

# **CHAPTER ONE            INTRODUCTION**

## **1.0            OVERVIEW**

This chapter opens the record of my apprenticeship into becoming a researcher. My goal in this chapter is therefore twofold: firstly to set the scene for the research project that I embarked on and elucidate the reasons that motivated it, and secondly to make a case for the viability and value of the work that was undertaken. In the course of reaching for this goal, I clarify the aims and objective of this investigation, argue for its rationale and significance, and delineate its scope and limitation. By doing so, I hope to demonstrate that this study is indeed a sound and meaningful endeavour that was worth the three years of effort which I had committed to its completion.

## **1.1            Background of Research**

### *1.1.1    Sociocultural setting*

The research that is documented in this thesis takes place against the backdrop of multilingual and multicultural Malaysian society, where the role of language is by no means a simple one. English in Malaysia is ostensibly taught as a Second Language, but the role and position of the English Language in this country has seldom been without controversy, being irrevocably tied to political and cultural factors, as traced by Asmah (1992), Awang (2006), Azirah (2009) and Ridge (2004). Currently, the language is designated as an important language in recognition of its primacy as an international lingua franca and means for knowledge acquisition (Awang, 2003) and taught as a compulsory subject in all government schools at primary and secondary level (Pandian, 2004; Samuel, 2005). This is borne out by the continued use of English in commercial and legal transactions (Azirah, 2009), as well as its role as the dominant medium of instruction in tertiary education (Gill, 2006; Ridge, 2004). English is also used as the

primary language of certain social groups (Rajadurai, 2010, 2011). A full description of the complexities of this sociolinguistic environment are beyond the scope of this investigation, but one salient point can nevertheless be made: given the diverse uses of English in Malaysia, a typical Malaysian student needs exposure and practice in a wide variety of contexts for English-language use to be able to fully utilise the language upon leaving school.

### *1.1.2 The Malaysian English Language syllabus for secondary schools*

The diversity of settings for English language use in Malaysia is reflected in the overall aim of the Malaysian secondary-level English Language syllabus, which contains the following statement.

*“...the teaching of English is to extend learners’ English language proficiency in order to meet their needs to use English **in certain situations** in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and for future workplace needs.”*

(Curriculum Development Centre, 2000, p. 2, emphasis added)

It can thus be seen that inherent in the syllabus is a focus on the context of language use, which is taken to include the immediate context or situation as well as the wider socio-cultural context. It is felt that this situational language use merits attention as an area of research since it is highlighted in the Malaysian English Language syllabus.

Another characteristic of the Malaysian English Language syllabus is that it is skills-based, with learning outcomes stated in terms of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Of these, this research focuses on the skill of writing because the writing skill is widely acknowledged to be the hardest skill to master for learners of English as a second language (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Harmer, 2004; Kroll,

2001; Reid, 2001; Savignon, 2001), yet it is of the greatest importance to these learners in terms of assessment and practicality (Hinkel, 2006).

The final characteristic of the syllabus relevant to this study is that the syllabus does not stipulate the content of classroom activities in terms of materials and language focus. With regard to the writing skill, the syllabus states only that students are to be exposed to certain written text types, including written complaints, instructions, recounts, descriptions, explanations, scripted speeches, reports and articles (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003d, pp. 12,17). However, teachers are given the flexibility of choosing the actual instructional materials that they use in teaching-learning activities. One direct effect of this autonomy is that students' exposure to language use in different situations is greatly dependent on the teachers' choices of materials. In other words, the model texts provided by teachers exemplify the type of writing that students are expected to master for the various situations of language use that they will encounter. Hence, this investigation seeks to examine in more detail how situational language use is reflected in these model texts.

## **1.2 Aim and Rationale**

At this point, it has been established that the aim of this study is to investigate how model texts used in writing instruction reflect the attention to the use of English in different situations. There are thus two key elements in the research: the model texts and the situation of language use. Specifically, the former includes the linguistic characteristics of the model texts and how these characteristics are reflected in the pedagogical use of the texts; and the latter, both the immediate situation and the wider socio-cultural environment. The immediate situation and wider context are conceptualised respectively as Register and Genre in Systemic-Functional (SF) linguistic theory, which is deemed the most suitable theoretical framework for this

investigation because it takes a sociosemiotic view of language (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Hence, it addresses not only the form or structures of language but also how the form of language is shaped by the social circumstances of its usage. This theoretical framework will be further expanded on in Chapter 3.

Towards this aim, model texts that were used by teachers in writing instruction were examined. Two kinds of written texts were selected—formal and informal letters—because they contain different forms of language since they are used in situations that differ in terms of formality, subject matter, purpose and audience. Hence, the letters exemplify the situational language use that is the focus of this research. The selection was also made in the interests of maximising the applicability of this research, as letters are deemed among the most likely texts to be written by the most number of students after leaving school.

Lastly, in order to address the two key elements found in the aim of this research, two kinds of research methodology were applied convergently: text analysis and qualitative analysis of data from fieldwork. This bilateral strategy is believed to best suit the purpose of this study because it enables the triangulation of different sources of data for a clearer understanding of this phenomenon. Chapter 4 describes this methodology in full.

### **1.3 Research Objective and Research Questions**

In line with the research aim stated above, the objective of the investigation is therefore to examine how Register and Genre are realised in the model texts studied, and how these elements of Register and Genre are reflected in the use of these model texts by teachers for writing instruction. Here, the term ‘realised’ is used in a sense particular to Systemic-Functional Linguistics, whereby the phrase “how Register and Genre are

realised” can be paraphrased as “how the concepts of Register and Genre are reflected in the choices of grammar and vocabulary found in the text”, based on the explanation of the term ‘realisation’ given by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004, pp. 24, 33). However, it should be noted that the teachers concerned do not teach about the concepts of Register and Genre per se; hence this investigation is not about how these two concepts are taught but rather, what elements of Register and Genre are present and highlighted in the texts.

From the aim and objectives presented above, it should be apparent that there is a dual perspective in this study, which translates into four research questions:

1. What is the realisation of Register in the model texts being studied?
2. What is the realisation of Genre in the model texts being studied?
3. How does the use of the model texts for writing instruction reflect the realisation of Register seen in these model texts?
4. How does the use of the model texts for writing instruction reflect the realisation of Genre seen in the model texts studied?

#### **1.4 Motivation and Inspiration: The Researcher’s Perspective**

The inspiration for this research came from my cumulative professional experiences, encompassing my initial attempts at teaching as a novice teacher, my later observations—in a supervisory and evaluative role—of instructional practices by other teachers, and my subsequent efforts as a teacher trainer to equip pre-service teachers for the same task. Out of the multitude of experiences I encountered, the teaching and learning of the writing skill stood out as an area of much polarised dispute. Over time, I accumulated a wealth of anecdotal information on the difficulties faced by teachers in their attempts to teach the writing skill, which was generally perceived to be the most difficult skill to teach. Added to this was confusion over the suitability of instructional

materials and frustration over apparently ineffective approaches, leading to anxiety that their classroom practices pertaining to writing instruction were incorrect or defective in some way. Without systematic documentation, these experiences remain anecdotes that cannot be analysed in a focused way. This research thus assembles a documented collection of actual pedagogical models and classroom practices which can then be coherently and systematically examined within a theoretical framework. The development of this interest in the theoretical aspect of teaching took place in tandem with my personal experiences as described above. Thus, taking the stand that classroom practice should not be divorced from linguistic theory, I undertook to investigate how the Systemic-Functional concepts of Register and Genre relate to writing instruction against a particular socio-cultural background. In addition, the relationship between theory and practice is particularly relevant to me in my present capacity as a trainer of pre-service teachers whom I need to equip with both theory and practical skills.

## **1.5 Significance**

In addition to the personal motivation for the investigation that was presented in the previous section, it is also believed that this research is worthwhile because of its significance in both the academic and pragmatic sense. From the academic point of view, the significance of this study begins with how it addresses an aspect of writing instruction that is frequently debated—the tension between accuracy of form and effective communication of meaning (Brown, 2007a)—by applying a theoretical framework within which language as communication can be examined in both its structure (form) and meaning (function). This is the Systemic-Functional theoretical framework that has been introduced earlier. The use of this theory for this research in the Malaysian setting for non-content-based language instruction is also significant when it is taken into consideration that past research with a similar theoretical

framework has been carried out largely in environments where English is a dominant language and used as a medium of instruction, as expounded on in Chapter 2. This indicates that the scope of the current research has the potential to further enrich the theory. In addition, this study employs an uncommon bilateral approach that combines text analysis based on linguistic theory with qualitative methodology, as stated earlier in section 1.2.

Pragmatically, this investigation ties in with the current “Elevating Bahasa Malaysia and strengthening English Language” educational policy of Malaysia, which includes a gradual revision of the English Language syllabus (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2010). Against this background, the proposed study is both timely and relevant as a source of up-to-date data to be utilised for curriculum planning and materials development at Ministry level. Lastly, at school level, the findings would be of direct interest to the English Language teachers and school administrators involved.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations**

The study is intended to be focused rather than comprehensive in its scope, hence it covers only two kinds of written texts, that is, formal and informal letters. Likewise, the investigation does not aim for representativeness with a small sample of 16 teachers from four schools. This is consistent with the in-depth naturalistic case study design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 2009), wherein generalizability is not considered a major limitation according to the interpretative paradigm applied (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Nevertheless, measures were taken towards safeguarding the credibility of the research, as presented in Chapter 4. This small-scale investigation can also be taken in an exploratory light as it has brought to light various issues that can initiate future research, which are presented in full in Chapter 9.

## **1.7 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of 9 chapters. After the introductory chapter are two chapters that position this research theoretically, respectively presenting a review of related literature and the theoretical framework for this investigation. This is followed by Chapter 4 which presents the details of the methodology used. Subsequently, the findings from text analysis for Register and Genre are presented separately in Chapters 5 and 6. Following that, the findings from the content analysis of transcript data are presented in Chapter 7, which combines the findings related to both Register and Genre. The penultimate chapter contains the overall discussion of the findings and issues arising from the research, and the last chapter concludes this thesis by discussing the significance of the findings and implications from the research, ending with suggestions for follow-up endeavours based on these implications.

## **1.8 Key Terms**

This section will provide a brief explanation of six key terms which are used repeatedly in this research; the first four (*English as a Second Language*, *model letters*, *writing instruction* and *text*) are related to the research design in general, and the remainder (*Register* and *Genre*) are the main theoretical constructs underlying the investigation. The explanations given here are concise definitions, but most of the terms are also discussed in more detail in the subsequent Chapters in which the terms are applied.

To begin with, the term English as a Second Language (ESL) is used whenever the background of this research is discussed. Depending on which country the language is being taught in, a distinction is often made between the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), on the assumption that English has a more prominent sociolinguistic role in ESL contexts. Accordingly, the availability of input in English and opportunities to use English



outside the classroom is supposedly much higher in ESL contexts (Brown, 2007b) compared to EFL settings. However, this may not be fully applicable in Malaysia, where students may experience a wide disparity in the extent to which English is used outside the classroom depending on whether the school is located in urban or rural areas of the country (Jalaluddin, Yunus, & Yamat, 2011; Rajadurai, 2010; Ting, 2010). Hence, a wider definition of ESL is used in this study, wherein the term is used to refer to the learning of English by students for whom the language is not their mother tongue or first language, regardless of whether or not English is used widely in their daily lives outside school.

The investigation examines model letters, which are defined as complete letters used in writing instruction, i.e. teaching and learning activities that teachers and students engage in which are related to the skill of writing. These model letters may be used in a variety of ways by different teachers and may likewise be deployed at different stages of the writing instruction, but the study does not focus on the activities or techniques that feature the letters since the objective of the research is on the language that is contained in the letters rather than language teaching methodology per se. Here, the letters are considered texts in the sense of “any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, quoted in Eggins, 2004, p. 24). As it is, the model letters fall broadly into two categories: formal and informal. The terms ‘text type’ and ‘genre’ are initially used interchangeably to refer to these model letters in the general sense of ‘variety of written text’ in Chapters 1 and 2, but a theoretical distinction is made between these terms in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.2), from which point onwards the terms are used in a specific sense.

Finally, Register and Genre are the two key concepts of this investigation that address two aspects of the research focus of situational language use—the immediate context and the wider social context—as stated earlier in section 1.2. Register can be

understood very broadly as how a particular situation can be described in terms of three variables that include the topic concerned, the people involved and the role of language, whereas Genre refers to the way that texts are structured in order to achieve a certain purpose. The full discussion of the two terms is found in Chapter 3. Also, it should be noted that in keeping with SF conventions, the terms ‘Register’, ‘Genre’, ‘Field’, ‘Tenor’ and ‘Mode’ are capitalised throughout this thesis, as well as all other terms referring to specific SF concepts.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter constitutes a summary of the background and motivation behind this investigation, as well as introducing the aims and objective, theoretical underpinnings and research strategy of the study. The summary provides a general overview of the study with the intention of demonstrating that the research is worthwhile, feasible and significant. The subsequent chapters of the thesis will present a record of the various aspects of research towards further substantiating this assertion.

## **CHAPTER TWO      REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **2.0      OVERVIEW**

This chapter examines the literature related to the research, covering the key concepts underlying this study and relevant research carried out recently in related fields. Since the study is concerned with both applied linguistics and language teaching methodology, the chapter begins with a brief look at the communicative approach to second language teaching, followed by a discussion of current approaches to writing instruction with an emphasis on the role of model texts in the various approaches. Subsequently, related research in four fields related to this study is also reviewed, which positions the study in the existing body of research done, as well as mapping out the gaps in research which validate this study.

### **2.1      The Communicative Approach to Teaching English as a Second Language**

As explained in Chapter 1, the term “second language” as used in this paper refers to the learning of a language other than one’s mother tongue—English in this case—for whatever reason. Since this study does not focus on language teaching methodology per se, this relatively broad definition is sufficient. However, some background information is necessary for a better understanding of English Language Teaching (ELT) practices in Malaysia. Towards this end, sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 provide a historical perspective and general description of ELT in Malaysia.

### *2.1.1 A brief history of the communicative approach in second language teaching*

The origins of second language teaching can be traced back to the study of classical Greek and Medieval Latin in that they could both be considered second languages to those learning them because nobody had these two languages as their mother tongues. With the waning use and influence of these two languages, the tradition of second language teaching has been continued by TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) to current times (Celce-Murcia, 2001a; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Throughout this history, two broad approaches can be observed: learning a language by studying it, versus learning it by using it. These approaches had dominated in succession in different eras, and are in fact, still visible in contemporary practices in TESL, albeit without one being more dominant than the other. The two broad approaches can also be presented as a dichotomy of focus: on form or on meaning. The former is influenced by the methods of instruction in classic languages, whereas the latter can be linked to critical reactions towards Chomsky's heavily form-focused Universal Grammar theory (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Savignon, 2001). Thus began the communicative movement in TESL, with its focus on learning language by creating meaning through negotiation.

The communicative approach is actually more accurately described as an amalgamation of multidisciplinary ideas (Melrose, 1991; Savignon, 2001), and does not have a single definitive authority or text nor a "founder" per se (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). As noted by Richards & Rodgers (2001) and Kumaravadivelu (2006), the theoretical basis for the approach is drawn from diverse sources, including the work of sociolinguists (Dell Hymes, John Gumperz, and William Labov), philosophers (John Austin and John Searle) and functional linguists (John Firth and M.A.K. Halliday). Central to the communicative approach is the notion of "communicative competence",

originally propounded by Hymes (1972) and further developed by Canale and Swain (1980) (both cited in Hiep, 2007; Savignon, 2001). Four essential and interrelated components of communicative competence are currently recognised: grammatical, discoursal, sociocultural and strategic competence; which can be found with various permutations in virtually all communicative methodology (Brown, 2007a; J. C. Richards, 2005). Chronologically, this development in linguistic theory coincided with a general trend towards an increased concern over students' needs and preferences, together with attention to the affective dimension of learning—the so-called humanistic perspective—which also influenced the communicative approach to some extent (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Since the 1980s, the communicative approach has been considered the norm in ELT, although in actual implementation it has been subject to criticism on the grounds of authenticity, acceptability and adaptability (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Hence it should be noted that the communicative approach is not a single method or set of techniques, but may include any teaching strategy which has the following broad characteristics:

- Classroom goals which focus on all the components of communicative competence
- Activities leading to the pragmatic, authentic and functional use of language for meaningful purposes, facilitated by form-focused instruction as necessary
- Attention to how form and function are interdependent, with an emphasis on authentic contexts of language use
- Attention to both fluency and accuracy, and both productive and receptive use of language, including unrehearsed content

- Active involvement of students, stemming from a personal sense of interest and responsibility
- The teacher taking on the role of facilitator and guide

Source: adapted from Brown (2007b, pp. 46-47)

Although it may appear from the discussion thus far that the tension between focusing on form or meaning in ELT has been resolved in favour of the latter, the debate in fact continues (Chang & Goswami, 2011; Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Savignon & Chaochang, 2003), mainly because the perceived importance of grammatical accuracy still persists. A third point of view has also emerged, which points out that the form-meaning dichotomy is a false one. Savignon (2001) points out that a different combination of form- and meaning-focused instruction may be required at different stages in a learner's linguistic development. Hence, rather than being absolutely for one or the other, a balanced approach is advocated, which is also in line with the learner-centred principle in education. This advocacy of balance is further translated into a movement away from fixed methods and towards what Larsen-Freeman calls "principled eclecticism" (2000, p. 183) or Brown's "enlightened eclectic approach" (2007b, p. 42) in current ELT practices.

