's success in showing important human truths through these supposed robots is then what makes this novel so "powerful". (itt 53)

These three sentences form the introduction to one of the essays in the timed sample. The initial element of the first sentence obviously cannot connect to a previous sentence as it opens the whole essay. The second sentence, however, begins with a circumstantial

Adjunct, which links it to the Rheme of the first sentence. This is an unremarkable example of how an experiential/ideational element creates the necessary textual cohesion. In this instance, the link is emphasised by the use of *this*, probably because the repeated nominal group is not identical in the second sentence and the reader needs to be alerted to the substitution of a similar term.

If we look at the third sentence, we see that strictly, according to SFG, the Theme would be *Margaret Atwood's success*. This would textually cohere with the opening sentence by connection with *Margaret Atwood's "most powerful novel"* but would give no cohesive textual connection to the second sentence. The cohesive element with the second sentence comes only in the second embedded prepositional phrase at the end of the rather extensive nominal group, *through these supposed robots*. If this phrase were removed, there would be no cohesive factor between sentences two and three. In order to see how sentence three coheres with sentence two, the reader needs to read beyond the strict SFG Theme and find the cohesive element. Only in this way can sentence three be located and oriented within its context, bearing in mind that sentence two is its immediate context and sentence one is only distal. In addition, sentence two would not be oriented within its context at all if sentence three lacked that final phrase within the initial nominal group. (Try reading it without that phrase.) Thus can be seen the necessity of looking beyond the first element with experiential/ideational metafunction to determine the Theme, if Theme is to be defined as a textually orienting structure.

In fact, when there is an initial textual element within the Theme, preceding but separate from the experiential/ideational thematic element, as in the example below, it could be argued that it is the textual element that does most of the orienting within the context, rather than the experiential/ideational element:

The effect of their love is reckless and destructive. (cmu 108)

Yet the love itself, without any mixture with political matters is genuine. (cmu 109)

Clearly here, *The effect of their love* and *the love itself* are cohesive elements between the two consecutive sentences, but, surely it is the initial Adjunct, *Yet* that is really responsible for orienting the reader with regard to how the clause to follow is going to fit within its context.⁵

Thompson and Zhou (2000, p.126) argue, with regard to the initial Adjunct, “Yet”, preceded by a sentence beginning with the initial Adjunct, “Certainly”, that “both propositions are presented as valid, but the second is presented as in some way more valid than the first” (see chapter 3, section 3.2.6). In the above example, there is no “Certainly” but a similar effect is achieved. The claim in the second sentence is presented as unexpected, in light of the first sentence, which itself is then demoted to a kind of a concession, while the second sentence becomes the more strongly asserted of the two. It is the *Yet* that prepares the reader for this comparative effect. Could the *Yet* be regarded as “the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that which locates and orients the clause within its context” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p.64)? If so, then this qualitative definition of Theme would seem incompatible with the grammatical definition of it as “the first group or phrase that has some function in the experiential structure of the clause” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 66). The definition implies that an element such as *Yet*, in the above sentence, while “**characteristically thematic**” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 83) is not obligatory when in fact it seems to be doing most of the work of orienting, while *the love itself* does the grounding.

If “most of the work” still does not make it “obligatory”, then the following example should demonstrate that when the initial experiential/ideational element does not seem to serve a contingent textual role at all, another textual element is indeed essential to orient the clause, even if placed after the topical Theme. Consider the following paragraph in one of the untimed essays:

*Despite this moral **muddle**, most critics have **concluded** that an Elizabethan audience would have watched the play with the **assumption** that Hamlet should have obeyed the ghost. (piu 477)*

*The **reasoning** behind this is that had Hamlet acted immediately and killed Claudius, the seven other lives lost would have been saved. (pmu 533)*

*The **question** then would be the way that Hamlet carries out his duty. (ptu 477)*

The Theme of the final sentence here, according to SFG, is *The question*. It may well be cohesive with elements such as **muddle**, **concluded**, **assumption** and **reasoning** but the order of these in this paragraph is inverted. One does not usually begin by concluding, then attempt reasoning and then ask the question. In fact, the **question** is a new one, not the answer to the *moral muddle*. The only way the Theme of the closing sentence of this

paragraph can be considered to locate and orient the closing clause in its context is if the following Adjunct, *then*, is included. By its (in this case metaphorical, logical) temporal function *then* tells the reader that the previous matter is closed. Thus, it is not the first experiential/ideational element but the second sentence initial element that orients the clause in its context by alerting the reader to the fact that the *question* the writer is going on to discuss is not the *moral muddle* but is a new matter for discussion in the remainder of the essay.

There are two points, then, that can be drawn from this consideration of the concept of Theme. Firstly, if Theme is to be an element that both “grounds” and “orients” the clause within its context, then it must surely contain an element with a textual metafunction, as well as an experiential/ideational. This may be (and often is) a dual functioning experiential/ideational element, but in some cases, where that element is not textually contingent with previous sentences, it may be a separate textual element. Secondly, this means that the Theme boundary perhaps needs to be enlarged to include such an element when it is located after an initial experiential/ideational element that does not “orient” the clause in its context.

It was mentioned in chapter 3 (section 3.2.5) that Alvin (2000a) argued that “There” is insufficient as Theme in “existential There” clauses, and also in chapter 4 (section 4.6.1.9) that Thompson (2004) argued that it is not really useful to consider the initial “It” in thematised comment clauses as Theme, because, despite standing in for experiential/ideational elements, neither of these gives the reader adequate information to orient the forthcoming clause in its context. Actually, neither does an experiential/ideational element that is not contingent with the previous sentence or sentences. Thus, it is not that Theme is inadequate as a construct, but it is perhaps necessary to consider further sentence initial elements rather than only the first element with an experiential/ideational function when seeking the orientation of the clause in its context (Theme), at least in an academic writing context.

6.3.2 The role of the interpersonal metafunction: unilateral conversations

All of the above becomes even more complex when one recognises that elements with essentially an interpersonal role can also function as textual organisation elements. The arguments of Thompson and Zhou (2000) and Thompson (2005) with regard to this were discussed thoroughly in chapter 3 (section 3.2.6) and instances from the sample were presented in section 6.2.3.1, above. In cases where such an element appears following the first experiential/ideational element, the Theme boundary would have to extend to include the dual-functioning interpersonal/textual orienting element also. This brings us to the final theoretical issue to consider: the role of elements with an interpersonal metafunction in academic writing. This has received some attention of late, as evidenced in the reviews outlined below, which were presented in detail in chapter 3, sections 3.2.5 and 3.2.6.

Hewings and Hewings (2001) demonstrated the rhetorical motivations in academic writing for the sentence initial “It” to introduce extra-posed clauses, such as in thematised comment or impersonal projection, as hedging, attitudinal, emphatic and attribution.

Thompson and Zhou (2000) as drawn on above, showed the possibility of evaluative coherence through the use of modal (interpersonal metafunction) initial Adjuncts in successive sentences. Thompson (2001) followed this up with his “interactional resources [which] involve the reader collaboratively in the development of the text” and “bring the underlying dialogue to the surface” (pp. 58 - 59) and, again in 2005, with his close examination of internal conjunction as “a resource for not only textual organisation but dialogic, negotiating relationships” (p. 775).

