

'Language as a system of meaning potential': the reading and design of verbal texts

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Bertrand Russell once described the word *obstinate* as an 'irregular verb'. During a BBC radio program, he offered the conjugation 'I am firm, you are obstinate, he is pig-headed'. <http://thewordguy.wordpress.com/> Downloaded 27 July 2009.

I could do the same with the word *fat*: 'I am plump, you are fat, he is obese'.

The Microsoft Word thesaurus offers the following synonyms for the word *fat*: *overweight, plump, chubby, stout, portly, obese, heavy, large, big, corpulent, hefty, huge, enormous*. Relative to the other options, *chubby* has an affectionate ring to it and *plump* is not as fat as *obese* or *enormous* or *huge*. *Portly* and *stout* are somewhat old-fashioned and are associated with upright elderly gentlemen in three-piece suits or stiff, matronly women. *Corpulent* suggests men with wide girths. *Big* and *large* could refer to size and height, not just weight, so they are less blunt

than *fat* or *overweight*. Given these options, *plump* seems to be amongst the lesser of the evils, which is why I chose it for the first person form of my ‘irregular verb’.

Although it is possible to view language as a closed abstract system, where each sign, each meaning-bearing unit, is arbitrary and derives its meaning from its place in the system relative to other signs (de Saussure, 1972), this tells us nothing about what happens when language is used. When people use language, they have to select from options available in the system – they have to make lexical, grammatical and sequencing choices in order to say what they want to say. This is what Halliday means by the meaning potential of language.

A language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realised. ... Systemic theory is a theory of meaning as choice, by which a language, or any other semiotic system, is interpreted as networks of interlocking options: either this, or that, or the other (Halliday, 1985, p. xiv).

For Halliday, the forms are the different elements of the lexico-grammar. Choice from this grammar determines how the meaning potential of language is realised. In 1978, he defined it as follows

What a speaker can say, i.e., the lexicogrammatical system as a whole, operates as the realization of the semantic system, which is what the speaker can *mean* – what I refer to as the ‘meaning potential’. I see language essentially as a system of meaning potential (Halliday, 1978: 39)

Let us then consider some grammatical options in addition to the lexical options already discussed.

We affect the certainty of a statement by opting for tense [1] or modality [2].

[1] He *is* overweight. (The choice of tense makes the statement categorical).

[2] He *might be* overweight. (The choice of modality, creates doubt and the statement is hedged).

The meaning changes entirely depending on our choice of polarity. Compare [1] and [3]. Where [1] is positive and [3] is negative.

[3] He *is not* overweight.

Transitivity is the technical name Halliday (1985) gives to the range of verbal processes from which to choose. Consider the differences in meaning created by what is selected from this part of the system.

[4] He *is* overweight. (Relational process).

[5] He *feels* overweight. (Mental process).

[6] He *says* he is overweight. (Verbal process).

[7] He *made* himself overweight. (Material process).

There is a difference between actually being overweight and feeling or saying one is overweight. Feeling is a perception that may not bear any relation to reality, as in anorexia. The same is true of saying one is overweight.

Making oneself overweight is an action for which one has to take responsibility. Being overweight is a statement of what is rather than of action. In [8] responsibility shifts away from the person who is overweight to a different participant.

[8] McDonald's made him overweight.

Halliday's theory of language as meaning potential (Halliday, 1985), argues that what is selected from the options in the lexicogrammar determines how we realise meaning when we compose and design texts. Understanding the choices that others have made enables us to recognise the linguistic resources that have been harnessed to produce a particular representation of events.