This section closes with the observation that there is a long-standing connection between the communicative approach and functional linguistic theory, beginning with Halliday's early ideas (1975) with regard to the functions of language, which have been cited as influencing the communicative approach (Brumfit, 1984; and Wilkins, 1976, cited in Widdowson, 2007). In contemporary applications of the communicative approach, at least three aspects of Systemic-Functional theory are still apparent. Firstly, the context of language use is still a central concept in the approach (Brown, 2007a, 2007b; Jacobs & Farrell, 2003; Larsen-Freeman, 2000), which

corresponds to the basic Systemic-Functional conceptualisation of language being shaped by the social circumstances of its use, later discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Secondly, the concept in Systemic-Functional theory of language as a set of choices for making meaning is reflected in the principle of teaching multiple forms for the same function (Harmer, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Finally, communicative language learning activities which employ authentic materials and models echo the investigation of authentic texts in Systemic-Functional research. It is thus concluded that the use of Systemic-Functional theory in this investigation is a valid choice for the generally communicative background of English language teaching in Malaysia.

### *2.1.2 The communicative ESL syllabus in Malaysia*

The Malaysian English Language syllabus for both primary and secondary level does not in fact, acknowledge itself to be a communicative syllabus anywhere within the official document from the Ministry of Education (Curriculum Development Centre, 2000). Nevertheless, the contents and general teaching principles stated in the syllabus indicate that it falls within the communicative camp, based on Brown's (2007b) set of characteristics stated earlier. The notable characteristics consistent with the communicative model are:

- The emphasis on using the English Language rather than studying its form, which is made clear in its aims and objectives
- The equal attention given to both productive and receptive skills as well as the development of both the comprehension and production of language
- The emphasis placed on learners' personal development and individual needs and preferences

In addition, the inclusion of all the components of communicative competence (discussed in section 2.1.1) is also evident in the syllabus, albeit not always transparently so.

- Grammatical competence is given specific attention, i.e. “Learners are expected to understand the grammar of the English language and be able to use it accurately” (Curriculum Development Centre, 2000, p. 1). Knowledge of specific components of grammar is also listed under the “Language Content” section.
- Discoursal competence is not specifically mentioned, but it is implicit in the ability to understand and produce a variety of texts in various contexts.
- Sociocultural competence is indicated by the aim of enabling learners to take part in social interaction as a part of using language for Interpersonal purposes.
- Strategic competence is reflected in the instruction to take differences in learners’ strengths into account when deciding learning outcomes, as well as the “Educational Emphases” which include thinking skills, “learning how to learn” skills, Information and Communications Technology skills, knowledge acquisition and preparation for the real world (Curriculum Development Centre, 2000, pp. 10-12)

Likewise, the five components of a communicative curriculum proposed by Savignon (1987, p. 238) can be seen in one form or another in the syllabus, namely language arts (grammar), language for a purpose (language use in context), personal language use, theatre arts (role-play and drama) and language use beyond the



classroom. Not surprisingly, Malaysia is quite often cited in published research as one of the countries in which the communicative approach is implemented (Butler, 2011; W. K. Ho, 2004; Littlewood, 2007). However, it should be noted that this study does not focus on how the communicative approach is implemented in Malaysia but rather on the characteristics and use of instructional materials, with the generally communicative syllabus as a backdrop for the research.

The Malaysian syllabus is organised around three “areas” of language use—the *Interpersonal*, the *Informational* and the *Aesthetic*—reminiscent of the three metafunctions in SF theory (discussed in Chapter 3). Within each area, the syllabus is expanded in terms of the Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills through specifications of the sub-skills that are to be addressed in teaching and learning. With regard to writing, this skill is taught with the overall intention to “...enable learners to present their ideas in a logical and organised manner” (Curriculum Development Centre, 2000, p. 3), along with the appropriate register and accuracy of form. Under each of the three areas of language use, a different type of writing is highlighted:

- Under the area of Interpersonal language use, students need to write as part of their social interaction, which includes the procurement of goods and services from others.
- Under the area of Informational language use, students need to write in order to present information synthesised from various sources, including carrying out the processes of drafting, revision and editing.
- Under the area of Aesthetic language use, students need to write creatively and imaginatively to express personal opinions and feelings.

(Summarised from Curriculum Development Centre, 2000, pp. 4-6)

It can thus be seen that within the Malaysian secondary English Language syllabus, the form-focus debate mentioned in section 2.1.1 is circumvented by directions to address both the expression of meaning and grammatical accuracy. In fact, the syllabus itself does not specify the exact classroom activities to be used, but there are suggested activities for each item in the syllabus in the Curriculum Specifications for each level. These suggested activities cover a conventional repertoire of communicative language-learning activities like role-playing and information-gap tasks, as well as a few techniques of the “learning a language by studying it” variety, for instance collocation, word association and analysing prefixes and suffixes. The Malaysian English Language syllabus is thus seen to be consistent with the eclecticism in methodology discussed earlier in section 2.1.1. The syllabus is likewise non-specific on instructional materials to be used, offering suggestions rather than advocating the use of compulsory texts. This affords teachers a considerable degree of freedom in choosing pedagogic models, as discussed in Chapter 1, which in turn determines what models of language use students are exposed to. Hence, model texts used for language instruction play a significant role in exemplifying the types of written communication that students are expected to master.

## **2.2 Approaches to Writing Instruction in Teaching English as a Second Language**

Chronologically, writing was initially considered a “subservient” skill in the early history of second-language instruction, with classroom writing being limited to mostly grammar practice activities (Harklau, 2002; Raimes, 1993, in Nunan, 1999). In the mid-1970s, this gave way to the “process” approach as educators began to realise the need for systematic writing instruction. Subsequently, writing instruction further developed to focus more on academic content in the 1980s, along with an increase in the attention

given to the writer-reader relationship. The evolution from grammar-practice vehicle in the form-focused era to legitimate means of communication in the communicative era reflects how writing instruction has evolved along with TESL in general. Presently, writing instruction in TESL can be put in three broad categories, as presented in the sections below.

### 2.2.1 *The 'traditional' approach*

The 'traditional' approach actually refers to the approach for teaching second-language writing that is modelled on first-language writing instruction (Kroll, 2001). As such, learners were confined to tightly-controlled writing exercises which were meant primarily to practice and reinforce language rules, as well as studying non-authentic texts. The focus on grammatical accuracy was consistent with the bottom-up structural approaches common in TESL prior to the 1970s (Larsen-Freeman, 2000), and also necessitated the use of terms to discuss language itself (metalinguage) in classroom activities. The traditional approach to writing instruction is also known as the *product approach* because of its emphasis on accurateness of form and conformity to conventions, achieved by focusing on organisation patterns and following rules to reproduce models of "good" paragraphs and essays (Reid, 2001). The final product was thus expected to be comparable, if not identical, to the model given in terms of rhetorical style, grammar and organisation (Brown, 2007b).

The main criticism against the traditional approach has always been its over-emphasis on grammatical accuracy out of context, resulting in the mastery of rules and the ability to articulate grammatical knowledge, but the inability to apply these rules to express unrehearsed meaning (Melrose, 1991). The approach has therefore fallen out of favour in contemporary ELT with the advent of communicative language teaching methodology. Traces of the traditional approach can be seen in the Malaysian secondary

EL syllabus, as evinced by the use of sentence patterns and attention to the mechanical aspects of spelling and punctuation in writing, but on the whole the syllabus does not advocate a patently product-centred traditional approach to writing instruction.

### 2.2.2 *The process approach*

In contrast to the traditional approach that puts accuracy of form above all else, the process approach foregrounds the writer's message, i.e. meaning, and how this is communicated to the reader. The act of writing is thus no longer a mechanical skill subordinate to speech (speech written down), but a process—a complex cognitive activity that is recursive and reflective in nature—as well as a social act that takes into account the audience for the written product (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007). The process approach is the only approach named specifically in the Curriculum Specifications for Form 1 until Form 5 (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d, 2003e), which seems to indicate a prominent role in Malaysian secondary-level ELT for this particular approach to writing instruction. The suggested procedure follows a typical process approach that guides learners from prewriting to producing the final draft. This is as advocated by White and Arndt (1991), who present six stages of writing in a recursive and interconnected system: generating ideas, focusing, structuring, drafting, evaluating and reviewing; to which Harmer (2004) adds a final stage of proofreading and editing. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the term 'process approach' actually refers to a variety of methods that share a cyclical view of the act of writing, rather than any single fixed procedure (Kroll, 2001).

It may appear that the process approach with its focus on meaning is eminently compatible with the communicative approach, but it should be borne in mind that the approach originated in first-language writing instruction and may not be ideal for use in ESL classes (Atkinson, 2003) wherein learners have to contend with the lack of socio-

cultural background knowledge and inadequate mastery of the form of the language (Johns, 1995). In similar vein, Badger and White (2000) point out that the approach does not seem to take into account differences in purpose and audience, whereas Nunan (1999) observes that the approach has also been criticised for over-emphasising narrative and recount writing to the exclusion of other genres such as factual descriptions and argumentative writing, which is inadequate preparation for writing at higher levels of education.

### 2.2.3 *The genre-based approach*

Where the preceding approaches have focused on form and meaning respectively, the genre-based approach takes the text as its starting point. However, it is not to be mistaken for a product-focused approach, as the emphasis is not just about producing error-free texts conforming to conventions of format and content, but rather on understanding the reasons behind why particular text types have “...recognisable and recurring patterns...” of organisational and linguistic features (Hammond & Derewianka, 2001, p.186). More precisely, the central idea of this approach is that written texts, like any other form of language use, are produced for a specific purpose and audience in mind, within a specific context or situation. Various elements in the contexts, purposes and audiences shape the related texts to have distinctive patterns of content organisation, lexis and grammatical features, which are recognised by the discourse community as distinct text types or genres. This definition of genre as text type suffices for now, but this concept will be expanded on in Chapter 3.

In relation to writing instruction, the genre approach is thus named because it advocates the explicit teaching of the features of organisation, lexis and grammar that typify genres of use to learners (Coffin, 2001). The approach is thus consistent with the communicative approach in that language forms are taught in context, leading to an

understanding of how the form of language works to achieve the communicative intent of a text (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003). This understanding is an advantage over the product-based approach because it equips learners to be more flexible in dealing with novel purposes and contexts of writing, as opposed to rigidly imitating set texts (Myskow & Gordon, 2010). This highlighting of context as a key factor in the production of meaning strongly links the genre approach to the systemic-functional theory of language, as elaborated later in Chapter 3. The approach is said to be particularly suitable for writing instruction in English for Specific Purposes (Harmer, 2001) but it has been successfully applied in Australian first-language writing instruction for disadvantaged children and in schools with high numbers of immigrant students, as well as in ESL programmes for adult immigrants (Burns & De Silva, 2007; Nunan, 1999).

The basis of the teaching-learning cycle in the genre-based approach is the scaffolding principle of supporting students towards eventual autonomy in writing (Paltridge, 2001). The basic procedure begins with establishing the context before presentation of the model by the teacher, including exploration of its content, organisational and linguistic features. This is followed by joint teacher-student construction of texts in that genre, and finally the students independently producing texts. Numerous aspects of this approach can in fact be seen in the Malaysian secondary English Language syllabus. Some examples are:

- attention to format and the use of past tense and linkers in writing recounts in the specifications for Form 1 (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003a, pp. 11,19) and Form 2 (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003b, p. 18)
- using authentic newspaper articles as models in the Form 3 specifications (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003c, p. 19)

- providing a framework or scaffolding as well as raising awareness of the purpose and audience for written work in the Form 5 specifications (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003e, p. 15)
- The following excerpt from the Form 2 specifications, which reflects the genre approach most clearly:

*Clear context must be provided as to the purpose and the relationship between sender and receiver so that the correct register and the correct choice of words can be used.*

(Curriculum Development Centre, 2003b, p. 12)

It can thus be seen that the genre approach can be found implicitly within the Malaysian syllabus, even if it is not specified as an approach per se.

The main problem with over-zealous application of the genre-based approach is an excessively prescriptive orientation (Watkins, 1999), but this can be mitigated by exposure to a wider array of model texts and treating these texts as examples rather than standards for exact reproduction (Harmer, 2001). The approach continues to generate debate centred on whether genres can and should be taught explicitly, and how this relates to ideology and social parity (Hammond & Derewianka, 2001).

#### 2.2.4 *Comparison of approaches: The role of model texts in writing instruction*

Even as writing instruction has evolved, one on-going issue remains: process versus product (Reid, 2001). The central question in this debate is whether to pay attention to the finished product of writing in terms of accuracy and format, or to concentrate on the process of writing, whatever the product may be. The role played by materials for writing instruction likewise ranges from pivotal to incidental at the two extremes of the process-product continuum, as discussed below. Nevertheless, Reid

(2001) points out that the process-product dichotomy only applies if any approach is carried out to the extreme, since there are few differences in actual practices

Product-oriented approaches are consistent with the bottom-up model of language learning and accentuate the role of model texts for imitation and reproduction, largely at sentence level (Nunan, 1991). Hence, teachers who subscribe to the *product* philosophy typically take a more rigid stance in their writing instruction and exert greater control over their learner's work in aiming for error-free finished products, with the view that learning to write is "assisted imitation" of models (Pincas, 1982, pg. 24, quoted in Badger & White, 2000, p. 154). Conversely, *process* oriented teachers are comfortable with a higher degree of error in their learners' final drafts as long as there is evidence of improvement over the first and subsequent drafts. Originality is valued since the aim of the writing instruction is to enable the learner to express their personal message; hence model texts do not play a prominent role. Therein lies the gist of the product-process debate. Process-oriented teachers cite the lack of creativity and tendency towards formulaic copy-writing as a shortcoming of the product focus (Schlepppegrell, 2004), whereas product-oriented teachers point out that the factors of time constraints and the inability of lower-proficiency learners to revise and edit their own written products work against the process approach in most language classrooms (White & Arndt, 1991).

The process-product issue may appear identical with the process versus genre debate, but a finer distinction can actually be made, since the genre approach does not actually focus exclusively on producing an ideal piece of writing but rather a piece of writing that is recognisable as belonging to a particular genre. The main criticism of the process camp against the genre approach is that focusing on what is perceived as the outward content and linguistic characteristics of the text (the product) stifles creativity and does not reflect the fluid nature of genres (Wennerstrom, 2003). Linguists working



in the field of critical discourse analysis have likewise criticised the genre approach for propagating hegemony by promoting text types typical of the dominant ideology (for example, Benesch, 2001, cited in Gebhard and Harman (2011, p. 48), Hyland (2007, p. 151), Luke, 1996, cited in Derewianka (2003, p. 150) and Johns (2011, p. 65). In response, the *genre* camp has pointed out that the model texts used in the approach are meant to be seen as prototypical and not definitive models (Swales, 1990, cited in Paltridge, 2001). The approach is thus presented as being not prescriptive but empowering, in that learners are not compelled to copy the model texts, but rather encouraged to explore the general characteristics of genres in order to independently produce written products with similar characteristics. In so doing, learners gain control over texts and forms of language that are valued in a particular discourse community, thus enabling their own participation in the discourse community (Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). Similarly, Johns (2011) recommends that students be led into becoming aware of the generic nature of texts by examining genre exemplars in their own language and culture to sensitize them to the fluid nature of genres in order to minimize a prescriptive orientation in genre-based approaches. As for the issue of creativity, this is addressed succinctly by Nunan, who states that “...one must master the rules in order to transcend them.” (1999, p. 287).

Nevertheless, against this background of diverging views there are some that take a reconciliatory stand. Nunan (1999) points out that the genre approach is not necessarily inconsistent with process writing procedures, since the genre approach concerns a matter of syllabus design, whereas the process approach is a matter of methodology. Harmer (2004) asserts that it is entirely possible for the process approach to be merged with the genre-based approach, wherein the analysis of model texts as genre exemplars forms part of the planning stage in the process approach, whereas the multiple revision stage of the process approach works towards a closer approximation

of the genre in the learners' writing. Similarly, Roger and Laura Everett (2005) propose the Community-Apprentice-Process (CAP) approach which incorporates elements from both the genre and process approaches. Wennerstrom (2003) and Thornbury (2005) likewise apply principles of genre-based ELT in combination with process writing in their take on writing instruction based on discourse analysis, as with Badger & White (2000).

