Exercises for language teachers

1. Identify a good example of a type of text you would like your students to be able to use effectively. The text might be spoken or written. If you wish, you may choose one of the texts in Chapter 1.

2. Undertake a clause complex analysis using the five steps in Chapter 7.

3. Use your analysis to look for patterns of clause combination across the text.

4. What patterns of combination tend to be used the most (e.g., independent, dependent, embedded, expansion, projection)?

5. How does the use of these patterns contribute to the text achieving its purpose?

6. What do these patterns reveal to you about:
   - the text's structure and purpose
   - experiential meanings in the text
   - interpersonal meanings in the text
   - textual meanings in the text?

7. Relate what you have discovered about the clause combination in this text to your students' learning needs and goals.

8. What do you think your students need to learn about clause combination in order to be able to use this text effectively?

9. Use what you have discovered about clause combination in the text to design activities that support your students' progress towards their learning goals. These activities might draw your students' attention to:
   - the purpose and structure of the text as revealed in the way the clauses are combined at different stages of the text
   - clauses boundaries
   - different types of clause (e.g., independent with or without ellipsis; dependent, both finite and non-finite; interrupting; embedded)
   - using a clause to expand the meanings of another clause, for example, by adding circumstantial information
   - using a clause to project another clause
   - binding clauses with coordinating and subordinating conjunctions or explicit and implicit conjunction.

Exploring context

Introducing ...
- A fuller description of contextual features based on lexicogrammatical patterns

Discussing ...
- Implications for language teaching
This chapter returns us to two fundamental questions about any text:

- What's going on in the world outside language (the extralinguistic level) to make this text as it is?
- What can we tell about the world outside language by exploring this text?

In this chapter we move from the patterns of lexicogrammar and semantics that have been the focus of earlier chapters towards a concern with interpreting the overall patterns of a text in order to see what they reveal about its context. To make this exciting step, we need to be comfortable with everything we have done so far. Appendices A and B provide two complementary charts that summarise the main issues in the previous chapters and lead us to the next step in our discussion of context. Appendix A summarises the metalanguage for each part of our metafunctional analysis while Appendix B summarises the overall meaning patterns uncovered by our analysis.

As we explore the relation between text and context, we will discover that the questions at the top of this chapter are essentially not two questions, but opposite sides of the same question. The relation between context and meanings is dynamic and reversible, with contexts being realised in texts and texts revealing contexts. This means that knowledge of the context allows us to make predictions about the lexicogrammar of a text. Conversely, grammatical analysis of the type we have been doing allows us to understand the context of a text's production because the sum of the meanings encoded in the lexicogrammar becomes the sign of the context.

Of course, this is what we have been implying from the first time we introduced the now familiar diagram: Levels of language (Figure 8.1).

**Metalanguage for exploring the relation between text and context**

The metalanguage needed for our discussion was introduced in Chapter 1 where we said that context of situation motivates the meanings of texts in three main areas:

- **Field of discourse**
- **Tenor of discourse**
- **Mode of discourse**

The metalanguage of context

- the field of human experience encompassed by the text and its purpose in encompassing it (field of discourse)
- the social relationship between the speaker or writer and the addressee (tenor of discourse)
- the nature of the text itself and the role that language plays in it (mode of discourse).

From context to text: From text to context

Imagine that you are constructing three texts in which the field of discourse — the description of the finals of an international tennis tournament in which you participated — is constant.

In the first text, you write a letter about the game to your closest friend, and, in the second, you phone him to discuss it. In these two, the tenor of discourse is also constant but the mode of discourse is different — the first text would be a written monologue and the second a spoken dialogue. We would expect that this vital difference would be reflected in the shape and lexicogrammatical choices of the two texts.

In a third text, you have written a description of the match for your local, suburban newspaper. The field of discourse would be the same description of the tennis match and, like the first text, the mode would be written and monologic. But in this third text the tenor of discourse (the statuses and roles of the participants) would be different and the difference would be reflected in your description.
Now imagine the reverse situation, where instead of creating the texts you are the reader or addressee. The lexicogrammar of the texts provides you with clues about their context of situation.

It almost goes without saying that it would be virtually impossible for you to produce or interpret the texts if you were not familiar with tennis matches, letter writing, telephones or suburban newspapers. Yet for many people in the world these situations would indeed be unfamiliar and the construction and interpretation of the three texts would be most unlikely. This kind of constraint means that contexts of situation always occur within the context of culture which encompasses the total of all the contexts of situation within that culture.