These selections are not neutral. In the examples that I have given, I could have chosen to use 'she' instead of 'he'. I deliberately chose not to because fat has been constructed as a feminist

issue (Orbach, 1986) and I did not wish to convey the idea that body image is an issue that predominantly affects women. Lexical and grammatical selections are motivated: they are designed to convey particular meanings in particular ways and to have particular effects. Moreover, they are designed to be believed. Texts work to position their readers; and the ideal reader, from the point of view of the writer (or speaker), is the reader who buys into the text and its meanings. Another way of saying this is to say that all texts are positioned and positioning. They are positioned by the writer's points of view, and the linguistic (and other semiotic) choices made by the writer are designed to produce effects that position the reader. We can play with the word “design”, by saying that texts have designs on us as readers, listeners or viewers. They entice us into their way of seeing and understanding the world – into their version of reality. Every text is just one set of perspectives on the world, a representation of it; language, together with other signs, works to construct reality.

Table 1: The four roles of the reader/writer

<p>Text decoder/encoder The decoder has to understand the relation between letters and sounds and the ways they combine to form words. Practice is needed to link visual and auditory processing with meaning. Automaticity in decoding allows time for both comprehension and interaction. Writers also need to develop the motor skills needed for hand-writing, remember spelling patterns and grasp the rules of combination, i.e. syntax.</p>	<p>Text participant Text participants do more than comprehend texts. They are active readers who use their own experience and meanings to think about and interact with the writer’s meanings when they make sense of a text. As writers they actively engage in making and communicating meaning. They have a purpose for writing and a sense of their audience.</p>
<p>Text user Users read and write for a range of purposes. They are familiar with different kinds of texts (newspaper articles, personal letters, poems, recipes, science reports, literature essays, text books, advertisements, notes, sms messages etc.) They understand that different genres are structured differently and use language in different ways. Implicit understanding of these forms comes from ongoing use. They employ a range of literacy practices.</p>	<p>Text analyst Analysts examine the effects of linguistic choices in order to understand how the text is working. They are not only interested in what the text means but who benefits and who is disadvantaged by the position taken by the writer. They are interested in how the text works to maintain or challenge existing relations of power in the society. Writers who are analysts are able to choose language deliberately so that their voices can be heard and the positions they support believed.</p>

Table 2: Linguistic resources underpinning the four roles of the reader/writer

<p>Text decoder/encoder <i>Print literacy</i> – familiarity with books, pages and print. <i>Alphabetic literacy</i> – names and shapes of letters.</p>	<p>Text participant – engaged reader or writer <i>Lexical competence</i> – extensive knowledge of words: formation and meaning.</p>
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<p><i>Phonic awareness</i> – sound letter correspondences. <i>Phonemic awareness</i> – sound system of English in relation to the sounds of the languages they speak. <i>Morphological awareness</i> - word formation (book, booking, bookings, books, booked). <i>Vocabulary</i> – words and their (multiple) meanings; word associations, webs of meaning, connotations, collocations, synonyms and antonyms. Word attack skills. <i>Spelling patterns</i>. <i>Syntax</i> – word order and the rules of combination; grammatical clues. <i>Contextual clues</i> (in the text and in the context).</p>	<p><i>Grammatical competence</i> – complex syntax and nominalizations. <i>Pragmatic competence</i> – how context affects meaning: implicature, ambiguity, inferencing. <i>Socio-linguistic competence</i> - language varieties and their social uses (register); text types and their social purposes (genres). <i>Semantic competence</i> – the ability to make and infer meaning; metaphorical uses of language. <i>Textual competence (above the level of the sentence)</i> – cohesive ties, logical connectors, discourse markers, structure and organisation of texts.</p>
<p>Text user <i>Engage in literacy events</i> – read, write and design texts for a range of social purposes. <i>Understand the social practices</i> that underpin different literacy events. <i>Understand genres</i> as text types tied to different social purposes; work with fiction and non-fiction, functional and aesthetic texts. <i>Appropriateness</i> – the ability to choose the variety and form suited to the social purposes of texts. <i>Modes</i> – recognise and use the affordances of verbal and visual modes in the construction of print texts. <i>Media</i> – use a range of technologies for the reception and production of print texts.</p>	<p>Text analyst – resistant reader or critical writer <i>Critical competence</i> – ask questions to understand whose interests are served by the way the text has been, or is being, constructed and its possible social effects; imagining how the text might be transformed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is language working to position the reader? • Who benefits? Who is disadvantaged? • What are the values that underpin the text? • Who is included? Who is excluded? Who speaks? • What is foregrounded? What is backgrounded? Why? • What is assumed or taken-for-granted? Who decides what is appropriate? • How is language used to maintain or challenge existing relations of power? Whose perspectives are privileged? Whose voices are heard/silenced?