Notwithstanding the fairly detailed discussion of approaches in writing instruction up to this point, it is once again pointed out that this study should not be seen as an attempt to extol one approach to writing instruction over another, since all the various approaches have their respective strengths and shortcomings. Regardless of the approach taken, model texts play a prominent role in writing instruction, whether as a standard for duplication, an exemplar for study, or a source of inspiration to generate ideas. Moreover, in line with the principle of authenticity in communicative ELT practices, model texts that are as close to real-life texts as possible are preferred. This gives added significance to the model texts that students are exposed to, in that these texts represent the kind of written communication that is used in the community of which the students are or will be a part. It follows that their mastery of these texts will determine the extent to which they are able to participate and function in the community, particularly once they leave school. Thus it is felt that model texts merit closer study, both in terms of their inherent characteristics as written texts and in how these characteristics are reflected in teachers' use of the texts for writing instruction.

### **2.3 Current Research in Related Fields**

The following section reviews some of the current research in the fields of writing instruction, SF linguistic theory, the study of genre and research conducted in a Malaysian setting, which are the four most distinctive aspects of this study. This has a

dual purpose: firstly, establishing the relatively less well-studied areas which would benefit from further research like that conducted in this study; and secondly, distinguishing this study from similar work carried out thus far.

### *2.3.1 Research on second language writing instruction*

With reference to the definition of key terms in Chapter 1, it should be noted that the term “second language” (L2) in this review refers to all situations in which English is not used as a primary language, which would include situations that are described as belonging to the category of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and Teaching English as an International Language. This review is based on recent academic work on L2 writing published in 6 leading journals, spanning all the issues of the journals published in the five-year period between 2007 and 2011. These journals included both internationally and locally published journals, selected based on general subject matter (language teaching and linguistics) and credibility (ISI-ranked). The 122 articles that were found can be considered an overview of the current concerns in research related to L2 writing, as well as an indication of the most heavily studied areas. This selection is intended simply to set the scene for this investigation and it is not meant to be an exhaustive one, nor does it claim to have any statistical significance. Table 2.1 on the next page summarises the journals and articles included.

Table 2.1: Journal articles reviewed in section 2.3.1 (Research on second language writing instruction)

Journal titles	Publisher	No. of issues	Total no. of articles	Articles on L2 writing	Impact factor
TESOL Quarterly	Wiley	20	105	12	0.969
Annual Review of Applied Linguistics	Cambridge	5	60	3	0.962
Journal of second language writing	Elsevier	36	73	73	0.897
English Language Teaching Journal	Oxford	20	143	13	0.677
RELC journal	Sage	18	93	15	NA
The English Teacher	MELTA	5	49	6	NA
TOTAL			523	122 (23.3%)	

The first observation that can be made about the research presented in the articles reviewed is that the bulk of this was on writing at tertiary level or writing for academic purposes. Research on secondary level writing instruction is relatively less well represented, and tends to focus most heavily on aspects of the teaching approach used (for instance Firkins, Forey, & Sengupta, 2007; I. Lee, 2008a, 2008b; Myskow & Gordon, 2010; Sa'diyah, 2011). Otherwise, the emphasis is on the distinctive characteristics of learners' writing (Chandrasegaran, 2008; Enright & Gilliland, 2011; Kibler, 2011; Kormos, 2011; Yi, 2007). None of this research focused on instructional materials used.

As for research on L2 writing at tertiary level, the top four areas covered are: research on practices in writing instruction, learner factors, errors and feedback, and writing assessment, as discussed below. Among the studies listed, of particular relevance to this investigation is Macbeth (2010) who examined the effect of using model texts in academic writing and found that model texts can be beneficial to learners as long as they understand that the models are to be emulated, not reproduced exactly. The studies by Ho (2009), Jalilifar (2010) and Yasuda (2011) are also relevant in that

they also investigated genre in writing instruction, except that they were not taking a qualitative approach. In any case, these studies reported generally positive outcomes from using genre-based approaches. As it is, the bulk of the research on L2 tertiary-level and academic writing comprised:

- Research on the impact of unusual or innovative practices in writing instruction (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ewert, 2009; Ho, 2009; James, 2010; Macbeth, 2010; Rao, 2007; Shehadeh, 2011; Wette, 2010; Yasuda, 2011), focusing mainly on the effects on learners' writing from the implementation of these approaches and the experiences and perceptions of teachers and learners involved in the implementation of these approaches.
- Research focusing on learners, which explores the connections between their writing and various factors in their background (Belcher, 2007, 2009; Cho, 2010; Li, 2007; Nakamaru, 2010; Ouellette, 2008) or examines the characteristics of their writing (Baba, 2009; Jalilifar, 2010; Wei & Lei, 2011).
- Research on the errors made by learners and the feedback given examines the matter in terms of effectiveness (Kathpalia & Heah, 2010; G. Lee & Schallert, 2008) and from the perspectives of teachers (Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011) and learners (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Montgomery & Baker, 2007).
- Research on the assessment of writing highlights issues (Md Rashid & Chan, 2008; Ruegg, Fritz, & Holland, 2011) or presents alternative means of assessment (Duong, Cuc, & Griffin, 2011; Lu, 2011b).

Based on what has been presented in this section, it can be seen that the characteristics and use of instructional materials is poorly represented in research on L2 writing at secondary level. Similarly, very few studies combine text analysis with qualitative research methods, as carried out in this investigation. Hence, it is believed that this study is able to add to the available research on L2 writing instruction because of its scope, focus and methodology.

### *2.3.2 Research in education based on Systemic-Functional theory*

The application of SF theory in research covers a wide range of texts and disciplines (Christie & Unsworth, 2000), a thorough review of which is not within the present scope. Hence, the studies included in this section are limited to those which have a connection to language education in keeping with the field of research. Within this range, research based on Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) can be put into three main categories according to the research setting: tertiary education, secondary and primary education, and ESL settings.

With regard to tertiary education, SF theories and tools for language analysis have been used extensively to study EAP (English for Academic Purpose) in general (L. Flowerdew, 2000; Gonzales, 2008; Ho, 2009; Lock & Lockhart, 1998; Ryshina-Pankova, 2006; Tsang & Wong, 2000; Woodward-Kron, 2005; Yuan, 2007), including ESP (English for Specific Purposes) (for instance Azirah, 2006; Iddings, 2007; Luna, 2004; North, 2005; Sridevi, 2006b, 2008, 2009; Wang, 2003). As for the primary and secondary level of education, there is a considerable body of work with SF theoretical foundations done on language used in classroom interactions and activities (Christie, 1990a, 1997, 2005; Machken-Horarik, 2006; Schleppegrell, 2001, 2004). More specifically, SF-based research has focused on writing instruction (Cullip, 1999, 2009; Ferreira, 2005; Schleppegrell & O'Hallaron, 2011), curriculum (Brown, 2008; Burns,

2003; Coffin, 2006; Lin, 2003), teacher training (Achugar, Schleppegrell & Oteiza, 2007; Aguirre-Muñoz, Park, Amabisca & Boscardin, 2007; Schleppegrell & Go, 2007) and the language of specific school subjects like History (Coffin, 2006; Cullip, 2007; Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Oteza, 2004), Science (Croce, 2007; Esquinca, 2006; Veel, 1997) and Mathematics (Abel & Exley, 2008; Morgan, 2006; Schleppegrell, 2007; Zolkower & Shreyar, 2007).

The range and depth of SF-based research in education is a strong indication that the SF paradigm is not just theoretically robust but also practically applicable. Nevertheless, whether conducted at the tertiary level or lower, what these studies have in common is that English is the medium of instruction in the research setting; hence it is the dominant language in the learners' environment. This means that the learners have ample access to the forms of language use that they need to master, as well as a clearer understanding of the social setting in which they are expected to use these forms. The current study adds an extra dimension to the investigation in that unlike the learners involved in the studies conducted in settings where English has sociolinguistic dominance, the learners and indeed the participants in this study are in a social setting where English may not be used very much outside the language classroom. This kind of environment severely limits the range of different language forms that learners may encounter and even the range of contexts in which language use occurs, which firstly makes it much more difficult for learners to develop an understanding about relationships between language form and the context of use, and secondly, accentuates the importance of making such knowledge of the form-context relationship explicit to these learners. Hence, it is believed that this investigation has some potential to put a fresh perspective on how the linguistic environment can affect the teaching and learning of situational language use.

It is noted that SF theory has also been applied in research in ESL settings, as seen in papers on the learning experiences of learners undergoing SF-influenced language curricula (Cheah, 2004; Kramer-Dahl, 2004; Kristjansson, 2004), content-based language learning (Gibbons, 2003; Mohan & Beckett, 2003; Slater & Mohan, 2010), the practices and effects of SF-based ELT (Ajayi, 2009; Cumming, Lunt, O'Loughlin, Senior, & Strauss, 2001; Forman, 2004; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Kongpetch, 2006; Michell & Sharpe, 2005) and the use of SF analysis as a research method (Ben, Celia, Constant, & Roxy, 2002; Coffin, 2003). However, these investigations all take place against a background in which SF-based language instruction is the norm. Hence, the findings from these studies are not directly applicable to the Malaysian context, in which SF-based language instruction is the exception, if practised at all. In addition, the bulk of the research done concerns the implementation or effect of classroom practices based on SF theory, but there is relatively little emphasis on the instructional materials used, including the model texts that learners are exposed to. It is thus believed that the distinct setting and scope of this investigation differentiates it sufficiently from the bulk of SF-based research in education to provide a strong reason for its implementation.

### *2.3.3 Research on Register and Genre in education*

It has been established that this investigation is concerned with both Register and Genre, but it was found that studies on the former are greatly outnumbered by those on the latter. Research that foregrounds register comprised just eight studies: Brown (2008) on the language curriculum at tertiary level, Gibbons (2003) on the language of interactions in content-based classrooms, Gimenez (2000) on differences in electronic and written business communication (not using a SF theoretical framework), Schleppegrell and O'Hallaron (2011) on teaching and learning of the academic register



in secondary school, Syrquin (2006) on the writing of African-American college students, and three studies on the language of specific subjects—Mathematics (Schleppegrell, 2007; Zack, 1999) and Science (Slater & Mohan, 2010). However, Register is actually mentioned regularly in studies on Genre, hence it would appear that Register tends to be studied together with Genre or as a component of Genre rather than a concept in itself, which makes this study unique in giving equal attention to the two concepts rather than to one or the other.

As for research related to genre in education, this has largely been concerned with tertiary education. However, research at tertiary level will not be discussed in depth here as it is of less direct relevance to this investigation, and because quite a number of these genre-based studies have already been mentioned earlier in the discussion of SFL-related research (Aguirre-Muñoz, Park, Amabisca & Boscardin, 2007; Azirah & Norizah, 2006; L. Flowerdew, 2000; D.G.E. Ho, 2009; Ryshina-Pankova, 2006; Sridevi, 2008, 2009; Wang, 2003; Woodward-Kron, 2005). Research on genre also overlaps with the previous section with regard to genres which are specific to particular subjects. One general finding that emerges from these studies is that for learners to function in different contexts, they not only need basic proficiency in the language, but also exposure to a sufficiently diverse range of genres.

A major part of genre-related research is the genre-based approach in language instruction. Scholarship related to the genre-based approach ranges from theoretical discussions (Cullip, 2000; Derewianka, 2003; Gebhard, Demers, & Castillo-Rosenthal, 2008; Gebhard & Harman, 2011; Gentil, 2011; Hyland, 2002, 2003; Johns, 2011; Paltridge, 1995a, 1995b; C. Tardy, 2006) to practical aspects of implementation (Burns, 2003; Dreyfus, Macnaught, & Humphrey, 2008; Hartnett, 1997; Hazelrigg, 2004; Hyland, 2007; Hyland, 2008b; Johns, 2008; Myskow & Gordon, 2010; Paltridge, 1996; Ramanathan & Kaplan, 2000; Read, 2010; Wu & Dong, 2009) and the effects of

implementing the approach (Chen & Su, 2011; Firkins et al., 2007; Knain, 2005; Thwaite, 2006) including analysis of learners' writing (Christie & Dreyfus, 2007; Kibler, 2011; Martínez, 2005; Woodward-Kron, 2005). Another area that is quite often studied is the analysis of academic writing by expert writers to determine the Genre characteristics of such writing (for instance Abdi, 2002; Hyland, 2008a). Even researchers who do not subscribe wholly to the SF model of genre likewise study much the same aspects (for instance Bhatia, 1997; Bhatia, 2008; Cheng, 2008, 2011; L. Flowerdew, 2000, 2005; Hüttner, 2008; Skulstad, 1999; Swales, 1985, 2009)

In keeping with the theoretical orientation of this study, the research presented thus far has been based primarily on the SF-based conceptualisation of genre. However, there is also a considerable body of independent work on genre in EAP and ESP which have their own theoretical underpinnings. This theoretical difference is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. With regard to the text types or genres in this investigation, research on letters are most commonly found in ESP, particularly in the field of business communication. Studies can be found on letters of negotiation (Dos Santos, 2002), tax computation letters (J. Flowerdew & Wan, 2006), letters of application (Henry & Roseberry, 2001), letters to the editor (Bloch, 2003; Magnet & Carnet, 2006), cover letters (Okamura & Shaw, 2000) and "For Your Information" letters (Vergaro, 2005) as well as other genres like resumes (Amare & Manning, 2009), audit reports (J. Flowerdew & Wan, 2010) and memos (Campbell, Brammer, & Ervin, 1999).

Conversely, comparable research on informal letters is not easily found. This is perhaps because informal letters are considered personal documents; hence a form of writing that does not need to be developed through formal instruction. However, it is believed that since the writing of informal letters is indeed formally taught in Malaysian EL classes, these letters merit study as much as any other text type. Only two examples of such research could be found: Anderson's (2008) study on persuasive letters written

by primary school children, and an investigation of a formal persuasive letter written for a secondary level humanities course, which was part of Kibler's (2011) research on audience in genres in a content-based language learning context.

#### *2.3.4 Research conducted in a Malaysian setting – published and unpublished*

When it comes to published research conducted in Malaysia, this has focused largely on the sociolinguistic profile of the country (S. K. Lee, 2003; Nagappan, 2005; Rajadurai, 2010, 2011; Ting, 2010) and its language policies (Azirah, 2009; Foo & Richards, 2004; Gill, 2005, 2006; Mandal, 2000; Ridge, 2004), notably the policy of using English as the medium of instruction for Science and Mathematics (Chan & Tan, 2006; Feryok, 2007; Ismail et al., 2011), which was subsequently annulled. There is also quite a large collection of published papers on various aspects of education in Malaysia, for instance Adnan & Smith (2001), Gardner & Yaacob (2009), Ismail & Alexander (2005), Kabilan (2007), Mukundan & Khandehroo (2010), Nagappan (2005), Joseph & Zaitun (2006) and Shuib (2009). As for published research conducted in a Malaysian context that focused on writing instruction, this can be categorised generally as follows:

- Research on the kinds of writing done by Malaysian students, both within (Darus & Subramaniam, 2009; Kok Eng & Miller, 2007) and outside (Tan, Ng & Saw, 2010; Tan & Richardson, 2006) the school context.
- Research on difficulties faced in writing instruction, particularly in rural schools (Jalaluddin et al., 2011; Maros, Tan, & Salehuddin, 2007).
- Research on writing for ESP settings (Said & Darus, 2011; Ting, 2002).

Writing instruction in Malaysian schools is in fact fairly well studied in postgraduate work, but this body of work is largely unpublished. Some examples of research on secondary level writing instruction with similarities to this study is presented below, but this list is by no means exhaustive.

- Research on general approaches to writing instruction, including the process approach (Ambikadevi, 2003; Sivalingam, 1993), cooperative learning (Foong, 2005; Hairani, 1998; Norharti, 2001) and the genre-based approach (Er, 2002; Kerine, 2000; Zurina, 2003). What is notable about the latter is that the studies do not refer to SF theory, even though the SF perspective on genre is recognized as a leading one in applied linguistics (Hyon, 1996; Tyler, 2010).
- Research on specific techniques in writing instruction, notably ways of generating ideas (Abdul, 2004; Parvathy, 2002, Thanaletchumy, 2004) and the use of computers (Cheong, 2005; Ooi, 2000). Here, the emphasis is on the content of writing rather than the language, indicating that content is a significant concern in writing instruction.
- Research focusing on various factors in writing instruction, including feedback (Ahmad, 2000; Mohd Fauzi, 2005), assessment (Khatija, 1998; Kho, 2006; Ravindran, 2005; Suzihana, 2003), and teacher factors (Diana, 2000). Like the majority of research found, these studies have all utilized mixed methods or experimental research designs. It would thus appear that a qualitative approach is relatively not as widely applied to research on secondary level writing instruction in a Malaysian setting.
- Research on writing instruction that takes a purely qualitative approach has tended to focus on the learners (Er, 2002; Magasvari, 2005;

Munisamy, 1998; Ranjit, 2002; Sim, 1998; Zarihan, 1999) or the effects of implementing innovative techniques (Leong, 1999; Mahaletchmy, 1994; Ooi, 2000; Parvathy, 2002; Thanaletchmy, 2004). It is observed that these studies have yielded more complex and balanced views of the phenomena being studied, compared to quantitatively oriented studies. It is thus believed that more research like this study—based on the triangulation of multiple data sources from systematic text analysis and sustained classroom observation—is justified, for an even better understanding of the complexities of Malaysian ELT.