Interpreting context

Our concern with the underlying motivations of a text should not sound daunting; after all, we use our knowledge of context with every text we write or speak or hear or read. We can test our ability to do so using Text 1 and its accompanying questions. As you read it, bear in mind these transcription conventions: the clauses are numbered, extra information is given in upper case, and each dot in a series represents a pause of a few seconds.

Text 1: A simple ball game

1 OK, Go over
2 And get the ball ...
3 Now sit down there ...
4 Sit down over there ...
5 Now roll it
6 Roll it over to Tiffany
7 And then she’ll push it back to you
8 There you go (LAUGHTER)
9 And back again (LAUGHTER)
10 And back again (LAUGHTER)
11 Oh not too hard (WARNING)
12 You’ll hurt her
13 There you go (LAUGHTER)
14 Oh! O.K., pick it up
15 And throw it ... like that
16 Oh (DISMAY) Go
17 And get it

Questions about context

- What activity is taking place?
- What in the text tells us this?
- Who is speaking?
- What in the text tells us this?
- Who is being spoken to?
- What in the text tells us this?
- What sort of social distance is there between them?
- Is the relationship between them equal or unequal?
- What in the text tells us this?
- Are any items in the text positively or negatively appraised?
- What in the text tells us this?
- Again, how do we know?
- Do we know precisely where the activity is taking place?
- How significant is this?
- Is the text interactive or not (is it a monologue or a dialogue)?
- Was this text originally spoken or written?
- How do we know this?
- How could we summarise the main tone or thrust of the text?
- Does language constitute the whole of the activity or is it helping some other activity along?

Although the language of the text is all we have to work with, it provides enough information for us to answer all but one of the questions with some degree of certainty. If we then ask ourselves why this should be so, the answer is that we learn language in contexts and we can compare texts to our previous language experiences. Because we have heard language like this text many times before, we can slot it into our experience and come up with a fairly accurate assessment of what is being talked about, the purpose of the talk, the relationship between the participants, and the role of language in the interaction.

The only unanswerable question is the precise location of the activity and, for this text, this is not really relevant. The exact location of the discourse in time and space is known as the MATERIAL SITUATIONAL SETTING and, except where it actually enters the text in some significant way, we generally keep it quite separate from the more important contextual features which we have been calling the context of situation.

If you think the speaker is a kindergarten teacher, you may think that the material situational setting is a pre-school and that Tiffany is another child of the same age – but you may be wondering why all the speech is addressed to the unnamed child. If you think the speaker is a mother, you probably think that the material situational setting is
a park or garden or a room at home and that Tiffany, propped up to participate in the game, is the younger sibling of the addressee. Whether it was a room or garden, whether the day was fine or wet, what the children were wearing, are all irrelevant to the text. What we are really interested in here are the contextual features from the extralinguistic world that make the text what it is.

We can define CONTEXT OF SITUATION as an abstraction made up of the sum of the motivating features of the text’s construction which make it what it is, what Hasan calls the ‘motivational relevancies’ (Hasan 1996a). Let’s look more closely at the short text.

**Investigating field**

The main questions concern the experiential domain.

- What activity is taking place?
- What in the text tells us this?

The experiential meanings of Processes, Participants and Circumstances provide the answer. Here are the major patterns uncovered by our analysis.

**Processes**

**Material** processes are in bold type.

1. OK, Go over
2. And get the ball ...
3. Now sit down there ...
4. Sit down over there ...
5. Now roll it
6. Roll it over to Tiffany
7. And then she’ll push it back to you
8. There you go (LAUGHTER)
9. And back again (LAUGHTER)
10. And back again (LAUGHTER)
11. Oh not too hard (WARNING)
12. You’ll hurt her
13. There you go (LAUGHTER)
14. Oh! O.K., pick it up
15. And throw it ... like that
16. Oh (DISMAY) Go
17. And get it

**Summary of Processes**

Most processes are material. This pattern is so strong that it does not matter that we have not recovered roll or push in Clauses 9 and 10.

**Participants**

**Actor** is shown in bold and **Goal** in italics.

1. OK, Go over
2. And get the ball ...
3. Now sit down there ...
4. Sit down over there ...
5. Now roll it
6. Roll it over to Tiffany
7. And then she’ll push it back to you
8. There you go (LAUGHTER)
9. And back again (LAUGHTER)
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13. There you go (LAUGHTER)
14. Oh! O.K., pick it up
15. And throw it ... like that
16. Oh (DISMAY) Go
17. And get it

**Summary of Participants**

The most common **Actor** is not shown in the clause. It is the addressee who is to perform the action, although Tiffany is also **Actor** in Clause 7. The most common **Goal** is the ball.