Hyland (2001) presented his dialogical “reader engagement features” as “explicit features of reader orientation”, “introducing them [readers] as real players in the discourse” (p. 552). And, in 2007, Hyland studied code glosses that take the form of exemplification, reformulation, re-statement and paraphrase. He stated that these not only serve an experiential/ideational function to improve reader comprehension but perform an interpersonal metafunction “helping to contribute to the creation of coherent, reader-friendly prose while conveying the writer’s audience-sensitivity and relationship to the message” (p. 266).

The use of finite reporting clauses with “that-clause” complementation to construct stance, in academic writing, was investigated by Charles (2006) with a view to showing the “rhetorical appeal to the reader, seeking to persuade them to accept the writer’s viewpoint” (p. 493).

Derewianka (2007) used Appraisal theory to investigate the use of different types of interpersonal elements in a variety of writing genres in History across age groups from early secondary to early tertiary, showing how at later educational levels, different demands are made on writers in the use of this metafunction. Swain (2007) used the same theory to compare the impression made by first year university writers who used interpersonal elements persuasively all through their writing as opposed to those who only used them in the conclusion, finding that the former was rewarded more highly by examiners.

Van de Velde (2007) showed the strong presence of the interpersonal metafunction in the English noun phrase by examining a variety of complex grammatical elements that nominal groups may contain. Finally, Harwood (2007, p. 32) quotes an academic writer describing another by saying sometimes he is “having a conversation with his reader ... inviting them to join him in his opinions”.

It would seem that it is hardly necessary to add to this to prove the point but what this thesis contributes is an examination of exactly how much the interpersonal metafunction predominates in sentence initial elements, and as such, acts in an orienting role. Although many could be, not all of the interpersonal features examined in the abovementioned studies would necessarily be sentence initial. When they are, they have the cognitive effect of steering the reader’s thinking, as was explained in Diessel’s (2005) paper on the differing roles of adverbial clauses in initial and non-initial positions (see chapter 3, section 3.2.8 and above, section 6.2.3.1). If it can be shown that interpersonal elements are more strongly represented within the sentence initial elements than topical or textual elements, then we can comfortably say that skilled writers are thinking more along the lines of conversing with the reader than merely supplying him/her with information (topical/experiential emphasis) or directing him/her through the text in a neutral manner (textual emphasis).

Now all declarative sentences have a grammatical Subject which “grounds” the clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 58), but recall from chapter 3 that many have additional elements preceding that element, which are designated “marked sentence initial elements” in this research, for the purpose of highlighting their role. These elements may be topical (supplying additional experiential information beyond the Subject), textual (organisational) or interpersonal (evaluative or opinion-giving).

This research investigated just how many sentences actually had marked sentence initial elements, whereabouts they were located in the academic writing and which metafunctions were entailed. It has had an informative outcome: in nearly every one of the nine designated locations within the essays, there were more marked initial elements than unmarked. When writers were under time constraint, only the introduction initial and paragraph initial locations had more – and only slightly more - unmarked initial elements (56.1% and 50.5%, respectively). Without the time constraint, in every location, there were more sentences beginning with a marked element than unmarked (see chapter 5, Table 5.9 and Figure 5.10).

An interesting line of enquiry, then, is what metafunction features most strongly, and, of course, the specifics of each location and grammatical structures involved. Discussion in the previous section of this chapter has dealt thoroughly with the specifics of locations and structures. It remains here to consider the implications of what metafunction featured the most.

Table 5.9 and Figures 5.11, 5.12 and 5.13, (as well as the bubble graph in Figure 5.14, for the top four locations for each type of metafunctional element, all in chapter 5) showed that overall textual elements featured the most strongly. In fact, in the untimed sample, there were significantly more textual than topical or interpersonal elements (see chapter 5, section 5.6.4: on the Mann-Whitney U test $U_2 = 19$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21). (In the timed sample, the difference between the textual and interpersonal was minimal but both considerably exceeded the topical.) This would seem appropriate for skilled writers: in addition to the unmarked topical Theme, they were supplying the reader with plenty of organisational markers. In other words, they were both “grounding” and “orienting” sentences effectively. However, this is not the whole

story. This state of affairs holds if one considers the first sentence initial element only. For reasons explained in chapter 4, this research extended the Theme construct to include all elements preceding the main verb of the main clause, calling them “sentence initial elements”.

As a brief reminder of that justification, it was demonstrated in chapter 4, section 4.3, using examples from the sample of a projecting clause with a post-head disjunct, a sentence with an initial subordinate clause and one with a circumstantial Adjunct and a subordinate clause preceding the main clause, that the reader is not truly “grounded” until he/she has encountered the grammatical Subject of the main clause. In addition, it has been shown in the above discussion that sometimes a sentence element in second position is key to “orienting” the clause in its context. Bearing this in mind, this research involved a second analysis, counting the total number of each metafunctional element type (topical/experiential, textual and interpersonal) within sentence initial position (that is, preceding the main verb of the main clause).

The outcome of that analysis was a higher count of interpersonal elements than textual or topical (see chapter 5, Table 5.12). The number of interpersonal elements was significantly greater than the number of topical elements (chapter 5, section 5.6.4: on the Mann-Whitney U test, $U_2 = 14$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21) and greater, although not significantly greater, than the number of textual elements. When one notes that for first element only, there was a significantly larger number of textual elements than interpersonal, it becomes clear that there must have been a significant increase in the number of interpersonal elements once all initial elements were added. The statistical tests confirmed this: (see chapter 5, section 5.6.4: on the Mann-Whitney U test, $U_2 = 3$ where the critical value for U when $n_1 = 9$ and $n_2 = 9$, one-tailed, $\alpha = 0.05$ is 21). Figure 5.15, chapter 5, which graphed the number of interpersonal elements for each time condition, in each location, both for first element only and all elements illustrated the increase.

The fact that there are no fewer interpersonal elements than textual once all initial elements are included, indicates that the writers are as determined to include elements which convey their opinion or evaluation as they are to ensure that their writing is well organised. What is

more, in terms of information structure (see chapter 3, section 3.2.2) these interpersonal elements are being subtly placed in the “given” or early part of the sentence, associated with the Theme, the “grounding”, “orienting” part, where they are less likely to be challenged by the reader than in the later part of the sentence, where “new” information is located.

These outcomes accord with some of the research discussed in connection with the research-based rationale for this study (chapter 3, section 3.4). Firstly, the fact that in the untimed condition, in every location there were more marked than unmarked sentence initial elements⁶, accords with North’s observation that her skilled “arts” writers made frequent use of what she called “orienting Themes” (marked Themes) for the purpose of creating space for the “interplay between data and argument ... providing an epistemic framing of the phenomenal content.” (2005, p. 449), whereas, her less skilled “science” writers did not. Secondly, as was anticipated, the greater use of interpersonal elements suggests that the type of argumentative writing examined in this research is more like that performed in the “Discussion section” of an academic research paper, which Gosden (1993) found to be higher in “interactional thematic elements” rather than “real world” (or topical) thematic elements, which characterised the “Results section”. Finally, the statistical significance of the finding that there are no more textual than interpersonal elements within all sentence initial elements (see statistic above) accords with the claim by Thompson (2005, p. 787) that the interpersonal metafunction has a more “central role” in academic writing than previously acknowledged. The role of sentence initial elements in skilled academic writing then, is not only to provide depth of informational background (marked topical elements) or textual organisation but easily as much to allow interpersonal communication between writer and reader.