Freebody and Luke’s (1996) four resources model for reading argues that readers have to be competent in four different roles. They have to be text decoders, text participants, text users and text analysts. Their focus is on the roles involved in text reception. Parallel roles are needed for text production. These roles are summarised in Table 1. Each of these roles is underpinned by linguistic knowledge. This is summarised in Table 2. Teachers need to exercise professional judgement to decide what activities are needed to develop their students’ implicit knowledge of lexis and grammar. They also have to decide what explicit knowledge is necessary and how to teach it in such a way that it becomes a useable resource in the literacy practices required by each of the roles.

Much of this linguistic knowledge is implicit and is acquired as one learns one’s primary language. Explicit knowledge gives one more conscious control for both the reception and production of language. It helps us to see what we are doing when we use language, and to locate the effects in particular linguistic choices. It gives us a meta-language to talk about these choices. It is important to understand that choice of any linguistic option necessarily implies rejection of

other options. Because any selection directs our attention to what is present in a text and away from the possibilities that have been elided (Kress & Hodge, 1979), it is useful to consider the range of options from which a choice has been made. Using Saussure's concept of paradigmatic relations, it becomes possible to consider the lexical and grammatical choices in the light of what was not selected but what could have been. Because our choices are constrained by what the language system allows us to choose from, we have to know something about this system. For example, at times we have to choose between two options, for example, the definite and the indefinite article¹ or the passive and the active voice. At other times we have to choose from many options: the vast array of synonyms in the lexis of English, the range of tenses and modality, the different logical connectors are all cases in point.

Key linguistic features for designing and analysing texts

In focusing on the linguistic features that are key for producing and analysing texts, it is important to recognise that text analysis is just one aspect of discourse analysis. For Fairclough (1989, 1995), there are three dimensions of discourse:

1. The object of analysis (verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts);
2. The processes by means of which the object is produced (written, spoken, designed) and received (read, listened to, viewed) by human subjects;
3. The socio-historical conditions which govern these processes.

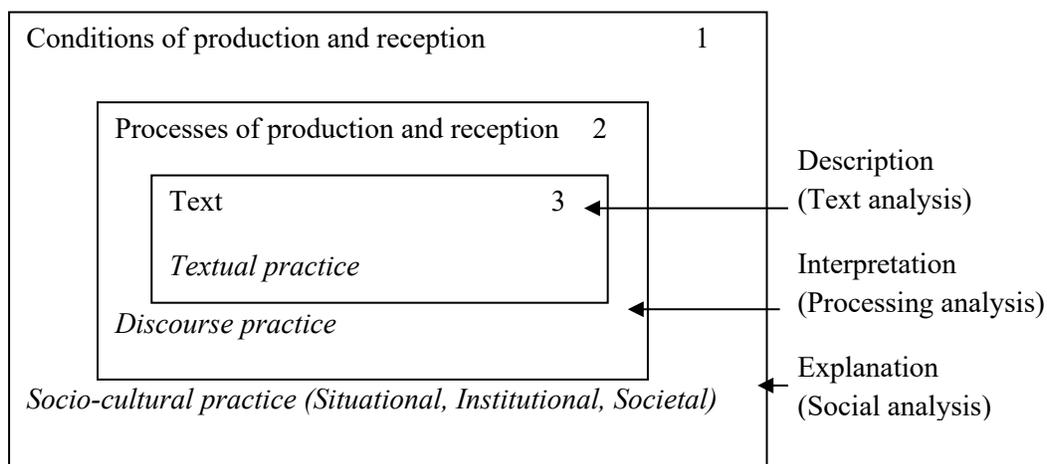
According to Fairclough each of these dimensions requires a different kind of analysis:

1. text analysis (description);
2. processing analysis (interpretation);
3. social analysis (explanation).