**Circumstances**

**Place** is underlined and **Manner** is in bold type.

1. OK, Go over
2. And get the ball ...
3. Now sit down there ...
4. Sit down over there ...
5. Now roll it
6. Roll it over to Tiffany
7. And then she’ll push it back to you
8. There you go (LAUGHTER)
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13. There you go (LAUGHTER)
14. Oh! O.K., pick it up
15. And throw it ... like that
16. Oh (DISMAY) Go
17. And get it
Summary of Circumstances

Most Circumstances answer the question Where? either about rolling the ball or directing the movements of the child. The Circumstances of manner refer to the child's actions.

Summarising field

We would have made an accurate assessment of the activity if we had said that the text concerns a simple ball game. To a large extent we gleaned this information about the field of discourse from the transitivity system of the clauses - the participants are largely concerned with positioning themselves and rolling and pushing and getting a ball. In other words, the experiential meanings combine as signs of the field of discourse.

Investigating tenor

This set of questions concerns the relationship between the speakers.
- Who is speaking?
- What in the text tells us this?
- Who is being spoken to?
- What sort of social distance is there between them?
- Is the relationship between them equal or unequal?
- What in the text tells us this?
- Are any items in the text positively or negatively appraised?
- What are the appraisal motifs?
- Again, how do we know?

The interpersonal meanings in the text provide the answers. Here are the major patterns uncovered by our analysis.

Mood

In this text, declarative mood is underlined and imperative mood is in bold type.

Summary of mood

Almost all the clauses in this text are imperative mood. Even the declarative clauses (7 and 12) contain some modality. The speaker demands goods and services and the other participants apparently comply, so the relationship is quite unequal. If we add this information to our conclusions about the field of discourse and our past experiences of similar activities, we can expect that a young child is being taught a simple ball game by a mother or teacher. The adult does all the talking and the children accept her instructions so the power and status is unequal. The adult also appraises the child's actions:
- There you go! (positive appraisal)
- Oh, not too hard! (negative appraisal)

The adult even appraises a possible action to warn the child, though we could only be really sure about the adult's appraisal if we could see the accompanying facial expressions and gestures:
- You'll hurt her

The relationship of adult and child seems very close and many things are taken for granted - the speech is familiar and elliptical - so the social distance between them is minimal. A summation of the roles of the participants and their relation to each other is known as the TENOR OF DISCOURSE and, to a large extent, comes from the interpersonal system of the clauses. In other words, the interpersonal meanings of the Mood system combine as signs of the tenor of discourse.

Investigating mode

The next set of questions concerns the role of language in the text.
- Is the text interactive or not, that is, is it a monologue or a dialogue?
- Was this text originally spoken or written?
- How do we know this?
- Do the overall grammatical patterns of the text reveal a structural pattern that conforms to a recognisable text type?
- How could we summarise the main tone or thrust of the text?
- Does language constitute the whole of the activity or is it helping some other activity along?
The textual meanings, which organise our experiential and interpersonal meanings into a linear and coherent whole, provide some of the answers to these questions. Here are the major patterns uncovered by our analysis:

Themes
In this text, topical themes are underlined and textual themes are in bold type.

Summary of Theme
Most of the topical Themes are the Predicator in imperative clauses and she and you in the declaratives. Many of the clauses are Rheme only. The Predicator Themes reflect the procedural nature of the text.

Cohesion
In this text the pronouns are replaced by the nouns they reference and lexical sets of Participants and Processes in the ball game are underlined. Notice also, the repetition in Clauses 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 9 and 10, and that 1 and 2 are repeated in 16 and 17.

Summary of Cohesion
This is a highly cohesive text about a ball game. Notice the small italicised lexical set too hard and hurt, which realise negative Appraisal, and the repetition of There you go, which seems to realise positive Appraisal. The main conjunction and signals the sequential nature of the activity.

Other patterns
Text 1 is, in fact, taken from a tape-recording of a mother and child at play. Even if we were not told that the language was originally spoken, we could work it out from the simple language and the ellipsis. Of course, the text could have come from a novel or a play; that is, it could have been written to sound spoken, but in either of these cases there would be other clues.

We never know the identity of you, nor the exact location of over there, just that they refer to people and places in the setting of the text. This helps us to conclude that language is helping the game along rather than constituting the whole activity. Where the role of language is ancillary, the material situational setting intrudes into the context of situation in some way, as it does here with the ball, but otherwise it is unimportant to the description. We can contrast this ancillary role with a lecture where the language does constitute the activity and the other things that go on in lectures, for instance, the overheads and the note-taking, are incidental. These conclusions about the language of the text tell us about the MODE OF DISCOURSE. In other words, the textual signs can be added together as signs of the mode of discourse.