In terms of the linguistic orientation of this investigation, similar research in Malaysia is also found to be mostly unpublished postgraduate research, more commonly on academic writing at tertiary level (Premavathy, 2000; Sze, 2003) than texts at primary or secondary level (Jeyanthi, 1998; Noreida, 2004). Likewise, unpublished postgraduate research driven by SF theory have been related to academic language at tertiary level (Y.S. Lee, 2001; Sridevi, 1996, 2006a; Tengku Silvana, 2002; Vijaya, 1997, 2000) or exercises in linguistics (Kalaivani, 2004; Ma, 2003; Sim, 2004). In contrast, no examples of SF-influenced research involving secondary education could be found except for Ho's analysis of Mathematics textbooks (T. T. Ho, 2004).

Similarly, published research similar in nature to this study—driven by linguistic theory and in a Malaysian context—is mainly on English for Specific Purposes (Azirah, 2004, 2006; Sridevi, 2006b, 2006c, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b) and the characteristics of English unique to Malaysian usage (Norizah & Azirah, 2010). Only two studies were found which are similar in scope to this research: Mukundan and Aziz (2009) who applied concordance software to English language textbooks; and Cullip (2007) who examined the language in History textbooks (translated from Malay

to English) with a SF theoretical framework. This investigation is hence partly motivated by the apparent rarity of classroom-based research on secondary level English language teaching in Malaysia that is carried out with a SF framework.

## **2.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has presented the background for this research in terms of how the communicative approach to language teaching is interpreted in the Malaysian English Language syllabus. The investigation was also related to current views on approaches to writing instruction, with particular attention to the role of instructional materials. Finally, a review of recent research in four related areas was presented, showing the current trends and most heavily-studied areas in related research. This served to position the current study amongst related work, while highlighting the distinctive aspects of this investigation. Based on what has been presented, it is believed that this study is timely, valid and relevant.

## **CHAPTER THREE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.0 OVERVIEW**

This chapter discusses the Systemic-Functional (SF) theoretical framework underlying the research. Section 3.1 provides a general overview of SF linguistic theory in order to establish the conceptual foundations for this investigation, with particular emphasis on the application of SF theory in language education. Following this, Register and Genre as conceptualized in SF theory are presented in Sections 3.2 and 3.3 respectively. Section 3.3 also discusses other conceptualizations of Genre as a comparison to establish the suitability of the model selected for this study.

### **3.1 A Theory of Language: Systemic-Functional Linguistics**

As an exploration of language teaching and learning, the theoretical underpinnings of this investigation are related to theories on teaching approaches as well as theories on language use, of which the former has already been discussed in the previous chapter. SF theory is therefore applied primarily as a theory of language in this study, although it also has strong connections to language education, as shown in section 3.1.3. The choice of the SF model of language is made based on two strong reasons: its focus on language use in context and thus its close relationship to the communicative approach to language teaching, and its well-documented application in education, both as a governing principle of language development and instruction, and a research framework in educational settings (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2000). These two dimensions are examined in the following sections.

### *3.1.1 Language as a system of choices*

As a theory of language, the pedigree of SF theory can be traced back to the Prague school of linguistics and the scholars J.R. Firth and Bronislaw Malinowski (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Martin, 1992). The two components in the hyphenated title ('systemic' and 'functional') are based on its two cardinal precepts, wherein the 'systemic' component expresses the idea that language is a resource for constructing meanings by making choices from a network of interrelated systems (Eggins, 2004), and the 'functional' component reflects the idea that language should be studied in terms of its functions in a social group (Thompson, 2004). Whenever Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL) is mentioned, the name of M.A.K. Halliday is frequently found cited as the 'father' or 'founder' of the theory. Undoubtedly this does not exclude the contributions of other scholars with systemic-functional orientations, as they offer different perspectives on the theory, but it should nonetheless be noted that the approach used in this paper is aligned with the so-called Hallidayan version of SFL rather than the West Coast functionalists or the Cardiff school (Bloor & Bloor, 2004). Accordingly, the key references for this study are Halliday's works on SF grammar (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; I. Lee, 2008a) as well as works by Bloor and Bloor (2004), Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, and Yallop (2000), Eggins (2004), Lock (1996) and Thompson (2004).

The systemic-functional view of language begins with the observation that all language use is purposeful and serves specific functions which are related to the position(s) and relationships of an individual within a social group. Halliday initially proposed up to seven functions of language (Halliday, 1973, cited in Brown, 2007a, pp. 223-224), which he then consolidated under three main functions or metafunctions. These three metafunctions—the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions—correspond with three components in grammar, each of which can be seen as a system

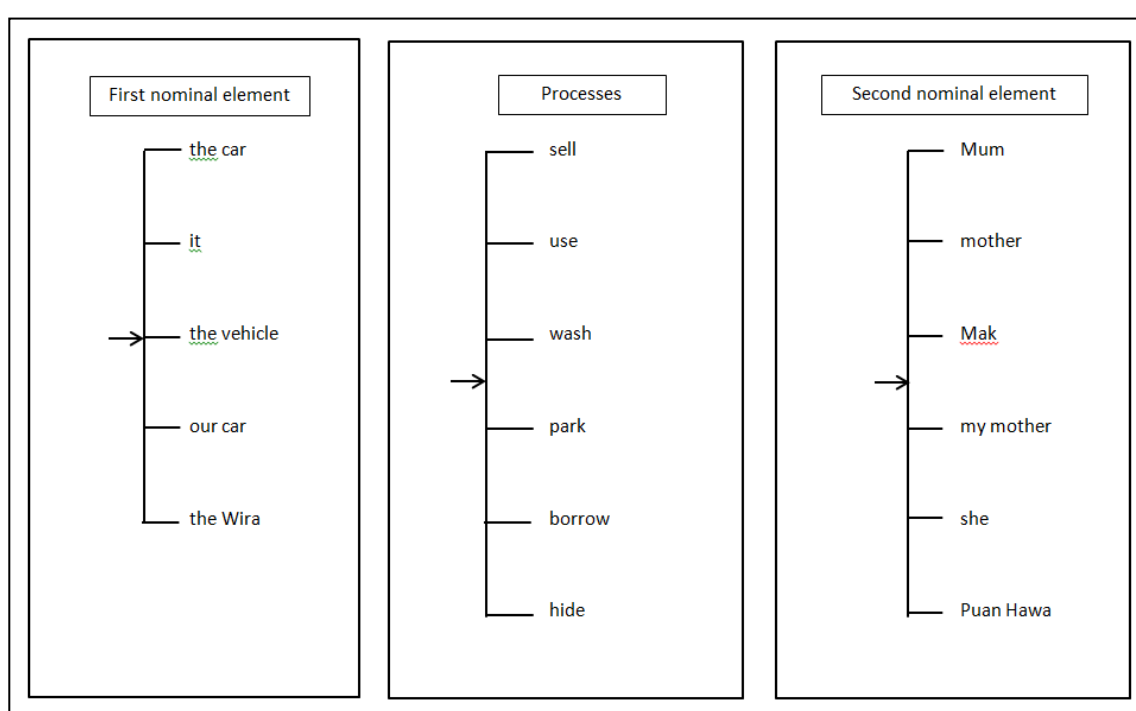


of choices. The Ideational metafunction is associated with the Transitivity system, the Interpersonal with the Mood system, and the Textual with the Theme/Rheme system. As a result of choices made simultaneously in these systems, language structures are produced, which encode a particular meaning or message with three dimensions of meaning corresponding to the three metafunctions. There is therefore an ideational meaning, which refers to the representation of our outward and inward experiences of the world; an interpersonal meaning, to do with our interaction with others; and a textual meaning, which concerns how language is organised in relation to its context of use (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 2004).

The following example of a language structure used in a Malaysian context provides a practical illustration of the SFL view of language: *Mak is using the car*—an imaginary reply to a family member’s request to be picked up from a shopping mall. Producing this structure might begin with a choice from the lexical and grammatical (lexicogrammatical) systems to express the ideational meaning of the message. The nominal element *the car* is a fairly restricted choice, given that it is essential as a response to the initiating request, but there are nevertheless alternatives that can be chosen instead, for example *it, the vehicle, our car, the Wira* and so on. This choice can in fact be further broken down into even more detailed descriptions of the composition of the nominal group, perhaps for the purpose of illustrating how much information can be included in the nominal group, but this is not illustrated here for brevity’s sake. The next choice would be the verb (or Process as it is called in Systemic-Functional grammar), wherein the list of alternatives may include *sell, use, wash, park, borrow* and *hide*, all of which are grammatically compatible with *the car* and also semantically appropriate for the purpose of responding to the initiating request, in that they indicate why the car is not available. The structure then requires another nominal element to complete it according to the conventions of the English Language, which also needs to

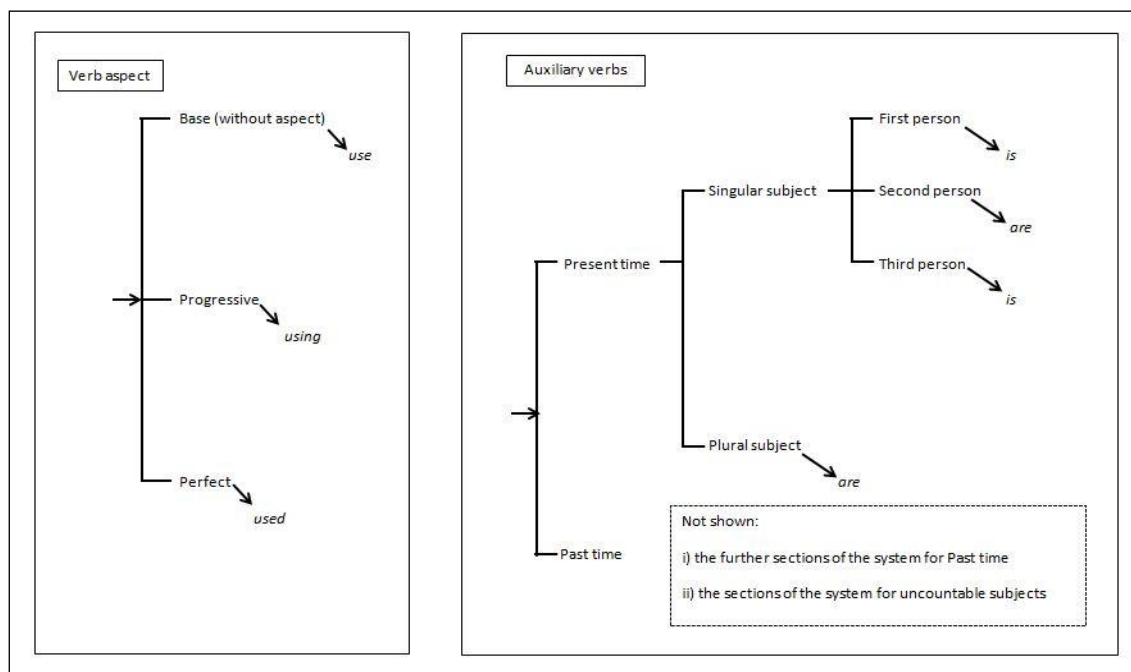
be in accord with the representation of the situation. In this case, the range of choices available to the speaker is not just any nominal group, but must be appropriate to his or her identity and position relative to the person that the nominal group refers to. The list of choices is therefore limited to *Mum*, *mother*, *mak*, *my mother*, *she*, *Puan Hawa* and so on. These sets of choices are known as systems in SF grammar (Eggins, 2004), and shown with diagrams like those in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Systems for lexical items in the given example



Finally, the form (grammatical aspect) of the chosen Process and the auxiliary verb that accompanies it are also made from the relevant systems, which in this case are more restricted, as shown in Figure 3.2 on the following page. The conventions on which these figures are based are as explained in Downing (2006, pp. 325, 369-370).

Figure 3.2: Systems for verb aspect and auxiliary verbs in English



The choices described thus far have carried the ideational meaning of the structure, or in SF terminology, these choices have realised the ideational meaning. Simultaneously, the order of *Mak is* rather than *Is Mak* constitutes the interpersonal meaning of the message because it reflects the choice of the Declarative from the Mood system, as opposed to the Interrogative or Imperative, which would affect the interaction in different ways. Likewise, the choice of *Mak* itself alludes to the relationship of the people involved. It shows, among other things, that the addressor and addressee are related to each other, and also to *Mak*; that this is an informal exchange and that the relationship between all of them is quite intimate; and that parents are not addressed by their personal names by their children in this particular social group. This same choice reflects the textual meaning of the message, since *Mak* is chosen as the subject and Theme of the message (rather than *the car* if the passive voice is used). Likewise, the choice of *the car* is a part of the reference system, specifically, an

exophoric reference that reflects the shared information between the addressor and addressee.

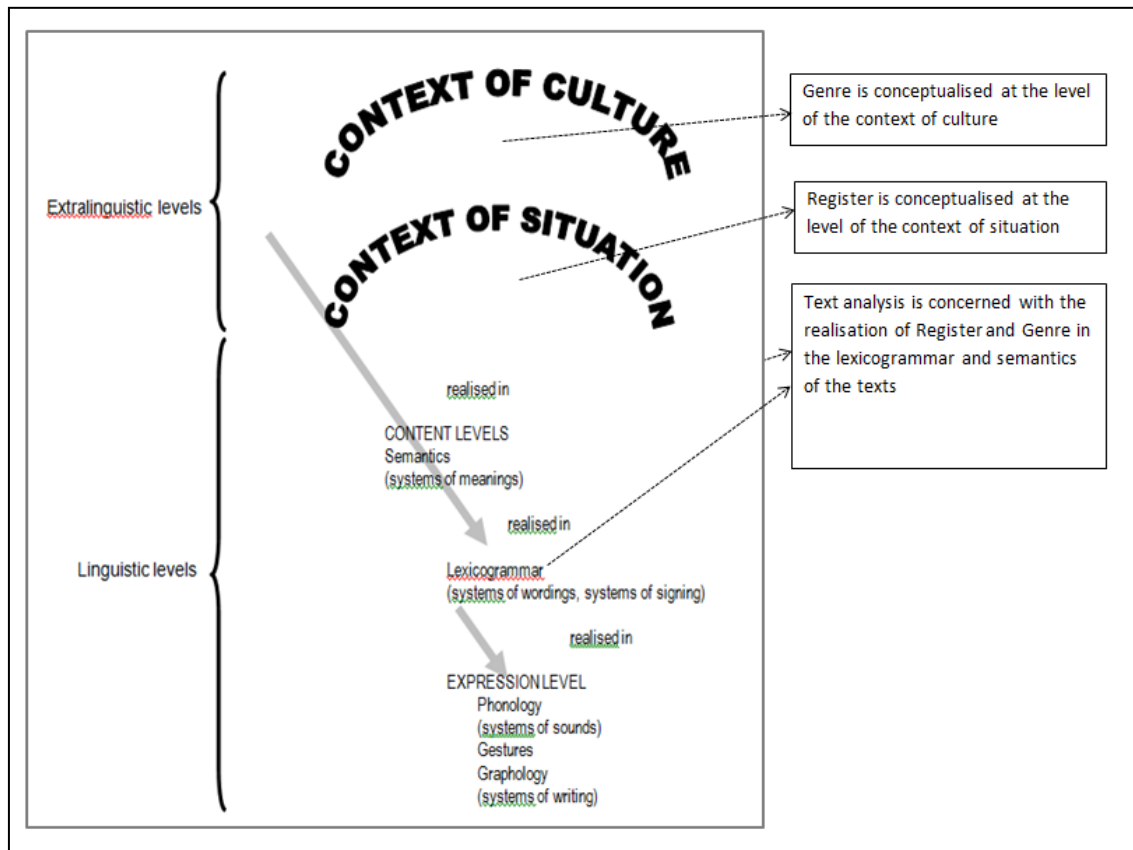
The example above shows the versatility and utility of the SF point of view in taking language as a system of choices that realises three dimensions of meaning in any given structure. It also illustrates how these choices cannot be made without knowing the contextual factors surrounding the linguistic structure, which underscores the primacy of the relationship between the form of language and the circumstances of its use. Given that the focus of this study is on situational language use, it is thus felt that this theory is admirably well-suited for the purposes of this investigation.

### *3.1.2 Language as strata of meaning-making resources*

Apart from conceptualising language as a system of choices for creating meanings, the other distinctive aspect of SFL is the stratified view of language that underlies the theory. It is posited that meaning is created from the interaction of the many components that make up a language system at various levels, and that the configurations of elements are connected across the strata in regular ways. At the lowest levels of the model are the physical components of sounds and visual symbols, which combine to form increasingly more complex and abstract structures at higher levels of the model.

The diagram form of this stratified view of language has been reproduced in many different versions in works on SFL, most often as a series of cotangential circles resembling the layers of an onion. The version shown in Figure 3.3 on the next page is modified from Butt et al. (2000, p. 183), but this diagram is specific to this investigation because apart from representing the stratified model of language in general, the diagram also shows the levels at which Register and Genre are conceptualised in this study as well as the levels at which the text analysis for the study is carried out.

