Chapter Three

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

3.0 Introduction

This chapter concerns the research methodology and theoretical framework of this study. The first section discusses the methodology of research: how the data is selected and collected; how the data is tabled; and finally, the kind of analysis performed on the data.

The second section focuses on the definition of Nominal Group, explaining its rank in the organisation of grammar, its functional structures, and its elements within those structures.
3.1 Research Methodology

The research methodology covers the research design used for this study. Each step in the design is carefully documented with reasons and examples of execution.

3.1.1 Data Selection

Five texts on inspiration writings with Christian themes, which are readily available in the retail market, are selected based on their contemporary insight into knowing and experiencing God. The texts are published in the 1990s and written by American authors. The reason for selecting texts by American authors is not based upon any bias, but by the fact that the hotbed of spirituality — thus, inspirational writings with Christian themes — is in America.

Apart from these two considerations, I have chosen the texts at random to ensure objectivity, without any personal preference for a particular author’s style of writing.

Figure 3.1 gives details of the authors, publishers, and year of publication, whereas Figure 3.2 gives a synopsis of each text. The texts are organised in chronological order of their published date, and are labelled as Text One (T1) to Text Five (T5).
**Figure 3.1** Details of selected texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>Experiencing God: How To Live The Full Adventure Of Knowing And Doing The Will Of God</td>
<td>Blackaby, Henry T &amp; King, Claude V</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Nashville, Tennessee</td>
<td>Broadman &amp; Holman Publishers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>In That Day: How Jesus Is Revealing Himself To The Jewish People In These Last Days</td>
<td>Levine, Rabbi David</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Orlando, Florida</td>
<td>Creation House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>The Stronghold Of God</td>
<td>Frangipane, Francis</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Orlando, Florida</td>
<td>Creation House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td>Possessing Your Inheritance: Moving Forward In God’s Covenant Plan For Your Life</td>
<td>Pierce, Chuck D &amp; Sytsema, Rebecca Wagner</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Ventura, California</td>
<td>Renew Books</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.2** Synopsis of selected texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Synopsis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td><em>Experiencing God</em> challenges Christians to experience the fullness of a life lived in fellowship with the loving, personal God. God reveals Himself to each of us in special and exceptional ways, so our perception of Him is unique. <em>Experiencing God</em> shows Christians how to deepen their own personal relationship with God and discover their special place in His kingdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td><em>Windows</em> calls Christians into a fresh sensitivity to God’s voice, speaking through unexpected parables that surround them: a child’s need for significance; the misunderstood sadness of a van Gogh masterpiece; the eloquence of sunlight dancing on water; and many more. <em>Windows</em> points to a world infused with the voice of the One who can transform the Christians’ backyard shrubs into burning bushes lit by His presence. God’s voice penetrates the raw material of their daily lives, speaking through Scripture and prayer, a painting or a poem, the remark of a friend or a night sky filled with stars. <em>Windows</em> will open the Christians to a fresh way of seeing, hearing, and enjoying the presence of God in their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td><em>In That Day</em> is a poignant account of how Jesus Christ is gathering His people – past, present and future – together into a rich tapestry that brings clear understanding of what God is doing on earth today among the Jews. <em>In That Day</em> offers the insights exciting, prophetic and full of promise, and uncovers an interesting aspect of what God will do in these last days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>As the magnitude of evil escalates in the world today, Christians are looking for a place of immunity and protection, a spiritual hiding place. <em>The Stronghold Of God</em> imparts fresh revelation about God’s shelter – a dwelling place for the soul – during times of suffering and persecution. The book touches on the means of reaching an end of peace and security, where love and safety dwell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T5</td>
<td><em>Possessing Your Inheritance</em> reveals how to understand God’s will for Christians, and to take hold of the spiritual riches He has in store for them. The book teaches the believers to live a vibrant life that is congruent with the wisdom of the Scriptures. The book provides a clear plan and direction for the believer to live a victorious life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the sake of uniformity in the analysis, I have selected only an extract from each text due to their differing page and chapter length. Only an extract is selected from each text, guided by these boundaries: (1) only the first chapter of each text is selected; (2) only the first 100 sentences from each first chapter are selected; and (3) only the main body texts are examined. Headings, sub-headings, quotations and listings that are within the boundaries of the first 100 sentences of each first chapters are omitted from the study. For example, the quotation and headline on page seven of the first chapter of T1 and the listings on pages 13 and 14 of the first chapter of T1 are not included as text.