Writing up context of situation
The field, tenor and mode of discourse summarise the 'motivational relevancies' which drive the text and make up the context of situation. Our analytic description of context of situation will be set out under these three headings. As we have already discussed, the essentials of the analysis are found in meanings encoded in the lexicogrammar of the text, so we begin with the lexicogrammar and proceed towards our description of context of situation. Traditionally, the description is written in almost telegraphic notes. The challenge in writing it is to be delicate and particular enough to go from the description of context to a fair approximation of the text while at the same time being general and abstract enough to compare texts with similar contexts.
Further metalanguage for writing up the context of situation

Field

The metalanguage for the telegraphic description of field of discourse, whose scope is the field of human experience and activity in the text, appears in the box on the left below.

The metalanguage of Field of discourse

- Experiential domain is what the text is all about - the Processes, Participants and Circumstances.
- Short term goal refers to the immediate purpose of the text's production.
- Long term goal is rather more abstract and refers to the text's place in the larger scheme of things.

Tenor

The metalanguage for the telegraphic description of tenor of discourse, whose scope is the relationship between the participants, their roles and status (both temporary and permanent) and their patterns of appraisal, appears in the box below.

The metalanguage of Tenor of discourse

- Agentive or societal roles are roles of the speaker and the addressee - for example, mother/child, doctor/patient, teacher/pupil.
- Power and status while others consider them together. What you do probably depends on the specific text; normally they can be conflated, but you'd want to separate them if a high status person appears powerless and/or the person assuming power is of lower status.
- Social distance measures how well the participants know each other: whether they speak familiarly or distantly. Maximal social distance is used by speakers who have never met before, and minimal by those who interact on a familiar and frequent basis. It may be indicated by the levels of formality and objectivity in a text. It can be stretched by exclusive we and minimised by inclusive we, and can be stretched by negative judgements and minimised by the solidarity of positive judgements.

In some languages, pronounal and even lexical choices are determined by the relative status of speaker and addressee. Status and power may be equal or hierarchic and temporary or permanent. Some pointers to an identification of status and power are mood choices by the speakers - that is, who gives the orders, who asks the questions, who makes the offers, who gives information - and the responses of the addresses - that is, who remains silent, who agrees, contradicts, or refuses to participate.

Medium refers to whether the text was originally spoken or written, or even signed. Patterns of cohesion and nominalisation allow us to make finer distinctions. Thus, we can often say that a text sounds written although it was spoken (for instance, a sermon or lecture) or written to sound spoken (for instance a television script).

Channel refers to how the text was originally received and is either phonic or graphic, and in the case of a signed text, visual.

Rhetorical thrust refers to the overall feeling of the text; for example, instructional, persuasive, literary. The emergence of structural patterns as the text unfolds contributes to our decisions about rhetorical thrust.

In the film industry, when a script writer is given a scenario, it will be detailed enough to create the text envisaged by the director. It will say what the text is about, who the characters are, enough about their personalities and the overall thrust of the text for the director's ideas to be realised in language. A contextual description of a text bears a close resemblance to a film scenario, but while the scenario allows a text to be created, a contextual description should allow a text to be re-created. The information under the formal headings of the description should be delicate and detailed enough to recreate something very close to the original. This is why functional grammarians speak of the dialectic relation between meanings and context; that is, the meanings display the context and the context is realised in the meanings. There are, in fact, functional grammarians presently engaged in computerised text generation programs using their delicate knowledge of text and context.

From lexicogrammatical analysis to contextual description

With the grammatical analysis of the text on the previous pages and a set of contextual parameters which apply to any text, we are now in a position to write up the contextual description of this particular text, as you will see on the following pages.
## Field of discourse
### Lexicogrammatical analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Experiential meanings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Contextual description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>process types</td>
<td>As a result of our analysis and knowledge of context of culture we can write up our description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mainly material - go, get, roll, pick up, throw, push, sit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participants</td>
<td>Actor: the addressee, Tiffany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal: the ball</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances</td>
<td>place: over there manner: like that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tenor of discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interpersonal meanings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Contextual description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mood selections</td>
<td>As a result of our analysis and knowledge of context of culture we can write up our description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mainly imperative - go, get, roll, pick up, throw, push, sit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some declarative with probability/futurity - will push, will hurt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person selections</td>
<td>2nd = child addressee 3rd = other child, ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appraisal</td>
<td>+ praise for child's capacity from mother. There you go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>= warning that child's action 'too hard' and could lead to 'hurting' sibling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Mode of discourse