¹ Even the choice of a word as seemingly innocuous as “the” is not neutral. The definite article is used only when the referent is specific for both addresser and addressee or, in simpler terms, when both the writer and the reader know what is being referred to. The use of the definite article presupposes shared knowledge. It is therefore used to refer to established information, whereas the indefinite article is used to refer to new information. So, for example, referring to “weapons of mass destruction” as “the weapons of mass destruction” presupposes both that we all know what weapons we are talking about and that they exist.

Fairclough captures the simultaneity of his method of CDA with a model that embeds the three different kinds of analysis, one inside the other. See Figure 1 which synthesises two versions of his model (Fairclough, 1989; 1995).

Figure 1: Fairclough's dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis



What is useful about this approach is that it enables text participants, text users and text analysts to focus on the signifiers that make up the text, the specific linguistic and visual selections, their juxtapositioning, their sequencing, their layout and so on. However, it requires them to recognise the historical determination of these selections and to understand that these choices are tied to the conditions of possibility of that text. This is another way of saying that texts are instantiations of socially regulated discourses and that the processes of production and reception are socially constrained.

Text analysis that focuses only on the semiotic choices that form the text is therefore limited because it says nothing about the text in relation to the social context or the conditions of its production and reception. However, for the purposes of this chapter, which focuses on 'language as a system of meaning potential', the focus is on linguistic options in the system and how choice realises meaning. This is not to suggest that text analysis should be done in isolation or that other forms of semeiosis are not as important as language. The template of key linguistic features for text design and analysis (Table 3), which is based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (1985), explains the meaning potential of different linguistic choices. While it provides a useful

starting point, it is not intended to be comprehensive. It has three columns. The first names the linguistic feature, the second explains it briefly and the third column is left open for comments about, or examples of, the use of the feature in specific texts.

Table 3: Template of key linguistic features for text analysis (Janks, 2005; 2009)

Linguistic feature	Meaning potential	Realisations
Lexicalisation	The selection/choice of wordings. Different words construct the same idea differently.	
Overlexicalisation	Many words for the same phenomenon	
Relexicalisation	Renaming	
Lexical cohesion	Created by synonymy, antonymy, repetition, collocation.	
Metaphor	Used for yoking ideas together and for the discursive construction of new ideas.	
Euphemism	Hides negative actions or implications.	

Transitivity	Processes in verbs. Are they verbs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>doing</i>: material process • <i>being or having</i>: relational processes • <i>thinking/feeling/perceiving</i>: mental • <i>saying</i>: verbal processes • <i>physiological</i>: behavioural processes • <i>existential</i> 	
Voice	Active and passive voice constructs participants as <i>doers</i> or as <i>done-to</i> 's. Passive voice allows for the deletion of the agent.	
Nominalisation	A process is turned into a thing or an event without participants or tense or modality. This is the central mechanism for reification.	
Quoted speech	• Who is quoted in DS/IS/FIS?	
Direct speech	• Who is quoted first/last/most?	
Indirect speech	• Who is not quoted?	
Free indirect speech	• Has someone been misquoted or quoted out of context?	
Scare quotes	• What reporting verb was chosen? • What is the effect of scare quotes?	
Turn-taking	• Who gets the floor? How many turns do different participants get? • Who is silent/ silenced? • Who interrupts? • Who gets heard? Whose points are followed through? • Whose cultural rules for turn taking are used ?cultures? • Who controls the topic?	
Mood	Is the clause a statement, question, offer or command?	
Polarity	Positive (yes it is); negative (no it is not)	
Tense	Tense sets up the definiteness of events occurring in time. The present tense is used for timeless truths and absolute certainty. The past tense is used for events in the past	
Modality	Degrees of uncertainty; logical possibility/probability; social authority Modality created by modals (may, might, could will), adverbs (possibly, certainly) intonation, tag questions (He'll come, won't he?).	
Pronouns	Inclusive we/exclusive we/you Us and them: othering pronouns Sexist/non sexist pronouns: generic "he" The choice of first/ second/ third person.	
Definite article (the)	<i>The</i> is used for shared information – to refer to something mentioned before or that	
Indefinite article (a)	the addressee can be assumed to know about. Reveals textual presuppositions.	
Thematisation	The first bit of the clause is called the theme. (If the bit before the clause has two bits, the theme is the first bit. The theme is the launch pad for the clause. Look for patterns of what is foregrounded in the clause by being in theme position.	
Rheme	The last bit of the clause: the part after the verb.	