Also this study is focused only on Nominal Groups as mentioned and explained earlier in section 1.3 of Chapter One.

3.1.2 Data Collection

Firstly, each text is marked T1 to T5. Following that, the first chapter of each text is extracted and marked accordingly from E1 to E5:

E1 (Extract One), corresponding to chapter 1 of T1. (see Appendix 7)
E2 (Extract Two), corresponding to chapter 1 of T2. (see Appendix 8)
E3 (Extract Three), corresponding to chapter 1 of T3. (see Appendix 9)
E4 (Extract Four), corresponding to chapter 1 of T4. (see Appendix 10)
E5 (Extract Five), corresponding to chapter 1 of T5. (see Appendix 11)
After that, each sentence is marked starting from the first sentence as S1, to the hundredth sentence as S100. Subsequently, the Nominal Groups are underlined in each sentence. For example, in the first paragraph of (E1), the Nominal Groups are underlined:

(E1.S1) *Jesus said that eternal life is knowing God, including God the Son – Jesus Christ.* (E1.S2) *Jesus did not mean that eternal life is “knowing about God.”* (E1.S3) *In the Scripture knowledge of God comes through experience.*

After the Nominal Groups are underlined, each Nominal Group is indexed according to their sequence of appearance in the sentence. For example, index (E1.S1.1) refers to the first Nominal Group in sentence one; (E1.S1.2) refers to the second Nominal Group in sentence one; (E1.S1.3) to the third Nominal Group in sentence one; and the index continues.

Where there are Nominal Groups embedded within a Nominal Group, those groups are further indexed. For example, in the above paragraph from Extract One (E1), its first sentence (S1) has three primary Nominal Groups: *Jesus* (E1.S1.1), *eternal life* (E1.S1.2) and *God including God the Son – Jesus Christ* (E1.S1.3).

Embedded within (E1.S1.3) is another Nominal Group, *God the Son – Jesus Christ*, which is indexed as (E1.S1.4). Subsequently, embedded within (E1.S1.4) is another Nominal Group, *the Son – Jesus Christ*, which is indexed as (E1.S1.5). And within (E1.S1.5) is another Nominal Group, *Jesus Christ*, which is indexed as (E1.S1.6). An illustration of the indexing of (E1.S1) is shown in Figure 3.3.
Thus, for example, index (E1.S8.5) refers to the fifth Nominal Group in linear sequence in the eighth sentence of the first extract; index (E2.S29.3) refers to the third Nominal Group in linear sequence in the 29th sentence of the second extract; index (E3.S44.4) refers to the fourth Nominal Group in linear sequence in the 44th sentence of the third extract; etc.

All embedded Nominal Groups are referred to as secondary Nominal Groups. The terms, ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’, are used to differentiate the initial ‘larger’ Nominal Group from the ones embedded within it, and they do not indicate importance or rank, in this case. This differentiation is needed for tabulation of the overall occurrences of Nominal Groups in the extracts, during analysis.

3.1.3 Data Analysis

After demarcating and indexing the Nominal Groups, they are extracted from the text. Then grammatical functions are assigned to the elements of the Nominal Groups and tabled according to their functions, as seen in Figure 3.4 below. Each extract is tabled
separately. The table of analysis for each extract is shown separately in the appendix (see Appendix 2-6 for the entire corpus).

![Figure 3.4 Example of Table of Analysis.]

After tabling the Nominal Groups according to their functions, the data is tabulated. Tabulation is based on: (a) the number of Nominal Groups in a sentence and in each extract; (b) the kinds of Nominal Group structure and its volume against total Nominal Groups; and (c) the percentage of words in Nominal Groups over total number of words.

For an accurate tabulation of the aforesaid, only primary Nominal Groups are considered, because the tabulation seeks to give an overall perspective of the frequency of occurrences of Nominal Groups and its different structural types. The secondary Nominal Groups are already embedded within the primary Nominal Groups.

The next step after tabulation is to look into the Nominal Groups in their logical structures from a broad perspective to search for any particular trends unique to
inspirational writings with Christian themes. From this stage onwards, both primary and secondary Nominal Groups are taken into account, because it gives a more accurate picture of how the Nominal Groups – both embedded and non-embedded – are structured logically and experientially.