Before closing this discussion, there is one final step to take in fully justifying the term coined for this thesis, “unilateral conversations”. We could say that the volume of interpersonal elements discovered in the academic writing alone justifies conceptualising it as a conversation, especially when many researchers refer to these as “dialogical” elements (Hyland, 2001; Thompson, 2001; 2005; Thompson & Zhou, 2000), but, this does not mean that the conversation is a balanced one.

Recall from the studies of Argumentation (chapter 3, section 3.2.7), Kaufer and Geisler (1991, p. 117) pointed out that “argument is not a chorus of perspectives. Rather it is a tightly sequenced set of directions controlled from the author’s perspective.” If this is the case, and the reader does not actually get a fair chance to challenge the writer at all, then the deliberately paradoxical term “unilateral conversations” would be justified and mean that academic writing is actually rather more directive than dialogical.

When thinking about this possibility, it was questionable as to whether the idea could actually be defended and whether a sufficiently convincing succession of sentences could be extracted to demonstrate it. However, on examining particularly the untimed sample, in fact, it was more difficult to find one that did not fit this description. Below are a few instances:

While this extract has shown the audience the importance power struggles play in everyday human interaction, in reality nothing is achieved by the characters in this interaction - Mick, dominant at the beginning, continues to dominate at the end of the extract, and similarly, Davies continues to be victimised, and this sense of nothingness is characteristic of the play. (ciu 87) Pinter perhaps suggests that Mick's search for power through experimentation of different methods, while achieving what he desires, is futile as he already had what he wanted before he started. (cmu 132) At the same time, then, the audience's involvement in victimising Davies by being voyeuristic and laughing at him is criticised as there is no need to further marginalise Davies through laughter if he is already powerless to start off with. (cmu 133) Yet the audience continues to wait in suspense of what is to come next, continues to laugh at the characters, embodying the very thing Pinter criticises, the brutal nature of human kind. (ctu 95)

This conclusion begins with a subordinate clause dismissing the possible objection of readers that *power struggles* are *important* in *everyday human interaction* and follows this with a disjunct, *in reality*, that would undermine even the slightest resistance from readers by suggesting that if they disagreed, they would have missed the reality of the play under discussion. The next sentence initial interpersonal elements, *Pinter perhaps suggests* (both the projecting clause and the subjunct) may be considered to be hedging devices, reducing the writer’s certainty and allowing the reader a chance to challenge but in this case the reader suspects from the *perhaps* that some form of substantiation is going to follow the suggestion and if he/she does not go along with it, he/she will be proven wrong. Whereas a simple projecting clause *Pinter suggests* carries more certainty, the double hedge *perhaps* and *suggests* actually creates the need for substantiation. And indeed *that Mick's search for*

power ... is futile is followed by an unassailable substantiation, *as he already had what he wanted before he started*.

After this, the writer glides towards his/her goal with ease, *At the same time, then* basically tells the readers that if they have agreed to the previous point, then there is no getting out of the next line of reasoning, because it is a parallel argument, which follows the same logic. If readers have identified at all with the audience then this and the next sentence are really a double blow since the writer accuses the audience of the same nasty behaviour towards Davies as Mick has displayed in the play and then reinforces his/her point by the initial *Yet* in the final sentence, pointing out that *the audience* (and maybe also readers) are still doing it even as they realise what they are doing. With each successive sentence, the initial elements serve to wind readers into a kind of trap from which they can either stand in judgement of the audience, or, more probably, actually feel guilty themselves. Either way, they cannot escape the conclusion.

We have already examined part of this second instance in relation to initial textual elements but since it serves neatly here too, we can look at the surrounding sentences also:

Shakespeare has created a complex relationship between Antony and Cleopatra. (ciu 79) *Their love has so many obstacles which would be destructive to their world and status.*(cmu 107) *The effect of their love is reckless and destructive.* (cmu 108) *Yet the love itself, without any mixture with political matters is genuine.* (cmu 109) *Therefore, without any other obstacles, their love is more “lyrical and ennobling” than “reckless and destructive”.* (ctu 87)

This writer's conclusion is more simply constructed but no less controlled. Essentially *Shakespeare* is an unmarked topical Theme, but, of course, an auspicious writer's name is never entirely neutral and so, as discussed in section 6.2.3.3, above, readers are less likely to disagree if they are told that Shakespeare has created something rather than the writer simply stating that, “There is a complex relationship between Antony and Cleopatra”. Two equally simple statements follow this up, perhaps disarmingly simple, such that readers cannot possibly object. Both begin with unmarked topical Themes. This gives the *Yet*, the first marked initial element here, greater impact as it jolts readers out of complacent agreement, undermines the sentence readers have just agreed with by demoting it to a kind of concession and opens the way for a startling change of direction. Having conceded some validity to the reader's possible objection, the statement following *Yet* becomes like the

main clause of a complex sentence and carries greater validity than the preceding clause. The writer uses (*the love*) *itself* to ensure that the reader understands the distinction being drawn, and *without any mixture with political matters* to reinforce this refinement of the argument, all as part of the initial elements. Then, before readers have time to review the new line of argument, they encounter *Therefore*, which leads to the conclusion but not before *without any other obstacles*, a reminder of the refinement of the argument with regard to the love relationship in question, which in effect is the justification for the change in direction experienced earlier. The marked initial elements, then, when they do appear, are extremely efficacious in forcing readers down a particular line of argument.

This example in particular seems to reflect Kaufer and Geisler's description of scholarly argument, "They devote full sentences ... to characterising the path before overtly indicating their reasons for leaving it." (1991, p. 118). And when they do leave it, we see evidence of the validity of Bestgen and Vonk's claim that to cancel the boundary effect of topic/argument discontinuous sentences (that is, to prevent the reader seeking continuity on the assumption that successive sentences are topic/argument continuous, the "nextness principle") "a discourse marker should be inserted at the beginning of a sentence to be effective in the comprehension process" (2000, p. 80). Both studies, from Argumentation and Psycholinguistics (see chapter 3, sections 3.2.7 and 3.2.8, respectively) add insight into understanding the role of the sentence initial elements.

A final instance is an introduction from an essay discussing a number of literary texts:

War is a concept which has been extensively explored throughout literature because of its destructive impact on humanity. (iiu 114) The texts [list of 4 texts] all delve into the oppressive circumstances during and surrounding World War II. (imu 172) They allow insight into how a family, civilians and characters alike are affected by the harsh events of war. (imu 173) Subsequently we learn that warfare destroys innocent lives and families, raising serious questions on morality and the value placed on human life. (itu 111)

Again, there are three sentences with unmarked topical Themes. The first sets up an equative structure, which leaves the reader with no doubt as to the topic under discussion. The second has an emphatic post-deictic *all* within sentence initial position, which gives readers a sense of a unity of purpose both of the texts and the writer's choice in selecting them. The third is another simple pronominal group and it is only when the final sentence is

reached that readers encounter a marked initial element: *Subsequently* (textual) and then an interpersonal element follows, *we learn*. The writer makes straightforward statements about two topics, war and the texts he/she is discussing and from those directs readers to the concluding sentence with the textual Adjunct and informs them, via the projecting clause, what they have learnt from the texts (even though, of course, it is actually the writer who has learnt these things since readers may not even have read the texts concerned). The more subtle *we learn* rather than “I have learnt that ...” engages readers, pulling them into reading on to see what they have already learnt according to the writer, but actually are now going to have expounded to them.