	In written English the new information is usually at the end of the clause In spoken English new information is indicated by tone.
Sequence	Sequencing of information in the clause and of clauses affects meaning Sequence sets up cause and effect, chronology ...
Logical connectors	Conjunctions set up the logic of the argument. Conjunctions are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Additive</i>: and, in addition • <i>Causal</i>: because, so, therefore • <i>Adversative</i>: although, yet • <i>Temporal</i>: when, while, after, before
Cohesion	Sets up connections between participants, processes and circumstances in a text Cohesion serves to tie long stretches of clauses together to form a text. Effected by conjunction, substitution, repetition, reference and lexical cohesion.

In order to use this table, writers have to become analysts of what they have written. Analysis enables them to understand how their text is positioned and positioning and it enables them to redesign their texts in relation to their purposes. What matters in text analysis, is that it is systematic. If the analyst (either a reader or a writer) decides, for example, to examine the use of pronouns, then every pronoun in the text needs to be considered in order to establish the patterns of use. The same is true of any other linguistic feature. Moreover, a principled reason needs to be given for which linguistic features are examined, should the analyst choose to select only a few.

The text used here as an example is ‘Spot the refugee’, one of four Lego posters which have appeared on the United Nations High Commission for Refugees website since they were first uploaded 31 December 1997. I downloaded them again at the following web addresses 27 July 2009.

<http://www.unhcr.org/4a5484999.html> Spot the refugee

<http://www.unhcr.org/4a5466e92.html> What’s the difference,

<http://www.unhcr.org/4a5485ba9.html> What’s wrong here?

<http://www.unhcr.org/4a5483b39.html> How does it feel?

They are not difficult to find if one googles ‘UNHCR Lego posters’ and they make an excellent resource for classrooms.

My analyses of these posters appear in Janks 1995 and 2010. In summary, I argue that in these posters, which set out to construct refugees as ‘just like you and me’, refugees are nevertheless othered. They are portrayed as having nothing, which suggests that, without material possessions, they are deemed to be worthless. The assessment of their worth is not based on their skills, their knowledge, their labour or their cultural resources. They are constructed as dependent on us. The historical causes that produce ever-increasing numbers of refugees are absent from the text and the readers (and their respective governments) are exonerated from blame. In order to make the readers more accepting of refugees, the UNHCR produces a discourse of sameness, that hides differences and does not value diversity as a resource for innovation and growth.

In order to arrive at this interpretation, the transitivity, voice, mood, tense/modality, theme and lexical choices of every clause in the text were analysed. This first level of description enables one to find patterns by counting occurrences. Table 4 shows the rough working that enables the analyst to understand the linguistic and grammatical selections that constitute the data for text analysis.