Subsequent to that, the Nominal Groups are analysed according to their experiential functions – Deictic, Numerative, Epithet, Classifier, Thing and Qualifier (explanation of these terms are fully elaborated in the following section 3.2, *Theoretical Framework*). The analysis intends to identify the relationship between the functions and the elements that realise those functions.

Furthermore, elements in each experiential function are interpreted for the meanings they embody and their relationship to the concepts found in inspirational writings with Christian themes. The experiential functions in combinations – for example, Deictic and Thing, Epithet and Classifier, Classifier and Deictic, etc – are also studied in the same manner.

Consequently, the Nominal Groups are reviewed again in their logical structure – looking at how the experiential elements are arranged logically. Finally, the study analyses how the Nominal Groups shape the concept of God in inspirational writings with Christian themes.

3.2 Theoretical Framework: Definitions of Key Concepts

A few key concepts are presented here to facilitate a clearer perspective of Halliday’s view on Nominal Groups:
Firstly, the way Halliday organises the grammar is described. Understanding the organisation of grammar will also help define what a Nominal Group is.

Secondly, we need to understand the two structures of Nominal Group: (1) experiential; and (2) logical. Each structure has different functions, and each function is realised by elements, and individually the elements will be explained.

The concepts and definitions are adopted from An Introduction To Functional Grammar (Halliday, 1994).

3.2.1 The Organisation of Grammar

In order to define a Nominal Group, two essential concepts in the organisation of grammar need to be explained: (1) rank, and (2) class.

(1) Rank. Rank refers to different levels of organisation within grammar. For example, the following inverted sentence from Extract two, Sentence 71 (E2.S71), Officials kept records, is a stretch of language that consists of one sentence and three words.

Sentence and words are two ranks of grammatical organisation. Sentences in English writing system are recognised by an initial capital letter and a final punctuation mark, while words are recognised by the spaces between the units in a sentence.

By identifying the different ranks, there is a correspondence to identifiable functional divisions, making it analytically useful. For example, below the word, there is another rank: morpheme. Morphemes are the smallest meaningful unit in grammar.
For instance, the word *Treasury* is analysed as the lexical morpheme *Treasur(e)*- plus another morpheme *-y*.

There are also other ranks between sentence and morpheme. Compare the aforesaid example (E2.S71) with the first half of its unabridged version: *Treasury officials kept good mental records of the top donors.* This unabridged version can also be analysed into three units: (i) *Treasury officials* (expansion of *officials*); (ii) *kept*; and (iii) *good mental records of top donors* (expansion of *records*).

These units are called *groups*, even though one of the groups contains only one word. The words in these groups are as *constituents* of the groups, and the groups are, in turn, constituents of the sentence.

Between the rank of a sentence and a group, there exists a further rank called the *clause*. Compare the aforesaid example (E2.S71) with its full unabridged version: *Treasury officials kept good mental records of the top donors, making sure they were shown the proper respect, greeted differentially in the streets, seated preferentially in the synagogues*.

Here, the sentence can be divided into four units: (i) *Treasury officials kept good mental records of the top donors*; (ii) *making sure they were shown the proper respect*; (iii) *greeted differentially in the streets*; and (iv) *seated preferentially in the synagogues*.

These units are called clauses. This sentence has four clauses, each consists of a number of groups, which themselves consist of a number of words. The sentence is also thus referred to as a *clause complex* – because there is more than one clause.
Finally, there is another rank called **phrase**. The full sentence from (E2.S71) yields a few phrases: (i) *of the top donors*; (ii) *in the streets*; and (iii) *in the synagogues*. A **phrase** is different from a group, in that a group is an expansion of a word, whereas a phrase is a contraction of a clause. Starting from the opposite ends, the two achieve roughly the same status on the rank scale, as units that lie somewhere intermediate between the rank of a clause and that of a word.

Figure 3.5 gives a clear summary of rank in the organisation of grammar using (E2.S71) as sample sentence.