All of this writing can be considered conversational to the extent that it draws readers into the thinking and argument of the writer, fitting Andrews’ description of argumentation as “a mode of thinking ... so closely connected to the operation of the mind” (2005, p. 108, see chapter 3, section 3.2.7); however, as mentioned above, Kaufer and Geisler (1991, p. 117) state, “argument is not a chorus of perspectives ... [but] a tightly sequenced set of directions”. The successive sentence initial elements presented in these examples follow a tight sequence so that there is really no room for the reader to wriggle out of the argument at all; they are entirely unilateral conversations.

Perhaps theorists from the field of Argumentation have the edge when describing the nature of academic writing but it remains a linguistic challenge to specify Riddle’s (2000) concept of “cognitive connectedness” within academic discourse when explicit markers of connection are absent. As suggested in chapter 3, it could well be partly explained in Thompson (2005) and Thompson and Zhou (2001) by their non-explicit interpersonal markers of conjunction but it may also be in the control of the sequence of sentence initial elements, with that control becoming more traceable when those elements are marked. Hence, it is extremely helpful to understand the role of marked sentence initial elements by knowing where, how and why skilled writers use them.

6.3.3 Concluding remarks on theoretical relevance of results

This discussion has allowed some reflection on the theoretical concept of Theme when applied to a set of data. It has suggested that the grammatical definition of Theme, at least in the context of academic writing, possibly needs to include reference to the textual metafunction as well as the experiential/ideational. The discussion has also added to research that applies SFG theory to academic writing for the purpose of gaining insight into its linguistic characteristics. It has shown that in the context of senior secondary academic writing produced by skilled student writers, interpersonal elements are as significant as topical and textual within sentence initial elements. Another dimension it has added is the possibility that the so-called dialogical nature of academic writing may actually take the form of unilateral rather than bilateral talks. Finally, a strong case was made for the idea that it is through tight control of successive sentence initial elements that the “cognitive connectedness” (a term borrowed from Argumentation) necessary for academic writing, is achieved.

6.4 Conclusion to Discussion of Results

The most pressing concern motivating this research was the need to improve resources for the teaching of academic writing, specifically at senior secondary level in New Zealand. The Discussion of Results has demonstrated that, by detailed investigation into skilled writing at that level using SFG as a theoretical basis, much may be learned with regard to how writers achieve the kind of qualities that examination boards demand for top grades in external national and international examinations.

By introducing teachers to the SFG concepts of linguistic metafunctions and sentence initial elements, and, how the two combine in the process of generating skilled academic writing it seems possible that they may increase their insight into how to go about more effectively addressing the writing problems that examiners have listed and achieve the objectives stated in the national curricula. This would not only enhance teachers' confidence in the assistance they are giving students, but also, obviously, be of benefit to students who would gain grammatical knowledge in the context of academic writing which would be highly motivational for them, and, of course, both their thinking and writing skills would be enhanced.

By application of aspects of the theory of SFG to authentic data, some observations on the theory itself have also been made possible. In short, then, this research has demonstrated that the application of theory to a purposefully selected sample, in a specific context, may render theoretical insights as well as make a valuable contribution to that context. The limitations of this research and how some of these may be addressed in future projects are points of discussion in the conclusion to follow.

¹ Since this thesis was proposed (2006) the idea that Appraisal theory, which highlights the interpersonal metafunction (see chapter 3, section 3.2.6), may be useful pedagogically has been suggested; see for example Swain (2007). She mentioned (in 2007) that research recognising the interactive nature of academic writing had “yet to find [its] way into the textbooks” (p. 168).

² See Aijmer (2007) for an interesting discussion of the “multifunctionality of *indeed*” (p. 329).

³ This element with an ideational metafunctional translates into topical Theme, see chapter 3, section 3.2.4.

⁴ The “experiential” component is an aspect of the ideational metafunction; see chapter 1, Introduction and chapter 3, section 3.2.4.

⁵ In fact, Lowe (1987, p. 7, emphasis added) argued that the “function of the point of departure element is *either* ... [the] experiential component; *or* [the] logical component such as with conjunction”, which means that in this sentence, *Yet* alone could be considered the point of departure.

⁶ And, in the timed condition seven out of nine locations had more marked initial elements than unmarked.

Chapter 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Summation

7.2 Evaluation, Limitations and Future Directions

7.3 Final Remarks

7.1 Summation

From the literature on matters relating to academic writing at secondary level in subject English, the objectives of national curricula for the subject in the UK, (some states of) Australia and in New Zealand and the relevant examinations boards' feedback with regard to the problems they identify with writing at this level, it seems that this area of pedagogy is still in need of investigation and development. There has been a great deal said about the declining ability of secondary students to produce well-constructed, sustained, elegant academic prose. Whether or not this is augmented by the ever-increasing use of more iconic, electronic sources of information is beyond the scope of this research but the growing disinclination of students to engage in sustained reading and writing activities is plainly observable to any school teacher who has been in the classroom with students in the last five to ten years.

There will always be, it is hoped, a cohort of students who are naturally talented in the skill of academic writing. This research has made use of the work of those students to assist the less able in the development of their academic writing skills. This has been achieved by gathering authentic data from New Zealand schools, in the form of Year 13 literary essays written in subject English and graded by teachers as "Excellent" (using NCEA Level 3 criteria) or A-grade (CIE criteria), and, then, applying elements of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) in a way that has not been undertaken before.

Two samples were collected: essays written in timed conditions and in untimed. The analyses were deliberately broad, categorising every sentence with regard to its location in the essay and then identifying and categorising the grammatical structure and metafunction of its first element and thereafter, subsequent initial elements preceding the main verb of the main clause. From this emerged a picture of the nature and the role of sentence initial elements in the writing and allowed comparison of sentences in different locations within the essays and of writing done under different time conditions. (The possibility of following this up with investigations of more limited scope is discussed in section 7.2.2.)

The findings indicated that under untimed conditions, students used significantly more sentence initial marked grammatical structures but not more marked metafunctional elements (although this was approaching significance). What this means is that these writers, being skilled, are aware of what metafunctions need to be performed by their sentence initial elements and will ensure that this is achieved but, when not under time constraint, they will use a wider range of grammatical structures to perform the metafunctions. What we can take from this is that marked grammatical elements are key structures that need to be taught to students who have not acquired them or who may not be using them effectively.

Secondly, different metafunctional characteristics were shown to be associated with different locations and were represented more strongly in some grouped locations. Teachers could use this information to assist students with problems relating to content, structural and interpersonal matters in their writing. Aligning these three problems respectively with topical, textual and interpersonal elements, students could be given some direction with regard to where these predominate in essays, as well as some grammatical structures they may employ to perform them.