Table 4: Detailed linguistic analysis of UNHCR poster

Processes in bold Pronouns in <i>italics</i>	Transitivity	Voice	Mood	Modality	Theme	Lexis: T=cohesion
Spot the refugee	material	active	command	categorical present tense		the= shared knowledge
There <i>he</i> is .	relational – being	active	statement	categorical present tense		he
Fourth row, second from the left. <i>The one</i> with the moustache. Obvious really. Maybe not	no verbs (relational – being?) abbreviated syntax – staccato information. all therefore theme		statement statement statement	categorical categorical high modality doubt	fourth row ... the one modal: certain modal: doubt	pointing out the one= with factual info e.g. moustache

The unsavoury looking character is more likely to be your average neighbourhood slob with a grubby vest and a weekend's stubble on his chin	relational – being	active	statement	more likely – makes 'is' less categorical	the unsavoury looking character	-Unsavoury -average neighbourhood slob -grubby vest -weekend stubble
<i>You're looking at</i>	behavioural	active	statement	you		
<i>You see</i>	mental	active	statement		you	
refugees are just like <i>you and me</i> .	relational – being	active	statement	categorical	refugees	the real refugee inclusive: you/me/ refugee
Except for one thing.			statement?		[except] for one thing	one <i>thing</i>
Everything has been left behind	material	passive	statement	categorical	everything	<i>everything</i>
<i>they</i> once had	relational – having	active	statement	categorical	they	exclusive
Home, family, possessions [are] all gone .	relational - being	active	statement	categorical	home family possessions	Overlexis rhyme: all gone
<i>They have</i> nothing.	relational. - having	active	statement	categorical	they	<i>nothing</i> T
And nothing is all	relational – being	active	statement	categorical	[and] nothing	<i>nothing</i> is all T
<i>They'll</i> ever have	relational – having	active	statement	categorical	they	ever T
Unless <i>we</i> all extend a helping hand.	material	active	statement	categorical	[unless] we all	helping hand
<i>We know</i>	mental	active	statement	categorical	we	
<i>you</i> can't give them back the things	material	active	statement	can't give back	you	<i>things</i>
that <i>others</i> have taken away .	material	active	statement	categorical	others	
<i>We're</i> not even asking for money	material	active	statement	categorical (even)	we (UNHCR)	exclusive we money
(though every penny certainly helps).	material	active	statement	certainly helps	every penny	
But <i>we</i> are asking	material	active	statement	categorical	[but] we	
And a smile of welcome.	(nominalisation)	active			[And] a smile of welcome	smile of welcome
It may not seem like much.	relational	active	statement	may not seem	it (a smile of welcome)	[not] much
But to a refugee it can mean everything.	?relational/mental	active	statement	can mean	[but] to a refugee	you: it [not much] refugee: it <i>everything</i>
UNHCR is a strictly humanitarian organisation	relational – being	active	statement	categorical present tense	UNHCR	strictly humanitarian

[that is] funded only by voluntary contributions.	material	passive [is] funded	statement	categorical	[UNHCR]	only by voluntary contributions (nom)
Currently it is responsible for more than 19 million refugees around the world	relational – being	active	statement	categorical present tense	currently {UNHCR}	more than 19 million around the world

It is this careful and systematic behind-the-scenes work that enables the analyst to complete the realisations column of Table 3.

Table 5: Linguistic analysis of a UNHCR poster using the key linguistic features template

Linguistic feature	Meaning potential	Realisations of meanings
Lexicalisation	The selection/choice of wordings. Different words construct the same idea differently.	If you look for the refugee in the <i>Fourth row, second from the left. The one with the moustache</i> , you will have been reeled in by the text, only to discover that you have been cheated, because – <i>The unsavoury looking character you're looking at is more likely to be your average neighbourhood slob with a grubby vest and a weekend's stubble on his chin. And the real refugee could just as easily be the clean-cut fellow on his left.</i> In addition, you will have been constructed as someone who assumes that refugees look like “unsavoury”, unshaved “slobs”. And because you are now someone who sees refugees as both different from and inferior to you, you need to learn that “clean-cut” <i>refugees are just like you and me.</i>
Metaphor	Used for yoking ideas together and for the discursive construction of new ideas.	Lego dolls is a visual metaphor – human beings are constructed as look-alike manipulateable toy dolls.
Euphemism	Hides negative actions or implications	Everything they once had has been left behind.
Transitivity	Processes in verbs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>doing</i>: material process • <i>being or having</i>: relational processes • <i>thinking/feeling/ perceiving</i>: • <i>mental</i> • <i>saying</i>: verbal processes 	The use of transitivity shows that the refugee is constructed predominantly with relational processes of “being” and “having”, whereas the reader and the UNHCR are constructed with very few relational processes. They are given both mental and material processes, and the UNHCR in addition, is given verbal processes. They are shown acting. The UNHCR is the only participant that speaks.