**Figure 3.5 Summary of rank in the organisation of grammar using (E2.S71) as text sample.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence or Clause complex</strong></td>
<td>(i) Treasury officials kept good mental records of the top donors, making sure they were shown the proper respect, greeted differentially in the streets, seated preferentially in the synagogues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are made up of one or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clause(s) or Group complex(es)</strong></td>
<td>(i) Treasury officials kept good mental records of the top donors making sure they were shown the proper respect (ii) greeted differentially in the streets (iii) seated preferentially in the synagogues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are made up of one or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Groups(s) or Phrase(s)</strong></td>
<td>(i) Treasury officials kept good mental records of the top donors (ii) kept (iii) good mental records of the top donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are made up of one or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word(s)</strong></td>
<td>(i) Treasury officials kept good mental records of the top donors (ii) kept (iii) good mental records of the top donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are made up of one or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morphemes</strong></td>
<td>(i) Treasur(e)- (ii) -y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(2) *Class*. Terms like noun, verb, conjunction, etc, are names of word class, traditionally known as parts of speech. The same class labels are used to label groups, thus we have **Nominal Groups, Verbal Groups, Conjunction Groups**, etc.

For instance, looking at the first portion of sentence (E2.S71), *Treasury officials kept good mental records of the top donors*, we have two Nominal Groups (*Treasury officials*, *good mental records of the top donors*) and a Verbal Group (*kept*). Notice that in the Nominal Group examples, some words do not fall under the class of nouns: *Treasury, good, mental, of, the, top*. There are adjectives (*Treasury, good, mental, top*), a preposition (*of*) and a determiner (*the*). Figure 3.6 illustrates a few examples of the word classes in Nominal Groups.

**Figure 3.6** Example of word class in Nominal Groups using text samples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NG</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>Bible</th>
<th>character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>determiner</td>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NG</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>numeral</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NG</td>
<td></td>
<td>We</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td></td>
<td>pronoun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Therefore, a Nominal Group is a group that has an entity (noun or pronoun) as its head, but which other constituents within it can modify. Constituents of a Nominal Group comprise word classes of nouns (proper nouns, common nouns and pronouns), adjectives, numerals and determiners (see Figure 3.7).
Figure 3.7 Summary of word classes of Nominal Group (Halliday 1994).

Nevertheless, technically the entity need not have to be modified to be a group, it can stand on its own. Examples are Nominal Groups with more than one constituent: *a person* (E1.S8.3), *the rhythm of the day* (E2.S2.3), *others in the neighborhood* (E3.S42.5), *northern tribes of Israel* (E4.S36.6), etc; and Nominal Groups that consist only of a head: *experience* (E1.S3.4), *We* (E2.S20.1) *people* (E3.S15.2), etc.

3.2.2 The Structures of the Nominal Group

Nominal Groups, thus, semantically point to facets of our experience that involve 'things' or 'entities'. Because language is not reality itself but a way of experiencing reality, we find the Nominal Groups are typically linked with other 'experiential' information that complements the Thing.

Thus, the Nominal Group is analysed under two of its structures: logical and experiential. Each structure functions differently. While the logical structure is
concerned with the 'logical' links between ideas, the experiential structure is largely concerned with content or ideas.

For the next portion of this chapter, the experiential and logical structures are illustrated at length. To get a better picture and understanding, the following two Nominal Groups, taken from the texts, are used to illustrate the discussion of the two structures:

(E2.S60.2) the two dimensions of the full-sized portraits framed before him
(E2.S79.1) A few drab brush strokes

3.2.2.1 Logical Structure of Nominal Group

The logical structure represents the logical-semantic relations that are encoded in natural language. The logical structure takes into account subcategorisation: 'α is a subset of x', which in the grammar of the Nominal Group is referred to as Modification.

For example, in (E2.S60.2) the two dimensions of the full-sized portraits framed before him, the Head is dimensions. What occurs before the Head is known as a Pre-Modifier, for example, the two before dimensions. What occurs after the Head is known as Post-Modifier, for example, of the full-sized portraits framed before him after dimensions.

This type of structure exemplified by the recurrence of the same function: α is modified by β, etc, is called a univariate structure (see Figure 3.8). The logical
structure is not concerned with the differences but the similarities: with the general relationship that runs throughout the pre-Head modification of the Nominal Group, whatever the experience of the individual element.