Figure 3.3: Register and Genre in the stratified view of language in SFL



Source: Modified from Butt et. al., 2000, pg. 283

The strength of the stratified model is that it enables both a top-down and bottom-up analysis of how language structures are formed and the meanings that they convey. Returning to the earlier example of *Mak is using the car*, a top-down approach to analysis may begin by examining the social group that uses the structure *Mak is using the car* in terms of theoretical constructs like ideology and cultural norms. Hence, this analysis begins at the level of the context of culture. Taking the analysis one level deeper, hypotheses about the function of the structure and the contexts of situation that it would be appropriate for may be generated, which may be further supported by an analysis of lexicogrammar and semantics at the linguistic levels. These hypotheses may then be compared to the actual circumstances under which the structure was used, towards supporting, refining or refuting the hypotheses concerned.

Conversely, an analysis with a bottom-up approach may begin even from the phonemes that make up the syllables and words as well as the intonation and word stress of the utterance. This can then be related to higher levels of analysis in terms of how different phonological realisations may affect the lexicogrammar and semantics of the structure. For example, in the structure discussed earlier, stressing *Mak* would have a different semantic consequence compared to stressing *the*. Subsequently, as illustrated in the previous section, the analysis can move on to the extra-linguistic levels to examine how the lexicogrammar realises the context of the situation in which the structure is used, that is in terms of the Ideational, Interpersonal and Textual meanings realised by the structure. The analysis can then proceed even further by examining how the structure is related to other structures in a text, including why certain combinations are appropriate or otherwise in a certain culture, thus moving into the next level of the context of culture.

The approach to text analysis that is taken in this study is neither clearly top-down nor bottom-up. On the one hand, the analysis begins at the level of context of situation, which is then related downward to the lexicogrammatical patterns found in the text. On the other hand, the second phase of the text analysis then moves upward to consider the context of culture. These two phases of text analysis are believed to provide a more complete and holistic understanding of situational language use. Here, it is pointed out that this strategy would not be possible without the stratified model of language in SFL, which once again demonstrates the utility and suitability of the SF theoretical framework to this investigation.

### 3.1.3 *Systemic-Functional Linguistics in language education*

The study of language is perhaps as old as the use of language itself, since it can be argued that in order to understand and use a language; one must ‘study’ it by

paying attention to it at the very least. Thompson (2004) points out that the study of language can take two different starting points in general, i.e. from the perspective of the form of the language, or its meaning. Systemic-Functional linguistics (SFL) falls squarely in the latter category, with its view of language systems as “meaning potential” (Halliday, 1976, 1978), but it does not neglect form altogether, since it is not only concerned with describing how meanings are expressed or realised in forms, but also explaining why this is so. Hence, the various applications of SFL theory share the common thread of attempting to explain why particular linguistic phenomena take on particular forms. Such explanations are often linked to the teaching and learning of language, the reasoning being that learners should know why particular language forms are used for particular purposes. The most widespread applications of SFL include the analysis of academic writing, especially writing related to science and technology; English for Special Purposes (ESP); the stylistic analysis of literary texts; and investigations of various texts in relation to ideology and issues of power in society, frequently in tandem with a discourse analysis or critical discourse analysis approach (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Thompson, 2004).

Another widespread application of SFL theory is in the development as well as teaching and learning of first languages and second languages, with the latter being of direct relevance to this study. The fields covered range from first language development in early childhood such as the work done by Painter (1984, 1989, 1999, 2003); language use in classroom interactions, for example the work done by Christie (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1997, 2005); and the language that is particular to various school subjects, notably Mathematics (Abel & Exley, 2008; Ongstad, 2006; Schleppegrell, 2007), Science (Croce, 2007; Esquinca, 2006; Veal, 1997) and History (Coffin, 2006; Cullip, 2007; Schleppegrell et al., 2004). Research related to the genre-based approach to language education that is prevalent in Australia is also well-documented (among

others: Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012; Thwaite, 2006; Watkins, 1999). SF linguists working in the United States and Australia have also examined the issue of language education for disadvantaged children (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Michell & Sharpe, 2005; Rose, Gray, & Cowey, 1999) as well as adults (AMEP Research Centre; Burns & De Silva, 2007; Cumming et al., 2001). In terms of geographical location, SF theory is most widely applied in education-related research settings in Australia (Burns, 2003; Macken-Horarik, 2006) and the United States (Croce, 2007; Schleppegrell et al., 2004; Short, 1995; Syrquin, 2006), but the theory has also been applied in similar ways in diverse locations like Vietnam (Forman, 2004), Thailand (Kongpetch, 2006), Singapore (Lin, 2003), Hong Kong (Firkins et al., 2007; Lock & Lockhart, 1998), Brunei (Ho, 2009) and Malaysia (T.T. Ho, 2004; Kalaivani, 2004; Sim, 2004; Sridevi, 2006a, 2006b, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2010b).

The notion that language is shaped the way it is because of the functions it is used to fulfil resonates significantly with the notion that the best way to learn a language is through meaningful use in context. This remarkable connection sets up a strong affiliation between SFL and the communicative approach in TESL. In like manner, Savignon (2001) sees a parallel between Halliday's concept of meaning potential and Hymes' concept of communicative competence. In fact, according to Halliday (1978, p. 19), the process of language development can be described as "learning how to mean", a process requiring not just rich input, but also social interaction. Social interaction is also a key element in the Vygotskian theory of learning that is often applied by researchers working with SFL in language education. This theory propounds explicit guidance or scaffolding to support the learning process through various phases. In the context of language education, this involves guiding learners to use language in increasingly more complex forms as well as guiding learners to independently choose language forms that are appropriate to a particular social



environment, or as Foley puts it, "...imparting a point of view, a way of life, as well as teaching technical skills." (Foley, 2004, p. 2). This holistic view of language instruction is also seen in the genre approach discussed earlier in section 2.3.3, wherein genre theory within SFL is brought to bear upon examining the connections between context and language. SF theory has been applied in most—if not all—of the various aspects of language teaching, ranging from initial needs analysis and syllabus design, to practical concerns like materials and classroom activities, to over-reaching issues like the contents of language learning syllabi, assessment criteria and course evaluation (Coffin, 2001). The influence of SFL can likewise be seen in recommendations that linguistics be included as a component in the training of language teachers, a stand supported by many applied linguists including Halliday himself (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Lock, 1996). The discussion above shows that SFL as a theory of language is both relevant and applicable to language education and resonates with the sentiments motivating this investigation, namely: putting theory into practice and enriching theory with empirical evidence.

### **3.2 Register**

Chronologically, Martin (1992) cites the ideas put forward by Bakhtin (1986) on regularities in the ways that language is used in relation to the circumstances of its usage as being very similar to the SFL model of Register. Building on Halliday's initial definition of Register as "the configuration of semantic resources that the member of the culture associates with a situation type" (1978, p. 111), the concept was gradually refined and consolidated into the present conceptualisation of Register as a combination of three variables—Field, Tenor and Mode—that describes a particular context of situation (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). In the stratified model of language shown in Figure 3.3, Register is studied at the first extra-linguistic level of the context of situation,

wherein Register is realised by the linguistic levels below it and in turn, realises Genre at the level of the context of culture. The following sections discuss the three components of Register separately, but it should be noted that there is a good deal of overlap in actual lexicogrammatical realisations.

### 3.2.1 *Text as representation: Field*

The first component of Register under SFL—Field—can be understood simply as the topic of the instance of language use. As such, Field corresponds with the Ideational metafunction of language and is concerned with the text as a representation of particular experiences of the world, both outward and inward. Field is therefore most clearly reflected in the occurrence of particular lexical items in a text. Conversely, the occurrence of certain lexical items can also be predicted based on the Field of a text. The notion of Field includes common topics and uses of language; for instance the presence of lexical items like *size*, *tight*, *fits*, *comfortable*, *toes*, *heel*, *sole* and *leather* would indicate that the Field of the text concerned is ‘choosing shoes’, and likewise, a text with the Field of ‘gardening’ could be expected to contain lexical items like *weeding*, *watering*, *fertilizer*, *seeds*, *fruit trees* and *fresh vegetables*.

However, Field can also be uncommon or specialised, in that the fewer the people who are likely to have—and to need to have—knowledge of the subject matter of the text, the more specialised the Field of the text is. Specialised Fields are reflected predominantly by the use of technical vocabulary, whether in the form of jargon (uncommon lexical items) or common lexical items that are used in an unusual sense. Taking as example the fairly specialised Field of ‘online forums’, examples of the technical vocabulary used in this Field would be *netiquette* (jargon), referring to the rules regulating behaviour in online forums and *flame*, a common lexical item with the uncommon meaning of *making an antagonistic and abusive remark in a forum*. Hence,

the first consideration in the analysis of Field is the degree of specialisation of the lexical items found in the text.

Apart from the choice of lexical items, Field is also realised in the Transitivity system in terms of lexicogrammar, which includes choice of Process types, Participants and Circumstances. Transitivity in SF grammar is basically a reconceptualization of the word class of ‘verbs’ in traditional grammar which rearranges verbs (called Processes) into six main categories, with each category having a different set of labels for the Participants, and certain other restrictions. Table 3.1 on the next page provides a summary of these categories, with examples taken from some of the model letters in this study. The categorisation of Processes in this system is based on the semantic aspect of the particular manner in which a particular Process represents experiences and is restricted by the characteristics of its syntagmatic surroundings. Under this system of Transitivity, a particular verb may function as a different Process in different structures, depending on the other elements in the structure. For instance, in Table 3.1, the verb *is* may function as a Relational Process of either the attribute or identifying type, or an Existential Process. This illustrates how the analysis of Transitivity in SF grammar is based on how a particular word functions to create meaning, rather than sorting out words into a rigid set of categories.

Table 3.1: Summary of Process types in Systemic-Functional grammar

Process types	Participants/restrictions	Examples
Material (Representing the material world of doing)	Actor, Goal, Range, Beneficiary No restrictions	The burst pipe has greatly <u>reduced</u> the water pressure in our homes (Stc 4 in ATf1)
Behavioural (Representing conscious behaviour)	Behavior, Behaviour/Range Behaver needs consciousness	On Saturday morning, we <u>woke up</u> early (Stc 10 in Si1)
Mental (Representing—possibly projecting— inner consciousness)	Senser, Phenomenon Senser needs consciousness and human characteristics	I <u>know</u> that you spend a great deal of your time surfing the internet (Stc 15 in Mi4)
Verbal (Representing speech)	Sayer, Verbiage, Receiver, Target No restrictions	I would also <u>encourage</u> you to seek advice and help from friends (Stc 12 in Si2)
Existential (Representing existence)	Existent No restrictions	There <u>is</u> a serious problem of traffic congestion in my housing estate (Stc 1 in Sf1)
Relational Attributive (Representing relationships of description)	Carrier, Attribute No restrictions	The students <u>are</u> bored with fried rice and fried mee every day (Stc 10 in Mf2)
Relational Identifying (Representing relationships of identification and equation)	Identified, Identifier / Token, Value No restrictions	Though Additional Mathematics <u>is</u> a difficult subject (Stc 9 in Wi3)

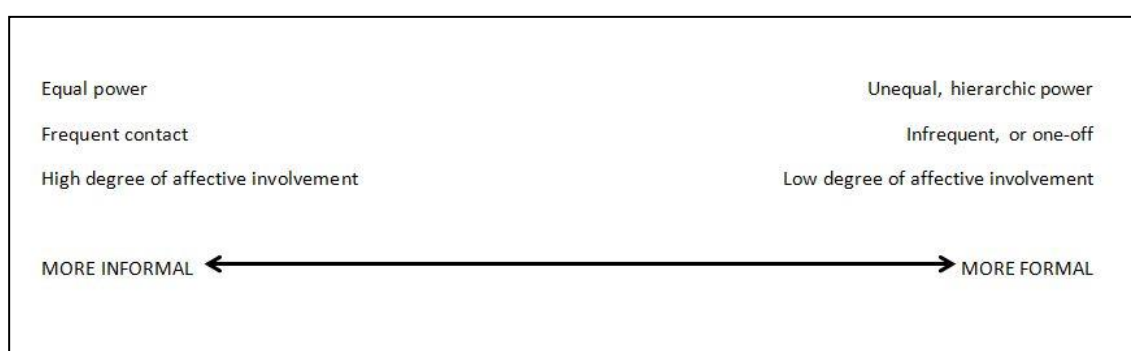
Source: Based on Butt et al. (2000, pp. 62-63)

### 3.2.2 Text as interaction: Tenor

The next component of Register is Tenor, related to the Interpersonal metafunction. Tenor highlights the nature of the text as an interaction and is thus very much dependent on the identities of the parties involved in the interaction (addressor and addressee), particularly the social distance between them. According to Eggins (2004, citing Poynton, 1985), social distance can be measured in terms of power, contact and affective involvement. Since Eggins defines the dimension of power based on reciprocity, this principle is likewise applied in this investigation. Hence, power is defined here as the degree to which one party has the power to control the environment

of the other. As for the latter two dimensions, these are relatively straightforward, in that contact can be compared in terms of the number of times the two parties have contact and affective involvement, in terms of the strength of the emotional connection between the parties. These three dimensions set up the poles of a continuum between formal and informal situations based on the social distance between the addressor and addressee. Figure 3.4 below presents a visual representation of this continuum, based on the information in Eggins (2004, pp. 100-101).

Figure 3.4: Social distance in formal and informal situations



Lexicogrammatically, Tenor is realised mainly by the Mood system, which refers to the position of the Subject and Finite relative to each other in SF grammar. Table 3.2 below shows the types of Moods in English with examples from the model letters in this study. The page numbers in the first column of the table refer to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004).

Table 3.2: Mood types in English

Mood	Subject-Finite arrangement	Example
Declarative (pg. 115)	Subject before Finite	They ignored the advice (Stc 8 in Kf4)
Yes/no interrogative (pg. 115)	Finite before Subject	Do you remember my Korean friend, Eun-Mi? (Stc 6 in Si1)
Wh- interrogative (pg. 115)	a) Subject before Finite if the wh- element is the Subject b) otherwise Finite before Subject	Type b: How's everyone at home? (Stc 2 in Ki3)

Table 3.2: Mood types in English (continued)

Imperative (pgs. 138-139)	Unmarked positive: no Mood element	...choose a quiet and conducive place to study (Stc 7 in Mi4)
Exclamative (pg. 137)	Most commonly, <i>what</i> or <i>how</i> in nominal or adverbial groups as the Subject, but other variants are possible	Wow, that's really a lot! (Stc 19 in Si1) * <i>Alternative form: What a lot!</i>

Reference: Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004

In accordance with the idea of the clause as an interaction or exchange, the Mood of a clause reflects the degree to which the message that is contained in the clause—the proposition—is open to negotiation. For instance, the veracity of a proposition contained in a declarative Mood clause can be negotiated through the Finite, but not in an imperative Mood clause, in which the Finite is absent.

Apart from viewing the clause as conveying a proposition that may or may not be negotiable, the clause may also be taken as an exchange from a semantic point of view (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This exchange may involve information, or goods and services, which can be demanded or provided by the parties involved. Combining these two dimensions of commodity exchanged (information or goods and services) and roles in the exchange (demanding or providing) results in four basic speech functions: offering (providing goods and services), commanding (demanding goods and services), stating (providing information) and questioning (demanding information). Mood type and speech functions are closely related to Tenor in that each speech function is associated with a typical Mood type, and the relationship between the parties in the interaction affects whether this typical Mood or a non-typical one is chosen. Eggins (2004) points out that an atypical combination of Mood type and speech function is a characteristic of formal relationships, along with certain types of modulation. The latter is in fact a part of modality, which is the second most prominent lexicogrammatical marker of Tenor.

Modality refers to the linguistic resources that allow the argument or discussion of meanings beyond simple polarity (i.e. the extreme poles of the continuum, as in absolute ‘yes’ and ‘no’), and hence enable the taking up of a particular position or point of view (Humphrey, Droga & Feez, 2012). Modality includes modalization (for information) and modulation (for goods and services), which are concerned respectively with the aspects of probability or frequency and obligation or inclination (Thompson, 2004). Table 3.3 below summarises the linguistic resources related to modality, with particular emphasis on the Mood system.

Table 3.3: Linguistic resources for modality in English

Resource	Operation	Examples
Modal verbal operators (modal auxiliaries)	Expresses the speaker’s current attitude	...so that you <u>can</u> concentrate better (Stc 17 in Mi4) Canteen workers <u>should</u> wear proper uniforms (Stc 17 in Kf2)
Mood adjunct	Expresses the speaker’s attitude without affecting the tense	<u>Perhaps</u> you are not using the correct study skills (Stc 5 in Mi4) <u>Frankly</u> , you always struck me as a bright student (Stc 7 in Wi3)
Separate clause	In a hypotactic clause complex, the attitude is expressed in the main clause and the relevant matter is found in the subordinate clause	<u>I believe</u> that you have good and loving parents (Stc 10 in Ki4)

Source: Thompson (2004, pg. 67-72)

### 3.2.3 Text as organised language use: Mode

The final Register component of Mode in the SF model can be said to be more abstract than Field and Tenor, in that it is more directly related to the properties of the text itself rather than the message it contains. Mode is related to the Textual metafunction, hence the main considerations for Mode are the role played by language, the type and medium or channel of the interaction, and the feedback given and received.