Voice	Active and passive voice constructs participants as doers or as “done-to-s”. Passive voice allows for the deletion of the agent.	All active voice except for “everything has been left behind” which is a passive construction, removing agency. Un-named “others” are blamed.
Nominalisation	A process is turned into a thing	“a smile of welcome”
Quoted speech	The use of direct, indirect or free indirect speech	
Turn-taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who gets the floor? How many turns do different participants get? • Who is silent/ silenced? • Who interrupts? • Who gets heard? Whose points are followed through? • Who controls the topic? 	Only the UNHCR speaks and it speaks for refugees. It alone knows what refugees want and need. No refugee's voice is heard.
Mood	Is the clause a statement, question, offer or command?	The opening instruction, <i>SPOT THE REFUGEE</i> , prominent because it is printed in capital letters in a large bold font is the only command in a text that is otherwise made up of statements. Statements providing information are used throughout, suggesting that the reader needs to be informed by the UNHCR.
Polarity and tense.	Tense is used for categorical statements	Almost all clauses are in the present tense and are categorical. Modality is used to create uncertainty only about our ability to recognise or understand the needs of refugees.
Modality: degrees of uncertainty	Logical possibility/ probability Social authority	
Pronouns Generic “he” used to include “she” Us and them Us and them Inclusive we/ exclusive we	<p>The pronouns chosen are doing interesting work. First the refugee is referred to as “he”. The use of pronouns is also interesting because of the way in which it presents the refugee as male, this despite the fact that 80% of refugees are women and children. The gender stereotyping is reinforced in the visual images, where women tend to be shown without the occupation markers of the male figures and with jewellery.</p> <p>The refugee is constructed as just like “you and me” (the reader and the writer, who represents the UNHCR). Having denied any diversity, reinforced by the supposed sameness of the Lego dolls, the text immediately sets up a difference, introduced by the word “except” and encoded in us/them pronouns.</p> <p><i>Except for one thing. Everything they once had has been left behind. Home, family, possessions all gone. They have nothing. And nothing is all they’ll ever have unless we all extend a helping hand.</i> [My emphasis]</p> <p>“We” is used here to include the reader and the writer, and to exclude refugees. In the very next sentence, “we” is used exclusively.</p> <p><i>We know you can’t give them back the things that others have taken away. We’re not even asking for money (though every penny certainly helps). But we are asking that you keep an open mind. And a smile of welcome. It may not seem like much. But to a refugee it can mean everything.</i></p> <p>Here, “we” refers to the UNHCR only. The UNHCR is constructed as knowing what <i>can mean everything</i> to a refugee. The reader is in need of instruction on how to behave, and refugees are given no agency and no voice. This sets up the very social divide that the early part of the text is at pains to refute</p>	
Definite article (<i>the</i>)	<i>The</i> is used for shared information – to refer to	Spot the refugee – “the” suggests that there is