In addition, the tight control of sentence initial elements to lead readers through the argument of the essay, by use of both textual and interpersonal elements or elements which may function as both, in a dual role, could be demonstrated to students. This would make them more deliberate in their thinking with regard to their argument design, enhancing their cognitive skills.

To achieve this, teachers of English would need to have some instruction in a few concepts from SFG such as linguistic metafunctions and probably have to learn some new grammatical terms and structures. But, they would not have to undergo training in all the complexities of SFG, which would clearly be too time-consuming both pre- or in-service. Thus, by identifying a narrow, selective range of SFG elements and applying them in a highly directed manner, a positive contribution may be made to a very important aspect of education that clearly still requires refinement: developing students' skills in thinking and writing in the argumentative mode.

7.2 Evaluation, Limitations and Future Directions

7.2.1 Significance of this study to theory and in application

This research has successfully brought together complex grammatical theory and the very practical matter of teaching secondary students to write well in the academic mode. In so doing, it has made a contribution to that theory by highlighting the key role of sentence initial elements within academic writing, specifically, that the textual metafunction seems as essential as the ideational/experiential to the concept of sentence Theme, the “point of departure of the sentence” that both “ground[s]” and “orients” the clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 58 & 64) and, also that the presence of the interpersonal metafunction within sentence initial elements seems as strong as the textual. The latter supports linguistic research into the dialogical features of academic writing (Charles, 2006; Derewianka, 2007; Harwood, 2007; Hewings & Hewings, 2001; Hyland, 2001, 2007; Swain, 2007; Thompson, 2001, 2005; Thompson & Zhou, 2000). The findings of this project perhaps go further, supporting research in Argumentation that suggests that academic writing is actually more directive than dialogical (Kaufer & Geisler, 1991; Blair, 2003). In other words, “Authors decide to include other perspectives for self-serving not democratic reasons ... [when these] make their own more clear or fair-minded or persuasive by way of background or contrast.” (Kaufer & Geisler, 1991, p. 117). The writer’s tight control of the reader’s side of the dialogue largely through highly directed successive sentence initial elements makes the conversation very much unilateral.

The findings of this study are relevant to the demand for higher standards in senior secondary education. New Zealand’s *North & South* magazine (March, 2008) claimed in an article entitled “Going by degrees”:

From next year [2009], just qualifying to get into university won’t ensure your kids get there. In a major change, our highest academic institutions will begin to limit the number of students across all courses’ (p. 38) [and] ... academic grades will be the most likely way to decide who makes the cut.’ (White, 2008, p. 41)

At the end of the article the writer adds that:

English features on the minimum requirements for university entrance 2008: NCEA, Cambridge, International Baccalaureate and these [minimum requirements] will be not enough for some university courses from 2009. (p. 46)

This means that in order to secure a place at university, success in subject English is vital and the primary way to achieve this is to be able to write essays of a high standard. Aspects of SFG such as Theme and metafunction are already being used to try to develop students' writing, especially in parts of Australia, the UK and the US. This study has taken a different angle of approach and contributes a selection of specific grammatical structures to perform certain metafunctions and has identified locations within essays where specific structures and metafunctions predominate. All of this adds to the sum of knowledge that may be used in academic writing pedagogy in the secondary context examined.

At a more profound level, achieving strong skills in writing also means that students are learning more successfully:

If students are to make knowledge their own, they must struggle with the details, wrestle with the facts, and rework raw information and dimly understood concepts into language they can communicate to someone else. In short, if students are to learn, they must write.

(National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges, 2003, p. 9)

And, of course, looking at the broader social picture, since learning to write well necessitates control and organisation of one's thinking and more meaningful expression of one's thoughts, secondary students may then become mature adults who participate more effectively in society:

... teachers often see themselves as trying to give all students access to the kinds of language and literacy that are the instruments of power, thereby enabling the less fortunate to overcome their disadvantage and achieve success. They also often see themselves as trying to expose the social limitations and the constrictions of thinking imposed by language, enabling the students to see how they are being positioned and limited, thereby hopefully enabling them to resist their enslavement.

(Christie & Mission, 2002, p. 7)

By using the findings of this research in assisting students, teachers may encourage them to "struggle" and "wrestle" and "rework" the content of their writing through the grammar, and this process in itself may help them to gain access to the forms of language that are the "instruments of power". They may come to understand better how language works through the metafunctional concepts they learn, how those are encoded in the grammatical structures they are taught, and deployed in discourse of various kinds. This would give them the ability both to use these themselves for their own advancement as well as identify situations when they may be disadvantaged by others' use of them.

7.2.2 Limitations of this study and future directions for research

Probably the most obvious limitation of this research is the small and highly specific context in which it was conducted. Although the pilot study consisted of data collected in the UK, the main study made use of only New Zealand students' work and only in subject English (literary essays) at Year 13. However, this opens up future directions for research. For comparative purposes, sustained writing in other subjects within the Humanities, such as History or Classics, or, beyond that in other disciplines such as the commercial and scientific subjects¹ could be analysed along similar lines. It may also be useful to compare writing graded as less successful, either on a grammatical or metafunctional basis, or both. In addition, it would be very interesting to compare top-graded writing produced in other countries along the same analytical lines. More limited scope studies may be helpful, such as identifying any one of the specific grammatical structures and their location in the writing produced in specific subjects.

Another limitation of this research is that due to the broad nature of the analysis undertaken, some of the possible lines of investigation were not pursued to the fullest extent. For instance, with larger samples, greater statistical testing could be undertaken on the use of different grammatical structures to perform certain metafunctions in specific locations, developing the combined grammatical / metafunctional analysis aspect of this study. One could envisage research focussing entirely on initial sentences (introduction, paragraph and conclusion) and comparing them for grammatical structures used and metafunctional purpose. Furthermore, the metafunctional categories could be sub-divided; for example, using Appraisal theory, the different types of interpersonal elements in different locations could be counted and compared.

Finally, the sample of essays used may be considered fairly small (109). The number was limited because it was not possible to gain access to essays written for national examinations in New Zealand without incurring significant costs.² Thus, schools had to be approached individually and students relied upon to offer their work, complete consent forms and take home and return consent forms for parental permission. Nevertheless, the number collected was reasonable for a single researcher to handle within the time frame for this research. With Ministry of Education support, researchers or even co-opted teachers

from secondary schools could examine a greater body of writing and draw a fuller picture of the characteristics of what is regarded as skilled academic writing at secondary level.

7.3 Final Remarks

Although we live in a time when access to information is easier and faster than ever before in history, this does not mean that that information and its implications for the individual or society are necessarily fully understood. Indeed, it is possibly because information (or misinformation) is so accessible that pedagogy needs to step up its efforts to ensure that students attain the fullest measure of competence that they can manage in all the language skills. Writing is the skill by which educators can assess whether an appropriate level of achievement has been acquired for a student to participate successfully in essential social processes: to think clearly about a document they are signing, a service or product they are paying for, or, a party they are voting for. This is because the academic essay is “the conflation of formal argument and personal expression” which enables the reader (teacher or examiner) to “see the quality of the candidate’s mind” (Womack, 1993, p. 46).