### Lexicogrammatical analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Textual meanings</strong></th>
<th><strong>Contextual description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thematic choices</strong></td>
<td>As a result of our analysis and knowledge of context of culture we can write up our description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>topical: Themes - I, she, you go, get, roll, pick up, throw, push, sit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>textual: Themes - and, now, and then</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>lexical sets to do with 'ball game' repetition reference to ball and Tiffany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ellipsis: in Clauses 9, 10, and 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural patterns</td>
<td>fit with procedure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Commentary

Nonverbal compliance gives this text some dialogic qualities. Text now transcribed.
A second descriptive analysis of context of situation

In this section we go through the same steps for another, rather different, text. In contrast to the detailed analysis of the previous text, we have often simply summarised the major patterns revealed by our analysis.

Text 2: Rugby notes

Captain: P W Goth; Vice-captain: L P Ghenge

The team was a powerful combination once it established its own pattern of play. It was unfortunate to play the top side, Mertons, first up. Although losing, the margin was small. The next game, against St Cuthberts, proved to be a torrid encounter with our forward pack crumbling in the remaining few minutes. Against Luscombe Grammar, quick, clean ball play enabled our back line to dominate and run in numerous tries. St Spirit's also proved to be little opposition, though poor goal-kicking and numerous dropped balls cost us many points in this game.

After the term holidays the team played many of its remaining matches in windy, wet conditions. Against St Bedes, powerful running by the back line established an early superiority which was not to be lost. The following week we played a club side, Forrest Hill, and found it difficult to compete against a stronger, more mobile pack. Dry conditions against Seeton Grammar enabled our back line to play well again and dominate the game. Unfortunately, the final game against Geneva proved to be our worst for the season, with careless handling and concentration lapses costing us the game.

If there is one thing to be remembered by the 1st XV from this season, it is that the team played best when individual glory was sacrificed so that team achievement could be maximised. A champion team, not a team of champions, was the motivating spirit behind this School rugby team.

Summary of Processes

Many processes are relational (was many times, proved to be three times). The most frequent material processes are played and cost, but also notice the passive voice was sacrificed to in the final paragraph. It is also in the last paragraph that we find the only projecting process, remembered. Something that is different from the rest of the text stands out, or is said to be foregrounded (Hasan 1985). When one part of the text is consistently foregrounded it becomes a focus of the text's meaning.

Participants

In this text, Actors are underlined, Carriers are in bold type and Tokens and Value are in italics.

The team was a powerful combination once it established its own pattern of play. It was unfortunate to play the top side, Mertons, first up. Although losing, the margin was small.

The next game, against St Cuthberts, proved to be a torrid encounter with our forward pack crumbling in the remaining few minutes. Against Luscombe Grammar, quick, clean ball play enabled our back line to dominate and run in numerous tries. St Spirit's also proved to be little opposition, though poor goal-kicking and numerous dropped balls cost us many points in this game.

Summary of Participants

In the relational clauses the first participant is most often the team or the game but is sometimes another school. In the final paragraph there is embedding on each side of
the relational process (one thing to be remembered by the 1st XV from this season is that the team played well when individual glory was sacrificed so that team achievement could be maximised). The mental process (to be remembered) within the embedded clause is in the passive voice so the Senser looks like an Agent. The Actor in almost all the material clauses is the team which plays, dominates and competes against other school teams. It is interesting that this material process pattern only occurs when the team wins or when it meets the club side of older players that it is not really expected to defeat.

There are not many nominalisations in this text; most of the action occurs congruently in the processes. So it is worth noting that all those events which are nominalised (poor goal-kicking, numerous dropped balls, careless handling and concentration lapses) allow the agency of the negatively appraised events to be ignored.

A final point worth mentioning here is the Agent-less passive material processes was sacrificed, and could be maximised. The message of this clause is that playing as a team is more praiseworthy than individual glory. In this last paragraph the only Actor/Agent is the 1st XV team.

Summary of Circumstances
The Circumstances are to do with the temporal order of the matches (first up, after the term holidays, the following week and so on) time within the matches (such as in the remaining few minutes) or the opposing teams (such as against St Bedes).

Summary of time and modality
Most of the text uses simple past tense but once again the first clause complex in the final paragraph is foregrounded by the use of the simple present tense.

Investigating tenor in interpersonal meanings

Summary of mood
All Finite clauses are declarative, giving information.