Since the focus of this study is on writing instruction, only written communication is addressed here. However, the type of written communication involved in this study differs in two main aspects from the general characteristics of written texts listed in Eggins (2004, pp. 92-93). Firstly, most of the letters may be considered closer to “language as action” than “language as reflection” (pg. 92) in that the purpose of the letters is to accomplish a certain task or goal; and secondly, the informal letters may contain some of the features of spoken language in that it contains more “everyday lexis” than “prestige lexis” (pg. 93).

The realisation of Mode in lexicogrammar is seen in the organisational aspects of the written text, predominantly the choice of Theme and patterns of Thematic progression, as well as the linguistic resources for cohesion throughout the text. In SF theory, Theme refers to the starting point of the message contained in a clause, and the remainder of the message is known as the Rheme. Theme is viewed with the same trinocular Ideational-Interpersonal-Textual perspective, in that every clause is considered to have a compulsory Topical Theme or Ideational element, and optionally, Interpersonal and Textual Themes as well. The distribution of these optional Theme types can vary according to the purposes and formality of different texts, thus characterising different registers. As for Thematic progression, this refers to the choice of consecutive Themes in a text, which is a way of studying how ideas in the text as a whole are linked to each other, and how this enables the purpose of the text to be achieved. Eggins (2004) suggests three main patterns of Thematic progression which develop the message in the text in different ways: Theme reiteration, zigzag pattern and multiple-Rheme, which correspond respectively with the *constant Theme*, *linear Theme* and *split Rheme* patterns described in Bloor and Bloor (2004). As such, Thematic progression is strongly connected to the rhetorical aspect of organisation and is thus pertinent to the concept of Genre, which will be discussed in section 3.3 below.



Apart from Theme and Rheme, Mode may also be analysed in terms of the cohesion of the text. Eggins (2004) defines cohesion as the manner in which the component parts of a text interact to bind the text together, and points out that cohesion can be achieved by lexical or grammatical means. The former can be analysed by examining the reference system that keeps track of the Participants in a text, and for the latter, by examining the conjunctive elements in the text. Resources for reference in a text include third-person pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and comparative structures (Thompson, 2004). These resources of pronouns and comparative structures may refer to shared knowledge that is not mentioned specifically in the text (exophoric), or elements found within the text itself (endophoric)—wherein the referent might be mentioned earlier (anaphoric), later (cataphoric) or together (esphoric) in the text. This series of references can be collected to form reference chains as a means of studying this aspect of cohesion. As for conjunctions, these can be put in several categories, as shown in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4: Types of conjunctions in English

Type	Function	Example
Elaborating	Indicates that a sentence restates or clarifies a previous sentence	Stc 6 in Kf2 – <i>in fact</i>
Extending	Indicates that a sentence either adds to, contrasts with, or qualifies the meaning of another sentence	Stc 33 in Mi3 – <i>however</i> ; Stc 3 in Mf3 – <i>in addition</i>
Enhancing	Indicates that a sentence is developing a certain aspect of the meaning in another sentence, i.e. time, comparison, cause, condition or concession	Stc 4 in Kf1 – <i>as a result</i> ; Stc 5 in Mi4 – <i>perhaps</i> ;

Source: Summarised from Eggins (2004, pg. 47-51)

One final lexicogrammatical feature that is linked to Mode is nominalization, the process by which words other than nouns are modified into a form in which they can function like nouns. Nominalization has the effect of concentrating into one nominal

group the amount of information that would otherwise be conveyed in numerous clauses. This condensation of information is useful according to Eggins (2004, pg. 95) for rhetorical purposes and increasing lexical density. As such, nominalization is associated more closely with written text compared to spoken discourse (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Cullip, 2000; Halliday, 1989).

### **3.3 Genre**

In terms of its SF theoretical foundation and the application of SF-based Genre theory in language education, this investigation identifies with the ‘Sydney school’—a term coined by Green and Lee in 1994—which has been used to refer to the work on writing pedagogy pioneered at the University of Sydney (cited in Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 20). Nevertheless, Genre, like Register, is not a term used exclusively in SFL. Traditionally, the term is associated with literature and the arts, the former including genres such as poetry, novels and drama; and the latter, genres like film, theatre, music and dance, as well as various styles of painting in art. The term is also used in diverse disciplines that involve the study of language, including the studies of discourse, literacy, language education and rhetoric (Coffin, 2001). As such, beyond the general discussion in section 3.3.1, a comprehensive coverage of all these possible applications of the term is beyond the scope of this thesis. The discussion will therefore focus on the models of genre which are most pertinent to the objective of this investigation in section 3.3.2, taking into consideration the objective of the research and its focus on writing instruction. Subsequently, alternative approaches to genre analysis are discussed in section 3.3.3.

#### *3.3.1 Conceptualizing genre*

To begin with, the word ‘genre’ in its most general sense can be taken simply as a synonym for ‘type’, but this is undoubtedly too broad a definition for this

investigation. Likewise, there is probably no definition of genre that can be considered a universal definition (Rao, 2007). As a starting point, the three perspectives on genre presented by Hyon (1996) have proven useful to highlight some of the more prominent applications of the term in linguistics. According to Hyon, in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), 'genre' refers to a class of communicative event; in SFL, a 'genre' refers to a kind of text; and in New Rhetoric studies, 'genre' refers to an event that enables the interpretation and creation of particular texts. Underlying this difference in viewpoints is the shared conceptualization of genre as patterns of language that are tied to contexts of use, as well as the understanding that genres are readily recognised by the members of the community that uses these genres. Nevertheless, some fifteen years later, Swales (2011) points out that the distinctions between these three perspectives have become somewhat blurred in application, and hence there is perhaps less reason to take such a sharply delineated view of genre at present. Tardy (2011) concurs and points out that some of the recent research in genre cannot in fact be clearly categorised as belonging to any one of these three camps.

Given that this investigation is conducted in an ESL (English as Second Language) setting, the ESP and SFL conceptualizations of genre (following Hyon's categorisation) are deemed most relevant because the New Rhetoric group is predominantly concerned with language use by native speakers. In fact, the ESP and SFL conceptualizations of genre share very similar underlying principles, as summarised in Table 3.5 on the next page. Indeed, the ESP and SFL perspectives are similar enough that Johns (2010) is able to incorporate both points of view into her work on academic literacy, pointing out that genre knowledge includes shared knowledge of roles, context, conventions (in terms of rhetorical structure and typical phrases), content, register (in terms of formality), cultural values and intertextuality. Recently, Bhatia has also put forward a stratified model of genre analysis that is

somewhat similar to the stratified model of language in SFL that was discussed in section 3.1.2 (Bhatia, 2008, p. 164).

Table 3.5: Conceptualization of genre in ESP and SFL

Aspect	In ESP	In SFL
Primary consideration	Communicative purpose, which may consist of sets of interrelated purposes	Social purpose, i.e. the things that are done with language in a particular culture
Shaped by a community of users	Genres are used and shaped by members of a specific group with shared goals and specific knowledge about genres that are used by the community is only shared by the members of the community	Users of the same genre need to share the same cultural knowledge, but genres are not necessarily highly specialised or limited to a small group of users
Limited variability	Genre conventions may be exploited in exemplars, but only a certain extent of variability from the prototype is acceptable	Genres are understood to be dynamic and evolving constantly
Names of genres	Genres tend to be named by the members of the community who are considered experts, and may be exported across disciplines	Genres are usually named by the members of the community that uses them but even culturally dissimilar communities may have similar genres
Aspects of genre acquisition	Knowledge of the code, genre knowledge, sensitivity to cognitive structures and genre ownership (Bhatia, 1997, pg. 314)	Knowledge of Register characteristics, knowledge of the schematic structure and knowledge of lexicogrammatical patterns (Eggins, 2004, pg. 56)
References	Bhatia (1993, 1997), Swales (1990)	Eggins (2004), Martin (1992), Martin and Rose (2003, 2008),

There is nevertheless one aspect in which these two perspectives appear to differ: genres appear to be more rhetorically construed in ESP compared to SFL, based on specific goals that reflect language as action. Conversely, whilst genres are also defined based on purpose in the SFL model, it is also recognised that any social activity in a culture can be linked to genres, including ‘everyday genres’ which do not necessarily have specific goals like chatting with friends or gossiping (Eggins, 2004, pg.

56); hence these genres include language as reflection as well as language as action. Johns (2011), in emphasising that the naming of genres is a significant matter in genre-based pedagogy, points out that the oldest names of genres refer to rhetorical modes that are fairly fixed, and with reference to Hyon (1996), she observes that such rhetoric-based genres are not in full accord with the practice of naming genres based on context and stable textual patterns in the Sydney school, nor do they fit in with the New Rhetoric stand that genres are in a constant state of flux. She then goes on to introduce a two-tier system for naming genres proposed by Bhatia (2002, cited in Johns, 2011, pg. 60), with the first level consisting of rhetorical modes that he calls *generic values* and the next level of genres which are grouped into *genre colonies*. The examples given included advertisements and job applications under the genre colony of 'promotional genres'. Likewise, 'homely texts' are also mentioned by Johns (1997, p. 38) as genre exemplars that can be used to introduce the concept and practice of genre analysis to learners. It would thus appear that genres may be viewed from two perspectives: rhetorically, as arrangements of ideas, or in a practical sense, as repeated patterns of language use in a particular sociocultural environment. A distinction may thus be made between rhetorical genres like narratives and expositions, and practical genres like letters and recipes.

With regard to this distinction between a practical and rhetorical understanding of genres, Biber (1988, cited in Paltridge, 1996) used the term *genre* to refer to activity types and reserved the term *text type* for texts which were linguistically similar in form. Paltridge quoted Martin's (1984) and Swales' (1990) definitions of *genre* and pointed out that these definitions indicated that they, too, shared the same general understanding of the term as Biber did. However, Paltridge also pointed out that when genre theory is applied pedagogically, it is usually text types that are analysed and presented to learners rather than genres, and different genres may actually be considered

the same text type based on their linguistic characteristics. He thus set up a distinction between identifying the genre characteristics of a text based either on criteria determined by the social group that uses the genre or on its internal rhetorical organization, and makes the point that these two aspects should not be conflated in analysing texts for pedagogical purposes. Hence, in relation to the earlier discussion on practical and rhetorical genres, what Paltridge refers to as *genres* are equivalent to the category of practical genres, and his *text types* to rhetorical genres.

These two terms, *genre* and *text type*, have in fact been used in various ways in writings on genre and genre pedagogy. For instance, Bhatia (2008, pg. 168) makes reference to a document (an annual report) in which two *genres* (accounting and public relations) were represented by two sets of *texts* (extracts from the annual report), whereas D.G.E. Ho (2009) uses the terms *text type* and *genre* interchangeably in her paper to refer to a text that is produced with a specific purpose and context. Humphrey, Love, and Droga (2011) likewise use the terms *genre* and *text type* interchangeably, as with Humphrey, Droga, and Feez (2012), wherein *genre* simply refers to a category of texts. More specifically, Thornbury (2005)—who conceptualizes genres as social processes which involve language with Register combinations that have become established as conventional through repetition—refers to the *genre* of formal letters (pg. 94) and epitaphs (pg. 96), and also *text types* such as instructions, factual information and narrative (pg. 86) in his book on writing instruction. Firkins et al. (2007) were also discussing genre in writing instruction, but they refer to procedure and information report as two types of written *genre* (pg. 341) and the exemplars of these genres as *texts* (pg. 345). In discussing the genre-based pedagogy practiced in Australia, Watkins (1999) observed that the term *text type* was used to refer to the kinds of writing that children in primary school work with, and that these text types were described in terms of structural features, for example: the features of orientation-complication-sequence of

events-resolution-comment/coda for narratives (pg. 123). Other text types in the same syllabus were: narratives, discussion, explanation, exposition, information report, procedure and recount as well as drama and poetry. Here, it seems that a piece of writing with the same name (procedure or information report) may be known as either a genre (in Firkins et al., 2007) or a text type (in Watkins, 1999), which again suggests that the two terms are interchangeable.

On the other hand, Coffin (2003) defines genres as “conventionalized texts which have evolved to enact social purposes” (pg. 13), which suggests that a genre is a kind of text. Coffin refers to the examples of students’ writing that she analyses as *texts* (pg. 11) which are examples of the *genre* of letters of complaint. Likewise, Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998, p. 309) and Thwaite (2006, p. 97) in their investigation of teachers’ views and practice of the genre-based approach refer to recounts, procedures, expositions and the like as *genres*, which also suggests that genre is being equated with a kind of text. Finally, the term genre is used in Martin and Rose (2003) to refer to “**types of texts** that enact various types of social contexts” (p. 8, emphasis added), including as examples of genres such everyday uses of language as greeting cards, instructions, jokes and games.

Given this variety of ways in which the two terms of *genre* and *text type* are used, it is necessary to make a decision on how these terms will be used in this thesis. Hence, based on the discussion throughout this section, the term *genre* will be used from this point onwards to refer to practical genres, which include the formal and informal letters that are being studied. As for the term *text type*, this will be used to refer to rhetorical genres where relevant, as in expositions or recounts.

### 3.3.2 *Genre in Systemic-Functional Linguistics*

Among one of the SFL scholars who are best known for his work with Genre is James Martin, particularly in collaboration with David Rose. Martin's definition of "genres as staged, goal oriented social processes" (Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 6) is often quoted as the quintessential SFL explanation of Genre (for instance in Hyon, 1996; Paltridge, 1996). Apart from the tripartite SF model of language, three major influences are also quoted as major influences on the work done by Martin and Rose (2008): Mitchell (1957), Hassan (1977) and Labov and Waletzky (1967).

Theoretically speaking, Martin also models Genre as being at the level of the context of culture with reference to the stratified model of language discussed in section 3.1.2, but he takes the basic concept further and adds an additional level of 'ideology' above the level of 'context of culture', giving five advantages of taking such a view (Martin, 1992). Ideology is realised by genre, thus making genre another strata of language. The inclusion of ideology is also consistent with the general orientation of linguistics as social action that is found across his work, wherein Register is seen as variations in situation and Genre as variations in culture, but Ideology is seen as variations in access to forms of language use that benefit the user socially. Subsequently, Martin developed a set of resources for analysing discourse that cuts holistically across the components of Register, comprising the systems of Appraisal, Ideation, Conjunction, Identification, Periodicity and Negotiation, which can be used to analyse texts of various genres as realisations of Ideology (Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2003).

With reference to the stratified view of language in SFL discussed in section 3.1.1, Martin's approach to genre analysis is essentially top-down in that it begins at the outermost level of Ideology and works its way down into Genre and Register as realised by lexicogrammatical patterns. In contrast, this study begins at the intersection of the linguistic and extra-linguistic levels by examining the lexicogrammar that realises



Register and then moves upward to consider how these lexicogrammatical patterns reflect the schematic structure of Genre at the next level. Hence, although the approach here may metaphorically be moving in the opposite direction to Martin's model, there is no conflict between the two, in that both are based on the basic stratified view and trinocular perspective of language that is the foundation of SF linguistic theory. Nevertheless, the decision was made not to apply Martin's approach in this study after initially taking into consideration two possible factors concerning the teachers involved in the study. Firstly, these teachers were most likely engaging with the model texts at the linguistic level rather than at the level of culture or ideology; and secondly, the approach in writing instruction was most likely to be generally bottom-up rather than top-down. Hence, it was felt that imposing a distinctively top-down perspective on the phenomenon was unlikely to lead to a satisfactory understanding. These possibilities were hypothesised based on the findings from past research on writing instruction in Malaysian schools (as reviewed in section 2.3.4 of Chapter 2), and were later confirmed as fieldwork was carried out. Also, Martin's approach is meant primarily as a tool for genre study, hence to apply this approach would be inappropriate for the purposes of this investigation when it is taken into account that the primary focus of this research is not whether or not—or in which manner—the teachers concerned carry out genre analysis, or even their approach to writing instruction per se.

Understanding genre in SFL begins with understanding Register, since Thompson explains genre as "Register plus purpose" (2004, pg. 42). Register, in turn, refers to the way in which the three metafunctions of language are realised in a text particular to a context or situation, as represented by the components of Field, Tenor and Mode. This was explained previously in section 3.1. However, texts sharing the same Register may differ in purpose, which results in these texts being categorised as belonging to different genres. The following two invented texts may be used to illustrate

this, albeit in a rather simplistic manner: *Buy now for fairer skin in 30 days* and *Do not apply on broken skin*. These two texts share numerous features of Register. Firstly, both texts contain the word *skin*, which, along with the words *fairer* and *apply*, indicate that the Field is ‘skin-care products’. As for Tenor and Mode, both texts are printed messages that address an unknown general audience using the imperative Mood type to convey a command. Yet the two texts are recognisable as being of different genres, based on their different purposes. The first text is recognised as an advertisement because its purpose is to persuade the reader to make a purchase, and in like manner, the second is recognised as a warning with the purpose of forbidding a certain action. Nevertheless, in order to recognise them as such, the reader must share similar cultural knowledge as the writer, hence genres are culture-specific (Martin, 2001) or at least specific to the community that produces and uses the discourse. The two texts in the illustration above are fairly short examples, but most genres unfold over longer texts, which would involve more organisation of content. Typically, a genre consists of several stages, for instance *Orientation-Record of events-Reorientation* for the genre of ‘literary recount’ (Humphrey et al., 2012, p. 196). A genre is thus identifiable by both its ‘shape’ (schematic structure) and lexicogrammatical features.