If one wishes to do more than participate in the essential social processes, for instance, enter the professions, then traditionally, one has had to undertake tertiary training and that training involves writing. It is in the writing that students make the knowledge associated with a specific profession their own and are able to evaluate that knowledge and build onto it themselves. By this they make a useful contribution to their profession and to society.

It would not augur well for any nation if standards of writing at secondary level were allowed to decline to the most basic level of correct sentence structure and spelling, or, be replaced by bullet point lists on a PowerPoint display. To prevent this happening, teachers of academic writing at secondary level need to have the opportunity to develop their own understanding of the nature and characteristics of skilled writing for the benefit of their students. Taking note of research into this area, such as that presented in, and that undertaken for, this thesis, and creating opportunities both in pre- and in-service contexts to use it in further educating the educators can help achieve the highly desirable goal of a well-educated and well-functioning society.

¹ As discussed in chapter 3, section 3.2.5, Iddings (2008) undertook a small study of one text in each of English Humanities and Biochemistry, looking at the percentages of different Theme types in each and a variety of other grammatical features. (Recall that this study was not chosen for comparison to the data in this thesis since the methodology took the clause as the unit of analysis rather than the sentence, which would

have made the comparison of percentages invalid.) However, the potential for comparative studies across disciplines and the insights that could be derived for pedagogy is illustrated.

² In New Zealand, private companies handle the distribution and collection of national examinations and on attempting to gain access to the scripts, I was informed that it would not be possible without my payment of these companies for interrupting the logistical process.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information Sheets for students and teachers

Appendix B: Consent Forms for students and teachers

Appendix C: Questions for semi – structured interview with teachers

Appendix D: Table D: Development of List A (common factors in objectives and descriptors on national curricula for senior secondary writing)

Appendix E: Table E: Sample of analysis of one sentence from each locational category

Appendix A Participant Information Sheets for students and teachers

STUDENT PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



Project Title: Unilateral Conversations: the role of marked sentence initial elements in skilled senior secondary academic writing

Researcher: Heather Meyer

Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener

Invitation: You are invited to participate in a study of senior secondary academic writing.

What is the purpose of the study? This research will examine approximately 100 ‘Excellent’ essays (NCEA grading) written by senior secondary students and try to identify specific language features in the writing which make them of such a high standard. The information gained will be used to help students who are still acquiring the skill of academic essay writing.

Why have you been asked to participate? You have written an essay which your teacher has graded as “Excellent” / “A” according to NCEA / CIE standards.

What happens in the study? With your consent, a copy of one of your essays, graded ‘Excellent’ by your teacher will be given to the researcher without your name or any identifying marker on it. It will be analysed (not assessed) by the researcher for the purpose explained above.

What benefits are there to you in this study? Your teachers and others will have access to the information gained from the research and you will have been part of the very important research process which enables teaching methods to develop and improve for all students. If you wish, you may receive a report on the findings of the study after its completion by circling the ‘Yes’ option on the consent form accompanying this letter.

How is your privacy protected? Your teacher who has assessed your essay will collect the essay copy from you and ensure that no means of identification is possible. After being carefully analysed by the researcher, the essay will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the abovementioned supervisor’s office, WT 1003, at AUT. After six

years, they will be destroyed together with the consent form you will sign if you agree to participate in this study.

Although the school at which you are studying will be recognised for its contribution towards this research, the thesis which the researcher writes and any publications which result from it will not make reference to names of participants.

Opportunity to consider invitation: You will be given a week to decide if you wish to participate. It is suggested that you discuss this invitation with your parents or caregiver before making a decision. If you choose not to participate or you choose to withdraw at any time before the data collection is completed, there will be no disadvantage to you in any way.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the consent form attached and return it to your teacher as soon as possible, together with a copy of your Excellent essay. You may remove your name from the essay or your teacher will do so for you.

If you decide to withdraw, please let your teacher know immediately or contact the researcher or supervisor at the number(s) or address(es) at the end of this information sheet.

Do I have to participate? No, participation is entirely optional for you.

Participant or parental concerns: Any queries or concerns regarding this research which your teacher is unable to answer, may be addressed to the researcher or supervisor using the contact details below or concerns regarding the conduct of the research at any stage can be addressed to the executive secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, at the addresses below.

Researcher: Heather Meyer

Tel. (021) 1226021

email: bearsrthere@yahoo.com.au

Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener

Tel. (09) 921 9999 extn 7830

email: john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz

Executive Secretary AUTECH: Madeline Banda

Tel. (09) 921 9999 extn 8044

email: madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz

Many thanks for considering this invitation.

Heather Meyer

This research was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28/08/06. AUTECH Reference no. 06/153

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS



Project Title: Unilateral Conversations: the role of marked sentence initial elements in skilled senior secondary academic writing

Researcher: Heather Meyer

Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener

Invitation: You are invited to participate in a study of senior secondary academic writing.

What is the purpose of the study? This research will examine approximately 100 ‘Excellent’ essays (NCEA grading) written by senior secondary students and try to identify specific language features in the writing which make them of such a high standard. The information gained will be used to help students who are still acquiring the skill of academic essay writing by assisting teachers in their development of skills in the teaching of academic essay writing.

Why have you been asked to participate? You are a teacher of students undertaking subject English at a senior level and have experience in teaching, correcting and grading academic essay writing. You know of difficulties that arise in this process. You are in a position to recommend the best way to make information resulting from this research, accessible to yourself and others in similar positions.

What happens in the study? With your consent, you will be involved in an audio-taped discussion of the process of teaching essay-writing at senior levels, according to guidelines given by the Ministry of Education handbook and of your experiences and difficulties, if any, in undertaking this, including any suggestions you may have for the type of information that may be helpful to you and in what format it may be most helpful to you.

What benefits are there to you in this study? You and other teachers will have access to the information gained from the research and you will have been part of the research process which enables teaching methods to develop and improve for all students and teachers. If you wish, you may receive a report on the findings of the study after its completion by circling the ‘Yes’ option on the consent form accompanying this letter.

How is your privacy protected? You will not be identified by name nor as a staff member at a particular school in the reporting of this project. Once reviewed by the researcher, the tapes will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the abovementioned supervisor's office, WT 1003, at AUT. After six years, they will be deleted.

Although the school at which you are teaching will be recognised for its contribution towards this research, the thesis which the researcher writes and any publications which result from it will not make reference to names of teachers.

Opportunity to consider invitation: The researcher will be returning to your school on at least two further occasions in the next three months to collect essays and consent forms. If you wish to participate, you may do so on any of these occasions. If you choose not to participate or you choose to withdraw at any time before the data collection is completed, there will be no disadvantage to you in any way.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the consent form attached and return it to the researcher.

If you decide to withdraw, please let your Head of Subject know immediately or contact the researcher or supervisor at the number(s) or address(es) at the end of this information sheet.

Do I have to participate? No, participation is entirely optional for you.

Participant concerns: Any queries or concerns regarding this research which your Subject Head is unable to answer, may be addressed to the researcher or supervisor using the contact details below or concerns regarding the conduct of the research at any stage can be addressed to the executive secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, at the addresses below.