Person selection
In this text, first person is underlined; all other nominal groups are third person.

The team was a powerful combination once it established its own pattern of play. It was unfortunate to play the top side, Merlins, first up. Although losing, the margin was small.

The next game, against St Cuthberts, proved to be a torrid encounter with our forward pack crumbling in the remaining few minutes. Against Luscombe Grammar, quick, clean ball play enabled our back line to dominate and run in numerous tries. St Spirit's also proved to be little opposition, though poor goal-kicking and numerous dropped balls cost us many points in this game.

After the term holidays the team played many of its remaining matches in windy, wet conditions. Against St Bedes, powerful running by the back line established an early superiority which was not to be lost. The following week we played a club side, Forrest Hill, and found it difficult to compete against a stronger, more mobile pack. Dry conditions against Seeton Grammar allowed our back line to play well again and dominate the game. Unfortunately, the final game against Geneva proved to be our worst for the season, with careless handling and concentration lapses costing us the game.

If there is one thing to be remembered by the 1st XV from this season, it is that the team played best when individual glory was sacrificed so that team achievement could be maximised. A champion team, not a team of champions, was the motivating spirit behind this School rugby team.

The first person pronouns we, us and our, whose referent is the team, turn this from objective reporting into something more subjective.

Summary of Appraisal
Like other writers of similar texts, this writer is concerned with how good the team was, how well they played and how much luck came into the outcomes of the season. Not surprisingly, the main appraisal motifs are social judgements about tenacity (dominate, established its own pattern of play, crumbling and so on) capacity (quick, clean ball play, powerful running by the back line and so on) and normality (unfortunate, unexpectedly). Even the weather seems to fit here as dry conditions produce good results, wet, windy conditions are unlucky. In the last paragraph the motif switches to social sanction as the writer moralises about school spirit. To a lesser extent appraisal resources of engagement and graduation combine with judgement. Thus the margin is small, the encounter is torrid, bad play costs us the game, and a game is the worst for the season.

Investigating mode in textual meanings

Themes
In this text, unmarked topical Themes are underlined, marked topical Themes are in bold type and interpersonal Themes are in italics.

The team was a powerful combination once it established its own pattern of play. It was unfortunate to play the top side, Merlins, first up. Although losing, the margin was small.

The next game, against St Cuthberts, proved to be a torrid encounter with our forward pack crumbling in the remaining few minutes. Against Luscombe Grammar, quick, clean ball play enabled our back line to dominate and run in numerous tries. St Spirit's also proved to be little opposition, though poor goal-kicking and numerous dropped balls cost us many points in this game.

After the term holidays the team played many of its remaining matches in windy, wet conditions. Against St Bedes, powerful running by the back line established an early superiority which was not to be lost. The following week we played a club side, Forrest Hill, and found it difficult to compete against a stronger, more mobile pack. Dry conditions against Seeton Grammar allowed our back line to play well again and dominate the game. Unfortunately, the final game against Geneva proved to be our worst for the season, with careless handling and concentration lapses costing us the game.
champion do not appear until the last paragraph, once again foregrounding that part of the text.

Another point to be considered here is the ease of interpreting the pronominal references and, once again, we notice that we and it both refer to the school team.

### From lexicogrammatical analysis to contextual description: Text 2

As we did with Text 1, we will now present the contextual description for the text ‘Rugby notes’.

#### Field of discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiential meanings</th>
<th>Contextual description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>process types</td>
<td>As a result of our analysis and knowledge of context of culture we can write up our description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relational with Attributes; relational identifying in last paragraph material – play, dominate, run in, cost, compete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the forward pack, the team, poor goal-kicking and numerous dropped balls (and so on); embedded clauses in last paragraph</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nominalisations avoid agency for mistakes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first up, against St Cuthberts, in the remaining few minutes, against Luscombe Grammar, after the term holidays, in wet, windy conditions, against St Bedes, the next week etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time and modality*</td>
<td>past until last paragraph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Commentary

The first clause of the last paragraph has been foregrounded by the mental process, the use of present tense and by complex embedding around an identifying relational process. This foregrounding underlines the importance of the long-term goal.
This is a very fuzzy area because it dissolves the boundary between experiential and interpersonal meanings. On the one hand, the primary tense and modality are an essential part of our interpersonal investigation into how speakers and writers take a position in their texts. On the other hand, the time when activities take place is an essential part of our experiential investigation. This double reading reminds us that although our analysis separates experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings, they are, in fact, interdependent and enmeshed, recombining to make one total meaning realising the context of situation.