Although the main focus of this investigation is not the genre-based approach to writing instruction, it is noted that Genre plays a significant role in language learning in the Sydney school. The role of Genre in language learning is explained by Eggins (2004) as a process of habitualization by learners to the typical ways in which language is used for particular purposes in the social group in which they wish to participate. Gaining and refining the knowledge of Register and Genre features takes time in order to allow exposure to multiple exemplars as well as unsuccessful attempts; hence if this knowledge is made explicit, learners can save time and mental effort by utilising this knowledge rather than continuing with their unfocused efforts, or learning anew the

language that is needed for every situation and purpose that they encounter. The benefits and possible risks of applying the genre-based approach to writing instruction has already been discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.2.3).

### 3.3.3 *Approaches to genre analysis*

Earlier in section 3.3.1, the similarities and differences between the conceptualization of genre in ESP and SFL were discussed, with the conclusion that there was in fact, little significant difference in these conceptualizations. Generally, it can be observed that the focus of ESP genre analysis is on the formal properties of texts and relating this to the social contexts of their production and use, whereas SFL genre analysis puts equal emphasis on form, function and social context. Here, a comparison is made of two procedures for analysing a particular genre, as recommended by Bhatia (1993) and Eggins (2004), representing the approach in ESP and SFL respectively. Both procedures begin with a genre exemplar, on which various operations are carried out in order to establish the characteristics of the genre that is represented by that exemplar.

Bhatia's recommended procedure (1993) is very similar to that discussed in Swales (1990), albeit more systematically presented. This procedure begins with establishing the situational context of the genre based on intuition and then referring to what has already been written about the genre. The framework for analysis is then refined by defining certain variables: speaker/writer, the community, related text types and topic of the text. The next step is to select a suitable corpus and to study the institutional context in which the genre is used. This is followed by the actual linguistic analysis, which may be at three interconnected levels: calculating frequencies of certain words or structures, studying the tactical use of certain words or structures, and finally examining the rhetorical structure of the text in terms of moves. Bhatia also

recommends as a final step that the results of this analysis be confirmed by interviewing members of the community which uses the genre.

The SFL approach to genre analysis advocated by Eggins (2004, pg. 56), which is also the approach used in this investigation, is actually a three-part identification of a particular genre that includes the Register characteristics of a text, its schematic structure and the lexicogrammatical patterns that are found in the text. The general guidelines for the identification of the schematic structure of genres comprise the following six steps:

- i. Identify the general social function of the text.
- ii. Identify stages—sections in the text that have different functions.
- iii. Assign functional labels to the stages.
- iv. Identify compulsory and optional stages
- v. Identify order of stages
- vi. Formulate schematic structure

(Summarised from Eggins, 2004, pg. 61 – 65)

Outwardly, the procedures recommended by Eggins and Bhatia are very similar, but two main differences can nevertheless be seen. To begin with, the moves in Bhatia's approach are construed psycholinguistically, in that the fundamental consideration for the identification of a move is rhetorical rather than functional in a social sense. These moves are in fact referred to as part of a cognitive structure (Bhatia, 1993, p. 30), which seems to indicate that the process of writing a text in a particular genre may be seen as a tactical operation analogous to playing a game of chess. Conversely, the primary consideration for identifying the stages in Eggins' approach is functional; hence the identification of stages goes beyond rhetorical considerations to

consider how the various parts of the text work towards achieving the social purpose of the text in the light of the Register elements relevant to that particular context.

The second difference between the two approaches lies in the description of the lexicogrammatical form of the moves or stages in the text. In line with the conceptualization of the genre as a text that is identified primarily by its rhetorical structure in Bhatia's approach, the lexicogrammatical form of the moves is also described primarily in terms of how this form enables a particular move to fulfil its rhetorical purpose. This description is based largely on traditional grammar, and background factors are mentioned mainly when there are occurrences of unusual structures. Typically, the characteristic phrases that are used to achieve a certain rhetorical purpose are named and listed, including quantitative analyses of the distribution of various structures when a larger corpus is involved. This can be contrasted with Eggins' approach in which the stages are identified on both semantic and lexicogrammatical grounds in relation to the social purpose of the text. The lexicogrammatical forms in each stage are therefore described in direct relation to the background or Register traits of the text. This description is organised around the trinocular view of language in SFL and shows how the overall social purpose of the text is achieved in three dimensions, which enables the identification of stages even when there is no apparent rhetorical goal, as in genres like gossiping or online chat exchanges that reflect the use of language as reflection.

Finally, a third but relatively less important difference between the approaches is that the ESP approach to genre study sometimes involves fairly large corpora of texts, such as in the work done by L. Flowerdew (2005), Henry and Roseberry (2001) and Lu (2011a). This is not feasible in this investigation given the detailed analyses carried out on the texts and the short time frame for the research. It is also felt that foregrounding a

large sample size in the interests of generalizability inevitably involves sacrificing the depth of analysis that is done.

To conclude, the comparison of these two approaches to genre analysis that has been presented above was a major consideration for the selection of the approach to genre analysis for this investigation. Eventually, the SFL approach was selected chiefly because it is closely linked to the focus of the study on situational language use, but also because it is believed to be a systematic and comprehensive way of analysing genre, as seen in the general procedure outlined above. The details of how this procedure was applied in this study are presented in full in the next chapter.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this chapter was to justify the choice of theoretical framework for this study as well as to clarify the reasons underlying some of the major decisions that were made in the investigation. Towards this end, the chapter began with a presentation of the overall SF model of language, with emphasis on the cardinal precepts in this theory. This was followed by a discussion of the conceptualization of the two principal concepts of Register and Genre. For Register, this was conceptualized in SF terms, whereas for the concept of Genre, the discussion included the perspective of ESP as well as SFL. Finally, the different approaches to genre analysis in SFL and ESP were also examined. Based on the discussion throughout the chapter, it is concluded the SF theoretical framework has been satisfactorily demonstrated to be the most suitable choice for this study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR      RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **4.0      OVERVIEW**

This chapter presents the underlying principles of the research design used in this investigation and describes the details of its implementation. The chapter begins with an overall view of the three central paradigms of the research. The subsequent sections are organised around data, including the type, collection, management and analytic strategies applied. The chapter concludes with a section on measures taken towards the trustworthiness of the research.

### **4.1      Research Design**

This section clarifies the core design characteristics of this research: its approach to data, qualitative orientation and case study structure. As discussed in Chapter 2, the first two of these dimensions distinguishes this research from other work done in a similar field, whereas the latter is consistent with more conventional research approaches in applied linguistics.

#### *4.1.1    A convergent bilateral approach*

The approach to data in this research can be described in the simplest terms as analysing two kinds of data about the same phenomenon within the same theoretical framework. This approach is bilateral in that two kinds of data are collected and analysed separately, but because this analysis is done within the same theoretical framework towards one objective, the two-pronged strategy is also convergent. It was therefore decided to use the term ‘convergent bilateral approach’ as the most accurate description of the methodology used, although the term itself does not refer to any formalised research methodology per se.

#### 4.1.2 *The qualitative paradigm*

The qualitative orientation of this research is reflected most prominently in the use of data sourced from fieldwork. This qualitative paradigm is based on certain philosophical assumptions, as presented by Creswell (2007). The study thus takes the ontological view that instead of a single universal reality, reality is subjective to the individual according to their personal experience, and hence there are different realities for different people. It is acknowledged that the researcher cannot access these different realities in full as a result of her personal biases and value system, but an effort is made to understand the participants' point of view as much as possible by delving into their background and views on the phenomenon being studied. Findings are thus presented with a more intimate style and participants' own words are used wherever possible.

Creswell (2007) also advocates an inductive approach in qualitative research methodology, which is characterised by an emerging research design. However, a certain degree of pre-planning was unavoidable in this investigation due to the limited time available for fieldwork. In addition, the phenomenon being studied was already fairly well defined. Hence, instruments were prepared in advance of fieldwork, as well as a preliminary framework for data analysis. Nevertheless, in keeping with the dynamic nature of qualitative fieldwork, these instruments and framework were modified in response to factors arising from the initial implementation of fieldwork to better achieve the purpose of the research. Later sections in this chapter provide further details on the instruments (section 4.3.1) and framework (section 4.4) concerned.

Finally, the quality of research in this study is also regarded with the qualitative paradigm in mind. The strongest proponents of the qualitative approach contend that the traditional measurements of the quality of research using the positivist constructs of reliability and validity should not be applied at all to qualitative research because of the fundamentally different philosophy underlying the two orientations



(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Instead, Lincoln and Guba advocated that the rigour of qualitative research be considered in terms of “trustworthiness”, which includes the “truth value”, applicability, consistency and neutrality of research (1985, p. 290). Subsequently, this pioneering point of view has frequently been cited as being representative of the qualitative stand on assessing the quality of research (for instance in Creswell, 2009; Dornyei, 2007; Flick, 2009; Lichtman, 2006; Mertens, 2009). In this research, it is this perspective on ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research that is adopted in general, although some positivist terms may also be referred to in a comparative way. Nevertheless, it is noted that there are also alternative points of view which are more conciliatory with the traditional perspective, for instance Maxwell (1992) who proposed a system which reorganises the aspects of the existing term of “validity” to reflect the standards in qualitative research (cited in Dornyei, 2007, pp. 58-59; and Cohen et al., 2007, p. 135); and Trochim (2001), who matches the aspects of trustworthiness to various aspects of reliability and validity (cited in Lichtman, 2006, p. 194).

Apart from that, qualitative research is generally still subject to the traditional evaluative criteria for research in terms of design, data and findings. These aspects are discussed separately in the subsequent sections of this chapter. In addition, the traditional concept of triangulation is also applied in qualitative research as a means of checking the veracity of the findings from a study (Dornyei, 2007; Lichtman, 2006). Section 4.5.3 of this chapter discusses how triangulation is implemented in this study. Finally, the clarification of the researcher’s integrity and personal stand, as a measure of research rigour, is given attention in section 4.5.1 since this issue is of increasing prominence in qualitative research (Dornyei, 2007; Lichtman, 2006).

#### *4.1.3 Case study design*

The overall research design for this investigation is the case study approach. This is because the present study fits the basic considerations in Yin (2009, p. 8) for choosing this approach, in that the research questions are ‘how’ questions to examine a contemporary phenomenon, but the research environment does not need to be controlled by the researcher. Case studies are pointed out by Creswell (2007, 2008) to be both a kind of research methodology and a final product of qualitative research methods. A case study is defined in this investigation as “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). In addition to this basic definition, Yin (2009) also stresses the following defining characteristics of case studies: the centrality of context, multiple variables of interest and multiple sources of evidence as well as theory-guided data collection and analysis, which are all evident in this study.

With regard to the case study as an approach to research, Duff (2008) recommends case studies in applied linguistics because they offer a holistic and thorough account of phenomena, which often lays the groundwork for further research. Duff also points out that case studies are strongly data-driven yet capable of contributing significantly to existing theory, whether by strengthening theoretical claims or providing evidence to the contrary. Case studies also have the quality of being realistic, in that research settings are manipulated as little as possible (Adelman et al., 1980, and Nisbet and Watt, 1984, both cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 256). In addition, case studies are said to be an apt choice for combining with other research approaches (Dornyei, 2007) and also for research settings that are relatively naturalistic (Cohen et al., 2007, citing Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). All of the three latter aspects are represented in this investigation.

On the other hand, the greatest criticism of the case study approach is the lack of generalizability, since cases are by nature unique and limited (Dornyei, 2007 and Nisbet and Watt, op. cit.); such criticism is directed particularly at the use of atypical cases to build up theories on typical cases. One way of approaching this issue requires a paradigm shift from a focus on statistical generalizability to theoretical generalizability, as advocated by Duff (2008). This involves making a distinction between intrinsic and instrumental case studies (Stake, 2005, cited in Duff, 2008, p. 49 and Dornyei, 2007, pg. 152), wherein the latter is selected because of its potential to yield findings that strengthen or challenge a particular theory, which in turn supports the generalizing of the theory to other cases. However, Duff acknowledges that ontologically, this point of view lies halfway between the strongly positivistic and interpretive positions, and thus it may be rejected by purists in either of these two camps.

Apart from analytic generalization, sampling procedures in case studies can also address the issue of generalizability to a certain extent. Silverman (2005, p. 128) presents a critical discussion of four ways of dealing with this issue based on sampling procedures: by applying quantitative principles, using purposive or theoretical sampling, and accepting inherent generalizability in all cases. However, the limited resources available in this study prevented the application of any of these options in entirety. Nevertheless, Cohen et al. (2007) assert that apart from generalizing from a sample to a population, generalization can take other forms in case studies, including generalizing from an instance to a class of instances, generalizing from a feature to the whole, and generalizing based on shared features across cases.

Another problem which may also stem from a positivist bias is the perceived lack of objectivity in case study research due to the conditions of data collection, wherein the researcher may develop strong personal connections to the participants (Duff, 2008). This issue of objectivity is in fact pertinent to qualitative research in

general, but it is not considered a major problem provided the researcher is sufficiently forthright about her personal background and ideologies, as well as explaining the considerations underlying all decisions (Creswell, 2009).

Alternatively, Lincoln and Guba's term, "transferability" (1985, pp. 287-298) is often found in references on research methodology as the qualitative equivalent of generalizability. This concept puts the onus on the reader to decide if the conclusions drawn from a particular study are applicable to another context, based on the detailed and explicit description that is provided of the original research context (Cohen et al., 2007). The challenge of taking such a 'thick description' approach lies in dealing with the massive volume of data that can be generated from case studies, not least in selecting significant events while striking a balance between individual details and overall patterns (Duff, 2008).

Finally, the type of case study being conducted in this research is instrumental in terms of Stake's typology (1995, op. cit.). The cases are said to be instrumental because they were selected based on their potential to provide information on the phenomenon being studied rather than their intrinsic properties. In addition, multiple cases are included to provide as detailed a representation as possible of the phenomenon within the limitations that the researcher was subject to. Based on the guidelines in Yin (2009), the selection of cases was done based on replication logic that is aimed at testing propositions in a theoretical framework, rather than sampling logic that is aimed at statistical generalizability. Details of the cases involved are found in section 4.2.1 below.

## **4.2 Data types and sources**

This section presents the types and sources of data used in this study. As stated earlier in section 4.1.1, the convergent bilateral approach used in this investigation involves the

use of two types of data about the same phenomenon. Specifically, the two types of data are model texts used for writing instruction—text data—and qualitative data from fieldwork. The text data addresses research questions 1 and 2, and the qualitative data addresses the remaining two research questions. Section 4.2.1 below describes the text data, whereas section 4.2.2 includes the overall case study design, principles for case selection and background information on the cases that make up the qualitative data.

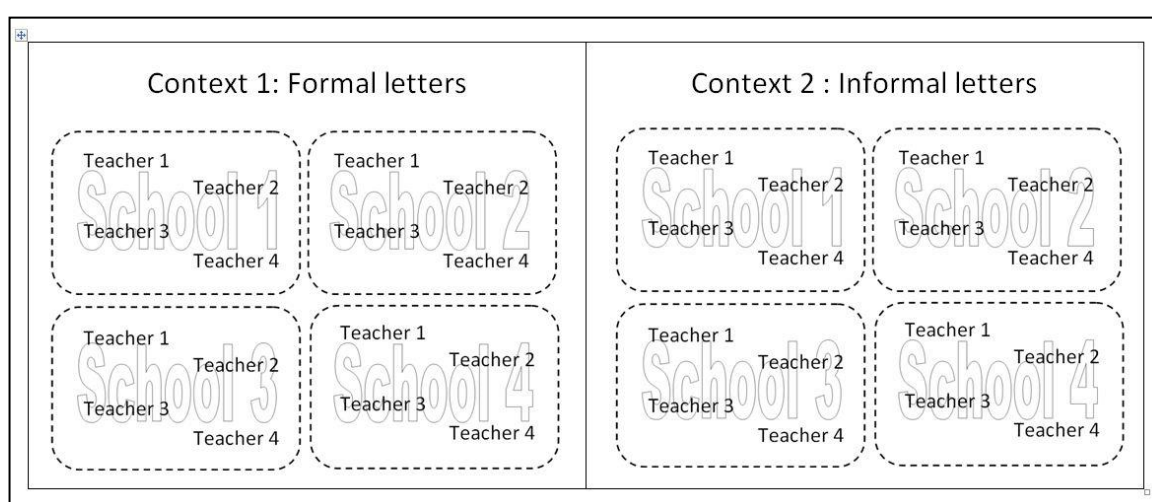
#### *4.2.1 Text data*

The text data in this study consisted of pedagogical models—actual model letters used in teaching and learning activities by the teachers studied. For the formal letters, thirteen different model letters in total were analysed. When the same letter was used by more than one teacher, this was counted as one sample. There were two such examples, ATF1 and ATF2, which were both in the textbook provided to all students by the Ministry of Education (Tan & Ng, 2002, pp. 29, 31). These two letters were both used by seven teachers each. Apart from that, letter Kf3 was also similar to ATF1, but since it was sourced from a commercial workbook and differed slightly in wording from ATF1, it was considered a different letter. Likewise, letters Kf2, Mf2 and Sf2 were very similar but not exactly the same, hence they were considered different letters. As for the model informal letters, fourteen letters in all were studied. None of these model informal letters was used by more than one teacher, but otherwise the same principle as that used for the model formal letters was applied in counting the letters. Hence letters that were similar but not exactly so were considered different letters, as in letters Ki3 and Ki4 as well as letters Mi5 and Wi1.