Researcher: Heather Meyer

Tel. (021) 1226021

email: bearsrthere@yahoo.com.au

Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener

Tel. (09) 921 9999 extn 7830

email: john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz

Executive Secretary AUTECH: Madeline Banda

Tel. (09) 921 9999 extn 8044

E-mail: madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz

Many thanks for considering this invitation.

Heather Meyer

This research was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28/08/06. AUTECH Reference no. 06/153

Appendix B Consent Forms for students and teachers

Consent to Participation in Research Project (Students)



Project Title: Unilateral Conversations: the role of marked sentence initial elements in skilled senior secondary academic writing

Researcher: Heather Meyer

Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- I understand that I may withdraw my work or any information that I have provided for the project at any time prior to the completion of the data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant texts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I would like to receive a report based on the findings of this study after its completion: Yes / No
- I agree to participate in this research.

Participant: _____ (Name)

_____ (Signature)

I give my consent for the above-named student's work to be used in this research.

Parent/ Guardian: _____ (Name)

_____ (Signature)

Thank you

Heather Meyer

Tel. (021) 1226021

email: bearsrthere@yahoo.com.au

Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener

Tel. 921 9999 extn. 7830

email: john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz

This research was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28/08/06. AUTEK Reference no. 06/153

Consent to Participation in Research (Teachers)



Project Title: Unilateral Conversations: the role of marked sentence initial elements in skilled senior secondary academic writing

Researcher: Heather Meyer

Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- I understand that the discussion will be audio-taped for the researcher's use only and that neither will my comments be quoted directly nor will I be named in the thesis or any resulting reports or articles.
- I understand that I may withdraw any information that I have provided for the project at any time prior to the completion of the data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way. If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant recordings, or parts thereof, will be deleted.
- I would like to receive a report based on the findings of this study after its completion: Yes / No
- I agree to participate in this research.

Participant: _____ (Name)

_____ (Signature)

Thank you

Heather Meyer

Tel. 021 1226021

email: bearsrthere@yahoo.com.au

Supervisor: Prof. John Bitchener

Tel. 921 9999 extn. 7830

email: john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz

This research was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 28/08/06. AUTEK Reference no. 06/153

Appendix C Questions for semi-structured interview with teachers

Prompt questions for discussion with teachers:

Note: This prompt sheet was for the researcher's use only; questions were delivered verbally.

1. How have you found the teaching of academic writing at senior levels?
2. To what extent are you able to implement the Guidelines in the Ministry of Education handbook?
3. What kind of information do you think would be of most use to you if you were to think about improving teaching in this area (i.e. academic essay writing)?
4. What do you think would be the most useful way to provide feedback to you from this study?
5. Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to make or questions that you have?

Appendix D

Table D:

Development of list of common factors in Objectives and Descriptors for senior secondary writing on National, State and Independent Curricula, chapter 2, section 2.2.4 (see also List A, chapter 6)

Key to Table D, below:

Objectives / Outcomes (O) and Descriptors (D) are for late secondary level writing in subject English on the following National, State or independent curricula:

UK = United Kingdom National Curriculum; NZ = New Zealand National Curriculum

NSW = New South Wales, Australia (State); Victoria = Victoria, Australia (State);

WA = Western Australia, (State); CIE = Cambridge International Examinations (Independent)

Factor		Objective or Outcome (O) / Descriptor (D)	Examination Board
1	Fluency, organisation and accuracy at the level of grammar, sentences and whole text	O: “write fluently”, “structure whole texts to give clarity”, “use ... paragraphs to develop and organise meaning”. “structure a wide range of sentence types” D: “grammar enables fine distinctions to be made”, “clear grasp of the use of ... paragraphing”	UK
		O: “adapts and synthesises a range a textual features to ... communicate information”, “refining the clarity of their composition” D: “ability to compose with refined precision”	NSW
		O: “creation of sustained and coherent texts”, “review and edit texts for fluency and coherence” “control of ... syntax” D: “achieves an assured cohesively structured piece” “makes fluent and effective use of language”	Victoria
		O: “writing in clear, direct language”, “adhering to conventions of paragraphing” D: “structures ... argument”, “accepted conventions of syntax”	WA
		O: “structuring well researched material effectively”, “present accurate and coherent information” D: “show accurate use and control of writing conventions”	NZ
		O: “ability to communicate clearly” D: “express ... arguments with clarity and fluency”, “control of written English will be accomplished”	CIE

Factor		Objective or Outcome (O) / Descriptor (D)	Examination Board
2	Logical, consistent and controlled reasoning emerging through writing	O: “establish and sustain a consistent point of view” D: “non-fiction is coherent, reasoned”	UK
		O: “ <i>composing sustained arguments</i> ” D: “ <i>presents critical ... response showing highly developed skills in ... analysis, synthesis</i> ”	NSW
		O: “justify points of view ... logically” D: “develops a cogent, controlled ... analysis”	Victoria
		D: “ <i>structures a logical argument</i> ”	WA
		O: “debate a proposition or point of view” D: “reasoned conclusion”	NZ
		O: “ <i>ability to produce informed ... judgements</i> ” D: “ <i>sustained relevance to the issues raised</i> ”, “ <i>logical progression</i> ”	CIE

Factor		Objective or Outcome (O) / Descriptor (D)	Examination Board
3	Sustained complexity of thought informing insightful/perceptive writing	O: “present information and ideas on complex subjects” D: “express complex ideas clearly”, “conveying complex perspectives”	UK
		O: “effective communication at different levels of complexity”, “increasing complexity of thought and expression” D: “highly developed ability to analyse ... and explain”, “highly developed skills in interpretation ... of texts and textual detail”	NSW
		O: “understanding of the relationship between purpose, form, language ...”, “explanations of their decisions” D: “explore ... conceptual complexity using an appropriate strategy”	Victoria
		O: “showing awareness”	WA
		O: “write explanations ... on complex issues”, “debate in depth”, “interpret, evaluate ... texts, identifying and discussing their language and literary qualities and relating them to ... contexts” D: “perceptive critical response”, “sustained perception”, “perceptive understanding”	NZ
		O: “ability to respond to texts ... different types”, “understanding the ways in which writers” choices ... shape meanings”, “insight appropriate to literary study” D: “express complex literary ideas”, “critical appreciation ... consideration of broader textual issues”	CIE

Factor		Objective or Outcome (O) / Descriptor (D)	Examination Board
4	Persuasion through evidence and linguistic devices	O: “support the purpose of the task, ... emphasis and creating specific effects”, “supporting views and opinions with a range of evidence”, “select appropriate persuasive techniques and rhetorical devices” D: “use of vocabulary and grammar enables ... emphasis [to be] achieved”, “non-fiction is ... persuasive”	UK
		O: “arguments supported by textual evidence”	NSW
		O: “explanations of their decisions” D: “achieves assured writing”, “integrating ... ideas suggested by ... texts”, “develops ... well-substantiated analysis using ... effective language and expression”	Victoria
		O: “awareness of the rhetorical nature of writing, using stylistic devices appropriately” D: “supports central ideas through ... textual reference”	WA
		D: develop ... response ... using supporting evidence”, “support ... ideas with relevant evidence ”	NZ
		O: “discuss varying opinions”, “produce independent opinions”	CIE