Figure 3.8 Nominal Group showing univariate logical structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Modifier</th>
<th>Head</th>
<th>Post-Modifier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\gamma$</td>
<td>$\beta$</td>
<td>$\alpha$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the</td>
<td>full-sized portraits</td>
<td>framed before him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\beta\gamma$</td>
<td>$\beta\beta$</td>
<td>$\beta\alpha$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What the logical analysis does is to show the recursive aspect of the modifying relation, showing the Nominal Group as a regressive bracketing structure. The logical analysis refers to relations such as order, dependency, restriction and non-restriction, embedding, discontinuity, scope and the recursive realisation of the elements.

According to Halliday, both the logical and experiential analysis are needed to provide an adequate account of the Nominal Group, and of a concept of what is meant by a ‘group’ as the grammatical resource for representing things.
3.2.2.2 Experiential Structure of Nominal Group

A different and complementary structure, the experiential structure of the Nominal Group functions as a whole in specifying: (a) a class of things, for example, *cars* (animate objects), *wind* (inanimate objects), *pain* (feelings), *paradox* (abstract concept), etc; (b) some category of membership within this class that accentuates the meaning.

The principle underlying the experiential structure is the subcategorisation shifts from right to left: beginning with 'what type of...?' ‘what quality of ...?’ ‘how many ...?’ etc. Categorisation within the class is typically expressed by one or more of the functional elements and to a certain degree follows this sequence: (1) **Deictic**, (2) **Numerative**, (3) **Epithet**, (4) **Classifier**, (5) **Thing**, (6) **Qualifier**.

This type of structure is exemplified by Deictic + Numerative + Epithet + Classifier + Thing + Qualifier is called a **multivariate** structure.

(1) **Deictic**. The first element of the Nominal Group, Deictic is realised by determiners. Deictics identify whether or not some specific subset of the Thing is intended. For example, in (E2.S79.1) *A few drab brush strokes*, the Deictic element *A*, indicates the Thing cannot yet be identified as something the reader already knows.

In contrast, in (E2.S60.2) *the two dimensions of the full-sized portraits framed before him*, the Deictic element *the* indicates that the Thing can be identified as something the reader already knows from a previous context or general knowledge. Deictics that are specific usually consist of demonstratives (*this, that*, etc) and possessives (*my, Jack's*, etc).

(2) **Numerative**. The Numerative as its name suggests, is concerned with the numbers and it is realised by exact numerals such as *two* in (E2.S60.2) *the two*
dimensions of the full-sized portraits framed before him, or by inexact expressions such as few in (E2.S79.1) A few drab brush strokes.

(3) Epithet. The Epithet is normally a slot that is filled by one or more adjectives, and which can answer two main questions: "What do you think of the Thing?" and "What is the Thing like?" (typically in that order). Thus it indicates a quality of the subset. In principle, there can be any number of Epithets, though in practice it is rare to find more than two. For example, drab in (E2.S79.1) A few drab brush strokes, indicates a quality of the strokes.

(4) Classifier. While Epithet indicates the quality, Classifier indicates a particular subclass of the thing in question. Examples: full-sized in (E2.S60.2) the two dimensions of the full-sized portraits framed before him indicates a particular subclass of the Thing in question as opposed to medium-sized, small-sized portraits. Brush in (E2.S79.1) A few drab brush strokes indicates a particular class of strokes.

(5) Thing. The main item in a Nominal Group is Thing, the semantic core of the Nominal Group. Though it is termed as such, the Thing element may be a material inanimate thing, an animal, a person, a substance or even an abstract concept. For example: portraits in (E2.S60.2) the two dimensions of the full-sized portraits framed before him is an inanimate object, while strokes in (E2.S79.1) A few drab brush strokes is a movement we make when we paint. Thing can also be represented by pronouns (he, they, it, etc).

(6) Qualifier. Qualifier is the element that follows Thing. For example, of the full-sized portraits framed before him in (E2.S60.2) the two dimensions of the full-sized portraits framed before him, qualifies the Thing dimensions. All Qualifiers, with
rare exceptions, are rank-shifted, which means Qualifiers are a rank higher than or at least equivalent to that of the Nominal Group. Therefore, on these grounds they would not be expected to be constituents of a Nominal Group.

3.3 Conclusion

Research methodology is covered in the first part of this chapter. Each step of the research design is documented carefully. In the second part of the chapter, certain key definitions of the theoretical framework are expounded and made clear.