**Tenor of discourse**

**Lexicogrammatical analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal meanings</th>
<th>Contextual description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mood selections</td>
<td>As a result of our analysis and knowledge of context of culture we can write up our description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>declarative</td>
<td>In the last paragraph, the addressee appears to be the wider school community as well as the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person selection</td>
<td>The relative status also changes in the last paragraph from equal to hierarchic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we, us, our.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exclusive, referring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only to the players</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>but it is also inclusive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as the team represents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appraisal motif</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>judgement of social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>esteem of team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>until last paragraph</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social sanction of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>team spirit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creates solidarity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Textual meanings**

- **Thematic choices**
  - unmarked topical Themes – the team, the games, the opponents
  - marked Themes – time and opponents

**As clause as Theme**

- paragraph 1 – although losing
- paragraph 4: if there is one thing to be remembered by the 1st XV from this season

**Cohesion**

- lexical sets and reference to schools and rugby; tight but with new lexical items in the final paragraph.

**Structural patterns**

- fit with recount until last paragraph

**Commentary**

- The rhetorical mode changes in the last paragraph from a simple recount to something more inspirational. The cohesion analysis also showed that this paragraph differed from the rest of the text.

**To sum up**

Because texts with enough common features in the field, tenor and mode of discourse will also have meanings in common, they are said to belong to the same **register**. Register can be defined as the way meanings vary consistently with the context of situation or according to use. Thus, we might speak of a register of classroom teaching, a register of advertising or a register of baby talk since texts in each of these areas have things in common in field, tenor and mode of discourse. If we want to make our description more delicate, we can use field to distinguish between, for example, teaching science and teaching literature, or advertising patent medicines and advertising soft drinks. We can use field and tenor to differentiate between two advertisements for the same product in a medical journal and a popular women's magazine. We can even use field, tenor and mode to distinguish between advertisements for the same product in a variety of media, such as teenage magazines, radio and television.
At the same time, the metalanguage for describing context of situation heightens our consciousness of linguistic diversity and binds together many of the strands we have discussed in this book. The same tools that describe a context of situation can be used to describe a writer's style or the similarities between writers of the same school or period.

Experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings are realised in wordings that become accessible through phonology or writing. In our study of context we become aware of the dynamic relationship between the meanings we want to convey, the grammatical structures we use, and the context of situation that frames these meanings. Thus, when we know the field, tenor and mode of the context of situation of a text, we can predict the grammatical structure with a great deal of certainty and, conversely, we can go from the grammatical structures to the context of situation. This is what we mean by the dynamic relation between text and context of situation.

Whether we apply this dynamic to children's writing or creations of verbal art, we can still go behind the text to the meanings. By investigating the grammatical patterns in an objective way we can see how users of language create meanings and achieve intended effects. Our comparisons of the field, tenor and mode of discourse and of the patterns of experiential, interpersonal and textual signs which realise these meanings allow us to differentiate between movements, periods and ideologies as well as between genres and individual writers. Indeed, the patterns of patterns we discern in our analysis make the definition of style almost as simple as the description of a context of situation because both are artefacts of the functional diversity of language.

**Exercises**

1. List the attitudinal words in the Rugby text and discuss how they construct the point of view.
2. Write a contextual description of one or more of the following:
   a. Speaker 1: You know it's just not a constructive way to go about solving your problems. What are you? ... You're fifteen now?
   Speaker 2: Next December.
   Speaker 1: You'll be fifteen in December. It won't be long before you're ... Only be a couple of years before you'll be appearing before the adult courts. You don't get any mileage out of this sort of behaviour once that happens. It's malicious damage and off to prison after that. Do you understand that? ... You're the one who'll suffer ultimately for it even though you might go away and laugh about this because it doesn't ... or ... touch you. I urge you to think about it. Very good. Thank you, Bennie. You can go ... Thank you, Mr. Jones.
   b. Mike's text which you will find on page 87
   c. The conversation between a mother and child on page 99
   d. Ian's text on page 138
   e. The Modes text on page 94.

**Implications for language education**

At the end of each chapter we have looked at the different types of grammar - experiential, interpersonal and textual - and discussed how a student's knowledge of these grammars allows them to control the related aspect of the context of situation. At the end of Chapter 3 we considered the kinds of meanings students are able to control once they can manage the expression of field through experiential grammar. At the end of Chapters 4 and 5 we considered the kinds of meanings students are able to control once they can manage the expression of tenor through interpersonal grammar. At the end of Chapter 6 we considered the kinds of meanings students are able to control once they can manage the expression of mode through textual grammar.