Factor		Objective or Outcome (O) / Descriptor (D)	Examination Board
5	Flexibility and breadth of style to fulfil a variety of writing situations/conditions/audiences	O: “adapting style and language to a wide range of forms, contexts and purposes”, “draw on their ... knowledge of linguistic and literary forms when composing their writing” D: “shows control of a range of styles”	UK
		O: “ <i>adapts and synthesises a range of textual features to explore and communicate information ... for a variety of purposes, audiences and contexts</i> ” D: “ <i>compose for a variety of audiences, purposes and contexts</i> ”	NSW
		O: “develop communicative capacities adequate for meeting the demands of post-school employment ...”, “communicate ideas ... to a range of audiences” D: “makes ... effective use of language appropriate to the purpose and audience specified in the task”	Victoria
		O: “ <i>writing in ... language, suited to the subject matter and audience</i> ”, “ <i>using stylistic devices appropriately</i> ”	WA
		O: “appropriate styles for different audiences”	NZ
		O: “ <i>ability to respond to texts in the three main forms (Prose, Poetry and Drama)</i> ” D: “ <i>sustain an appropriate balance between critical appreciation ... and consideration of the broader textual issues</i> ” <i>[emphasis added]</i>	CIE

Factor		Objective or Outcome (O) / Descriptor (D)	Examination Board
6	Flair, creativity and originality in expression	O: “write imaginatively, creatively and thoughtfully, producing texts that interest, engage and challenge the reader” D: “pupils” writing is original, has shape and impact”	UK
		O: “ <i>manipulating a range of generic forms</i> ” [emphasis added] D: “ <i>compose imaginatively ... with flair, originality and sophistication</i> ”	NSW
		D: “expressive language”, “assured ... writing”, “integrating in a sophisticated way, ideas ...”	Victoria
		D: “ <i>wide vocabulary</i> ”	WA
		NZ objectives and descriptors do not include this factor. D: “ <i>responses ... often freshly personal, and may show originality in approach to and treatment of questions</i> ”	CIE

(BOS, NSW, 2007a & 2008a; CIE, 2008; CCWA, 2001 & 2009; NZQA, 2008b & 2009a; QCA, 2008a; TKI, 2008; VCAA, 2008a & 2009a; VELS, 2007)

Appendix E Table E:
Sample of analysis of one sentence from each
locational category

	Location & condition	Examples from the sample with analysis below		
1.	introduction initial (timed) (64)	<i>Cuterson's strength, in his first novel 'Snow Falling on Cedars', is undoubtedly his keen mastery of the art of description.</i>		
		Grammatical analysis: 1 st position unmarked nominal group: contains premodifier 2 nd position: minor circumstantial Adjunct (location)	Metafunctional analysis: 1 st position interpersonal element: Head of nominal group: <i>strength</i> ; 2 nd position topical element: Adjunct	Other: equative: identifying (intensive)
2.	introduction medial (untimed) (125)	<i>The one thing he had ultimate trust in - the earth [-] is no longer safe.</i>		
		Grammatical analysis: 1 st position unmarked nominal group: contains premodification, definition by embedded clause and elaboration by paratactic nominal group	Metafunctional analysis: 1 st position interpersonal elements: numerative premodifier, <i>one</i> , and embedded clause, <i>ultimate trust</i>	Other: equative: attributive (intensive)
3.	introduction terminal (timed) (40)	<i>But the bleak end of the play reveals the workings of the dipolarities that exist within the play in microcosm.</i>		
		Grammatical analysis: 1 st position marked: minor conjunct 2 nd position contains premodification and definition by embedded propositional phrase	Metafunctional analysis: 1 st position textual element: conjunct 2 nd position interpersonal element: premodifier, <i>bleak</i>	Other: 2 nd position: equative: identifying (demonstration)

	Location & condition	Examples from the sample with analysis below		
4.	paragraph initial (untimed) (477)	<i>Despite this moral muddle, most critics have concluded that an Elizabethan audience would have watched the play with the assumption that Hamlet should have obeyed the ghost.</i>		
		Grammatical analysis: 1 st position marked: minor concessive, conjunctive Adjunct	Metafunctional analysis: 1 st position: textual, interpersonal and topical (triple) element: Adjunct 2 nd position: interpersonal element: projecting clause	Other: n/a
5.	paragraph medial (timed) (258)	<i>; this [,] in his eyes [,] makes him the biggest hypocrite of them all.</i>		
		Grammatical analysis: 1 st position unmarked: pronominal group 2 nd position: post head minor (viewpoint) subjunct (commas have been added as <i>in his eyes</i> as an embedded, defining prepositional phrase would be nonsensical and it does not fit easily into any type of enhancement as it does not add to the topic but indicates a point of view; it remains a subjunct because it would be awkward if moved away from <i>This</i>).	Metafunctional analysis: 1 st position: textual element: pronominal group 2 nd position: interpersonal element: viewpoint subjunct (Jackson, 1990, p. 153)	Other: equative: identifying (intensive) by assignment
6.	paragraph terminal (untimed) (490)	<i>It is therefore not surprising that Hamlet develops a feeling of disgust towards Claudius and thus lays the basis for Hamlet's later vengeful intentions.</i>		
		Grammatical analysis: 1 st position unmarked: anticipatory 'It' 2 nd position: post finite minor conjunct (within thematicised comment)	Metafunctional analysis: 1 st position: interpersonal element: thematicised comment 2 nd position: textual element: conjunct	Other: n/a

	Location & condition	Examples from the sample with analysis below		
7.	conclusion initial (timed) (40)	<i>Without a doubt I can say the theme of blindness is central in 'King Lear'.</i>		
		Grammatical analysis: 1 st position marked: minor disjunct 3 rd position: pronominal group with defining prepositional phrase	Metafunctional analysis: 1 st position: interpersonal element: disjunct 2 nd position: interpersonal element: projecting clause and first person pronoun	Other: 2 nd position: <i>I</i> as Subject of main clause 3 rd position: equative: attributive (intensive) (<i>central</i> is equivalent to 'important' or 'key' here, not a circumstantial element)
8.	conclusion medial (untimed) (127)	<i>It is this insecurity that Iago latches onto so that Othello and Desdemona's relationship develops from blindingly intense love to murderous hate.</i>		
		Grammatical analysis: 1 st position marked: Theme predication	Metafunctional analysis: 1 st position: topical element: Theme predication and textual element: deictic premodifier within Theme predication structure (dual marked)	Other: n/a
9.	Conclusion terminal (timed) (62)	<i>In conclusion, through the differences of several characters, their conflicts, the increased tension and hysteria in the bare and punishment-driven setting of Salem, we learn about several important human truths just as Miller intended.</i>		
		Grammatical analysis: 1 st position marked: conjunctive Adjunct 2 nd position: minor circumstantial Adjunct (manner) (multiple elements)	Metafunctional analysis: 1 st position: textual element: Adjunct 2 nd position: topical element: circumstantial Adjunct 3 rd position: interpersonal element: first person pronoun	Other: 3 rd position: <i>we</i> as Subject of main clause