Indefinite article (<i>a</i>)	something mentioned before or that the addressee can be assumed to know about.	a refugee in the group of Lego figures and that this is shared information.
Thematisation	Look for patterns of what is foregrounded in the clause by being in theme position.	An analysis of theme, shows movement in the text from the refugee, to you (the reader), to possessions thematised four times and expressed as everything and as nothing, back to the reader (and his or her attitude) – “a smile of welcome” is thematised twice, once with the pronoun “it”. The text concludes with the UNHCR in theme position.
Rheme – syntax: the last bit of the clause is called the rheme.	In written English the new information is usually at the end of the clause.	The bottom right hand corner of the text, the prime position for new information, is reserved for the UNHCR.
Sequencing of information. Logical connectors – conjunctions set up the logic of the argument.	Sequence sets up cause and effect. Conjunctions are: • <i>additive</i> : and, in addition • <i>causal</i> : because, so, therefore • <i>adversative</i> : although, yet • <i>temporal</i> : when, while, after, before	The logic of the text is maintained by the way in which information is sequenced. Additive conjunctions predominate with two noticeable variations – the use of “except” to signify the shift to the one thing that differentiates refugees, and the use of “but” to underscore how important people’s attitudes are to a refugee.

While there can be no doubt that the intentions of the UNHCR are to improve the ways in which refugees are perceived by making an argument for the recognition of our common humanity, what this analysis shows is that it does this by constructing a discourse of sameness that is problematic. It fails to value our differences and it is a discourse that presupposes a melting pot ideology as opposed to one which embraces.

I began this chapter by playing with lexical and grammatical options for constructing fatness. I will end by stressing the importance of grammatical knowledge for both writers and readers of texts. An understanding of how lexical and grammatical choices realise the meaning potential of language in texts enables writers to design texts purposefully and it gives readers the power to see how texts have been designed – *how* they mean, not just *what* they mean. In the old days of teaching grammar, students were asked to rewrite texts transforming active voice to passive voice or direct speech to indirect speech or present tense to past tense in order to demonstrate their technical facility with these different linguistic forms. Grammar was taught as form not meaning. Such decontextualised grammatical exercise can be redesigned to focus on meaning. If one takes a sentence in a text and makes different linguistic choices, one can ask students to

explain what the change does to the meaning. To illustrate this idea, I have suggested some changes in relation to *Spot the Refugee* (see Table 6).

Table 6: Possible changes to *Spot the Refugee*

Original version	Changed version
Spot the refugee	Can one spot a refugee?
They have <i>nothing</i> .	They have no <i>material possessions</i> .
We know <i>you</i> can't give them back the things that others have taken away.	We know <i>we</i> can't give them back their stolen possessions.
Your average neighbourhood slob.	Your average neighbour.
Picture of Lego people arranged <i>in rows</i> .	Picture of <i>real</i> people <i>not in rows</i> .

These changes serve to draw attention to the choices that were made by the writer and invite students to compare the meaning of the original and the changed version, sensitising them to the effects of particular selections. In rubbing original texts up against transformed texts, we help to see the effects of the original choices and to recognise them as choices, rather than as natural and inevitable ways of encoding meaning. This provides both a purpose for learning and understanding grammar and the motivation for doing so. Where grammar for grammar's sake may be boring, meaning is not. Most importantly, this method of teaching language can be used with any text, at any level.

When we add to this the other dimensions of Fairclough's model and ask students to think about the effects of these meaning choices in particular socio-historical contexts, then the study of language is immeasurably enriched. In relation to this text for example, we could ask questions such as:

- Are people the same? Why is it so important to think of people as the same rather than as different?
- Why are people who have no possessions viewed as having nothing? What other kinds of “things” might people have?
- Who is said to be responsible for taking the refugees things? In what ways might our government or other governments be responsible?
- What percentage of refugees in the world are men?²
- How are refugees treated in your country?

Such questions teach students to become text participants, who bring meanings to texts, and text analysts who think about the interests at play and the political and social effects that textual representations can have.

If discourse analysis is not possible without an understanding of lexicogrammar, and critical reading is not possible without discourse analysis, then we do our students an educational disservice if we do not teach them grammar. If writers have no means of interrogating the texts they produce, then they have limited resources for redrafting and repositioning their work. In this chapter I have provided the motivation for teaching grammar along with a method and a model for thinking about the use of lexico- grammar for making meaning in texts and contexts. I trust that I have used the meaning potential of language to construct a convincing argument.

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² These questions are addressed in Janks, 2005

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