In this chapter we are shown what can be discovered about all three aspects of the context of situation when we use our knowledge of grammar and the metalanguage introduced in the book so far to explore the three metafunctions of a text simultaneously. This exploration generates a rich description of the way the context has motivated the text, its meanings and, therefore, its structural patterns. We are shown how 'the sum of meanings encoded in lexicogrammar become signs of the context'.

The ability to explore language in this way makes it possible for language educators to understand different contexts of language use on the basis of the meanings in different texts. It also makes it possible for them to consider the language patterns that are likely to emerge in texts realising a particular context of situation.

The reciprocal illumination of context and text allows language educators to target their teaching specifically to the particular needs of students by analysing the contexts of situation relevant to their students' needs and goals. Teaching language can thus become a much less hit-and-miss affair. In addition, students can be given portable knowledge about patterns of English they can apply strategically to a range of contexts of situation, rather than a set of arbitrary rules which may or may not be effective as contexts change.

In this chapter our attention is also drawn to the fact that, to produce and interpret texts in a particular language, we need to be familiar with the contexts of situation which occur within the culture in which the language is used - in other words we need to be familiar with:
- what people talk about in the culture, that is the topics, subject matter and social activities which make up the experience of people living in that culture
- the kinds of roles and relationships people build with each other in that culture
- how people communicate in that culture, whether in spoken or written language using channels of communication such as face-to-face communication, telephone, electronic and print media, letters, and so on.

If this information is incorporated systematically into language teaching programs, students build up language experience across a variety of contexts of situation, allowing
them to produce and interpret an increasing repertoire of language varieties. The set of questions used to interpret context in this chapter provide teachers with a useful framework for guiding students' exploration of the way different contexts of language use are expressed in the meanings and structures of different texts.

Perhaps one of the most important distinctions made in this chapter is between context of situation and the material situational setting. Language educators have for a long time been used to establishing a material situational setting, that is a location in time and space, for the language they are teaching, for example At the railway station, In the restaurant or On the weekend. Some of the features of these material settings are significant for the texts that are used in these settings and some are not.

Context of situation, however, is a more precise way of determining what features of a context make the text 'what it is' because it reveals the three general aspects of the context (field, tenor and mode) which account for differences in lexicogrammatical patterns from text to text. Using these three general headings teachers and students can ask strategic questions about any context in which language is used in order to identify and categorise the extralinguistic features that motivate the patterns of the text and to ignore those extralinguistic features which have no impact on the text. Being able to account for the differences in language patterns from text to text within three general domains of context gives teachers a manageable yet comprehensive tool for:
- selecting what language patterns to teach, within which texts and in which contexts
- deciding how to present those language patterns and the texts they are part of in authentic contexts of language use
- selecting which aspects of the context to draw learners' attention to
- deciding which aspects of the context to alter in order to reveal to learners how language patterns change systematically as the context changes, for example:
  - changing the field so the subject matter changes
  - changing the tenor so a new role or relationship needs to be negotiated
  - changing the mode so the text is spoken rather than written.

Where language education is occurring across the curriculum, students need to build a solid knowledge of the subject matter (the field) and its expression in language. For example, if learners are working in the discipline of science they will need to have many experiences with the material they are learning about – including opportunities for hands-on exploration and guided discussion that reveal the language scientists use to talk about the phenomenon they are studying. It is through these experiences that they will build the field knowledge on which their language use in that discipline can be based.

This chapter provides full contextual descriptions of two texts – one spoken and one written. These descriptions are very detailed and reveal the overall drift of the meanings in each text. There would be few language teaching situations where it would be practical or effective to draw learners' attention to all these features. However, the descriptions do reveal the meanings that make the text what it is – whether a dialogue (mode) where one more skilled interlocutor is telling the other (tenor) how to play with a ball (field), or an article for a school newspaper (mode) that glorifies (tenor) a school rugby match (field). The challenging task for the teacher is to select from meaning-rich texts such as these the specific language features that match students' language development and that will trigger the next developmental step. We will return to this question in Chapter 10.

**Exercises for language teachers**

1. Identify a good example of a type of text you would like your students to be able to use effectively. The text might be spoken or written. If you wish, you may choose one of the texts you have already worked with in completing exercises in earlier chapters.
   a. Prepare a contextual description of the text.
   b. What did you learn about the text and its context which you had not noticed before completing this exercise?
   c. Use the description to select key features of context and language use that you believe are relevant to the students' learning needs and goals.
   d. How would you adapt the questions on pages 186, 188, and 189 to guide your students as they work with this text?