#### 4.2.2 Qualitative data (cases)

This investigation uses an “embedded multiple case” design (Yin, 2009, p. 46). Taking the two text types—formal and informal letters—as the two main contexts, four main cases (schools) are studied within each context and within each collective case, four individual cases (teachers). This is represented in graphic form in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Graphic representation of embedded multiple case study design



Source: After Yin, 2009, pg. 46

The cases were selected based on two main considerations: relevance to the research objectives and accessibility. With regard to the research objectives, the cases had to be actual instances where the two text types being investigated were in use as model texts by teachers for writing instruction. The cases were also chosen because of their accessibility, based on the researcher’s previous professional relationship with the gatekeepers and some of the participants. Specifically, a few years prior to carrying out this investigation, the researcher had held the post of Curriculum Supervisor in the local District Education Department, being in charge of English Language programmes in the district where this research took place. During this tenure, the supervisor had developed

cordial relationships with the school administrators and most of the participants. This relationship not only enabled the researcher to gain access to the research site but made possible the in-depth and exhaustive methods of data collection used, which would not have been possible had the researcher been a complete outsider to the research setting. It was also felt that the researcher's relationship to the participants resulted in less self-censorship, since the participants were aware that at the time of the research, the researcher was no longer in a position which posed a threat to them professionally or personally. Finally, in terms of logistics, the research sites were chosen because all four lay within a twenty-kilometre radius. This was a necessity because the text types being studied were taught concurrently in the schools within a brief time span according to the annual scheme of work used by many of the schools. In keeping with the principle of minimal interference in conducting naturalistic research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the researcher did not request for major changes to the teaching schedule in order not to interfere with the normal operation of the school. This resulted in a very packed schedule of fieldwork during the months concerned. The proximity of the research sites thus enabled the researcher to access the schools repeatedly at many different times of the day according to the participants' teaching schedules, including visiting more than one school in the same day.

Based on the considerations described above, the four cases selected consisted of four government-run secondary schools, which are all under the same administrative office at district level. To ensure anonymity, the schools are referred to as SMK S, SMK W, SMK M and SMK K throughout this thesis. Table 4.1 on the following page contains the general background information on the schools concerned.

Table 4.1: Background information on research settings (schools)

School (SMK)	Type / Class	Category	Student population	No. of Form 4 classes	No. of teachers teaching Form 4	
					Initially approached	Actually studied
1. S	Day (A)	Rural	1900	9	5	4
2. W	Day (A)	Rural	1600	9	4	4
3. M	Boarding (A)	Rural	2300	11	5	4
4. K	Day (A)	Rural	1800	9	6	4

At the level of individual participants—with regard to the embedded case study design described earlier in section 4.2.1—there were four participants within each of the four cases above, adding up to a total of sixteen participants. The participants’ demographic information is summarised in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Basic information about participants in the study

Participant	Gender	Age	TESL trained	Highest qualification	Teaching experience (years)	
					English Language	Upper secondary
ALK	M	35	Yes	Degree	11	11
ANC	F	48	Yes	Degree	20	18
CAL	F	34	Yes	Degree	10	10
IBI	F	31	Yes	Degree	6	6
JAT	F	39	Yes	Degree	7	1
LAH	F	51	Yes	Degree	25	11
LLE	F	42	Yes	Degree	18	1
LSF	F	33	Yes	Degree	6	2
MAT	M	45	Yes	Degree	20	16
MEM	F	39	Yes	Degree	8	6
MSG	F	45	Yes	Degree	21	14
NEP	F	57	Yes	Degree	36	10
OBL	F	38	Yes	Degree	7	5
RJ	F	35	Yes	Degree	6	6
SAB	F	44	Yes	Degree	17	6
TAR	F	48	Yes	Degree	20	10

The sampling of participants was based on convenience, wherein all the English Language teachers teaching Form Four in the school concerned were approached as potential participants. As seen in Table 4.1 above, the rate of attrition was fairly low,



with two teachers declining to take part in the study from the beginning for personal reasons, one teacher withdrawing in the interim because of administrative responsibilities and one teacher unable to complete the scheduled fieldwork in full. Since the remaining teachers were participating willingly in the research, they may be considered participants in this research. The terms ‘teacher’ and ‘participant’ are therefore used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

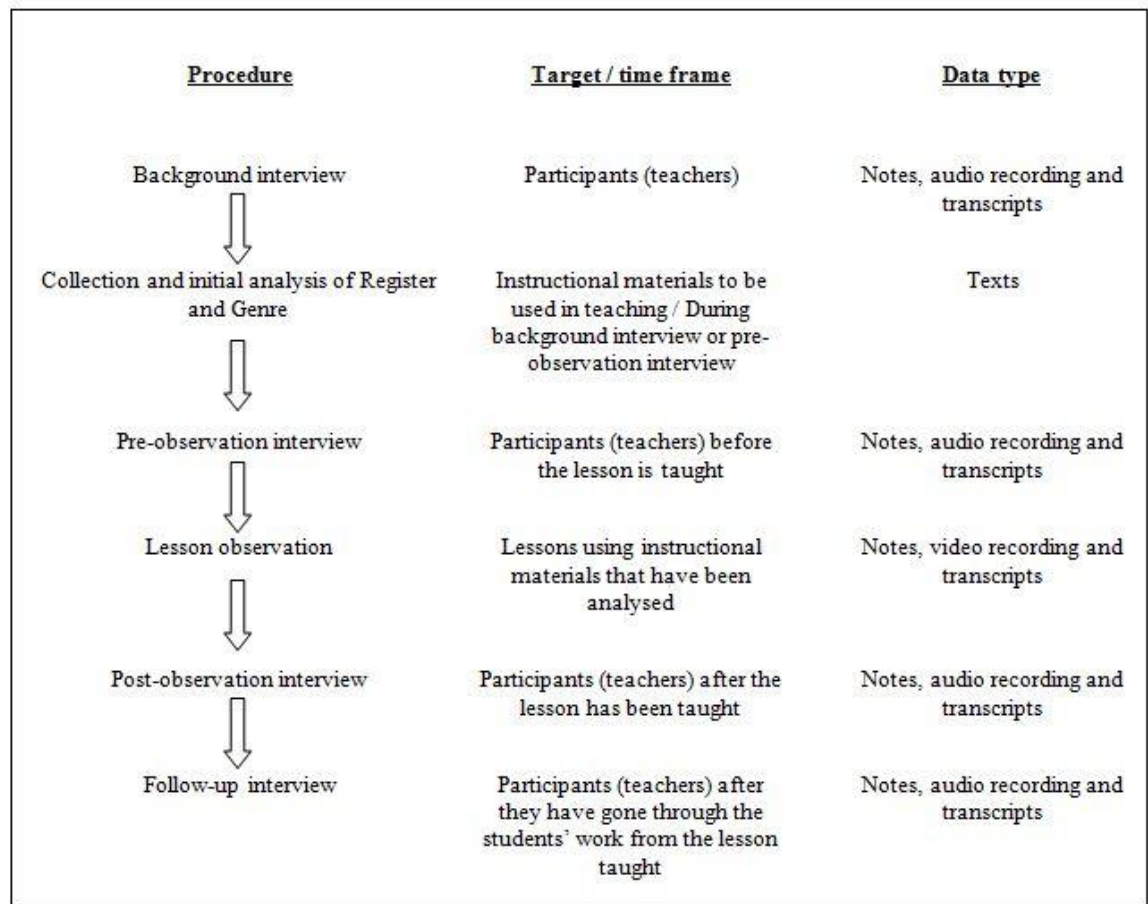
### **4.3 Data Collection and Management**

With reference to the emerging research design of qualitative research mentioned in section 4.1.2, the pre-planning for the collection and management of the two types of data used in this investigation was perhaps not as detailed if compared to a quantitative research design. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that the process was not initiated without prior consideration, nor carried out on an ad hoc basis. Preparations included drafting initial guidelines for fieldwork, estimating the extent of data collection and the time needed to do so, and the practical considerations of recording, labelling and storing the data as well as preparing data analysis frameworks. The overall procedure is presented chronologically in section 4.3.1, whereas sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 contain the specific details of how the text and qualitative data were collected and managed.

#### *4.3.1 General procedure for data collection*

The investigation used multiple data sources to examine Register and Genre from different angles, covering the realisation of Register and Genre in the model letters chosen by the participants and how this realisation is reflected in the use of the model letters for writing instruction. Figure 4.2 on the following page presents an overview of the procedure for addressing the various data sources in chronological order.

Figure 4.2: Overview of data collection procedure



Nevertheless, it should be noted that in actual implementation, it was not always possible for the order shown in Figure 4.2 to be rigidly applied, in that some of the procedures had to be completed out of turn due to unavoidable circumstances. For instance, some of the teachers only gave their instructional materials to the researcher on the day of the observation itself, hence these materials could not be analysed beforehand. The teachers' schedules and workload were also taken into consideration by conducting some background interviews and pre-observation interviews in one extended session when the teachers concerned were relatively free, rather than in two separate sessions. This also had the advantage of cutting down on repeatedly rescheduled appointments, which were often necessary due to unexpected school activities like meetings and administrative duties for form teachers. Similarly, some post-observation interviews were not conducted immediately after the lesson on the

teachers' request if there were no major changes in the planned activities, particularly when the teachers concerned had other lessons after the observed session. Instead, the post-observation interview in these cases would be combined later with the follow-up interview.

#### *4.3.2 Text data*

The text data for this investigation consisted of model letters for teaching two text types found in the English Language syllabus for Form Four: formal and informal letters. The rationale for selecting these two text types has already been discussed in section 1.3 of Chapter 1. In terms of collection, the procedure for the text data consisted of directly requesting the teachers to provide the researcher with a copy of the model letters they had chosen to use in the lesson that would be observed. All the letters collected were then re-typed in a standardised layout and font in a word-processing application (Microsoft Word). Before the original copies were labelled and put in storage, the descriptions of the physical layout of the letters were catalogued and compiled, enabling comparison across the entire collection of letters. Turning the hard copies of the letters into soft copies thus resulted in no practical disadvantages while having the following benefits: the text data could easily be searched for particular words and phrases and the number of occurrences of these words and phrases could be counted by the software. In addition, the soft copy of the text data could subsequently be copied and pasted into a spreadsheet application (Microsoft Excel) for further analysis. The complete set of model letters is found in Appendix 4A.

#### *4.3.3 Qualitative data*

The bulk of the qualitative data was generated by the interviews and naturalistic observations that were carried out during fieldwork, supplemented by notes

and relevant documents. The fieldwork extended over a period of nine months (February to October 2011) and all the fieldwork was carried out personally by the researcher using protocols that were also designed by the researcher. This is in line with a recognised feature of qualitative research: the principle of “researcher as key instrument” (Creswell, 2009, p. 175). The amount of data generated by this fieldwork is summarised in Table 4.3 below, totalling almost 333,000 words’ worth of data.

Table 4.3: Summary of data from observations and interviews

Data source	Sessions	Duration (total)	Transcripts
Interviews	97	1708 minutes	176,203 words
Lesson observations	37	1944 minutes	151,617 words

Interviews were semi-structured, with the researcher using interview protocols consisting of a list of points to be covered in relation to the focus of that particular interview. Hence, the exact wording of the questions used was not fixed and the ordering of the questions was also flexible depending on the participants’ responses. These protocols are found in Appendix 4B. All the interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for content analysis. Participants were interviewed up to five times each, with each of the interviews having a different function or focus. As noted in section 4.3.1, some participants had fewer interview sessions because they opted to combine two types of interview, but these combined sessions were generally longer in duration. The different foci of the various interviews are summarised in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Foci of interviews carried out

Type of interview	When conducted	Focus / purpose
Background interview	After participants have consented to take part in the study, before any lesson observations	Aimed at gaining a closer understanding of the participants’ professional background and their general orientation towards the teaching of writing, including their stand on the selection and use of instructional materials

Table 4.4: Foci of interviews carried out (continued)

Type of interview	When conducted	Focus / purpose
Pre-observation interview	Before the lesson observation, ideally not longer than a week before	Focused on participants' reasons for choosing those particular instructional materials, and how they intended to use the materials
Post-observation interview	After the lesson observation, ideally immediately following	Focused on how the instructional materials were actually used (particularly if this was different from what was planned), and the reasons for any last-minute changes made, or any other unusual events during the lesson
Follow-up interview	After the teachers have gone through the student's work resulting from the lesson observed	Focused on the characteristics that the teachers valued in their students' work. Teachers who had completed the observations for both text types were also asked to compare the two text types in terms of general differences between the two, and the relevance of the text types to their students.

The observations involved all the lessons in which the instructional materials that had been analysed were used. The researcher adopted a non-participant role and took up a position at the back of the classroom to take notes while operating the video recorder. It was felt that having a technician do the video recording was unnecessary, in order to minimise any disruption to the lesson. In addition, the position of the video recorder was mostly fixed, with the camera focused predominantly on the teacher or what was displayed on the chalkboard. The note-taking during the observations was also semi-structured in that the researcher had a guide listing key points to pay attention to, in order to ensure that the observation was focused on the research questions. This guide is found in Appendix 4C. All lessons were recorded in their entirety. All the teachers also agreed to wear clip-on microphones for audio-recording as a backup measure. The microphone was unobtrusive and did not greatly affect the teacher's behaviour. The audio components of the video recordings and the audio recording from the teachers' microphones were later transcribed, with additional notes on the teacher's

actions or other relevant information. It should be noted that all the transcription work was done personally by the researcher. The result was a broad transcription using the conventions in Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.5: Conventions used in transcripts

Symbols	Indicating
R:	Researcher speaking
T:	Participant (teacher) speaking
S:	Student speaking; students are not distinguished individually
...	Short pause
[text]	Overlapping words (Researcher and teacher speaking simultaneously)
Italicised	Phrases that are not in English
Bold	Emphasised words
(xxx)	Indistinct words, not transcribed
{NOTES}	Notes or information on the transcription itself or the circumstances
<SS>	Indistinct overlapping responses from students, not transcribed
<Notes>	Actions accompanying words or non-verbal behaviour
<chorus>	More than two students giving the same response together simultaneously
<CM>	Classroom management routines; not transcribed
/text/	Words between the slashes are written on the board
//text//	Words between the double slashes are read out loud from a printed text

Source: Developed by the researcher

There are two advantages of personally transcribing the recordings as opposed to using the services of an independent transcriber. Firstly, there is consistency and accuracy in the transcriptions because the researcher is relatively familiar with the accent of the participants, and can also check with the participants if there are any portions that are not clear. Secondly, the researcher was simultaneously going through the data while transcribing, which stimulated thinking about the patterns that could be seen in the data, thus facilitating the identification of key information as well as issues for further exploration. To support this process, the researcher also made reflective notes on the data throughout the transcription process.

In addition to the data from the interviews and observations per se, the notes taken by the researcher during interviews and observations were also considered part of the qualitative data. These handwritten notes were not retyped due to time constraints as they were sufficiently legible to be referred to. Finally, the researcher also examined relevant documents like the English Language syllabus, yearly schemes of work used in the various schools and lesson plans used by various teachers. A full list of documents examined is found in Appendix 4D. These documents were considered part of the qualitative data; hence they were not retyped for further analysis as done with the model letters collected. Instead, the information found in these documents was used to support the findings from the interviews and observations.

#### *4.3.4 Data management*

Sound data management is a basic and essential component of good qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; L. Richards, 2009). In view of this, the researcher endeavoured to set up a well-organised data management system to enable the efficient retrieval of data during analysis and enable precise cross-referencing. The three main aspects of this system—software, logs and data labels—are discussed below.

To begin with, no specialised software was used for data management as the existing applications available to the researcher were found to be practical and well-suited to the researcher's requirements. As for logs, two varieties were kept: chronological logs and reflective logs. The former was a record of all relevant events and actions by the researcher, whilst the latter was a record of developing ideas and emerging theories from the researcher's reflections. The two types of logs included notes on five main aspects of the research: logistics, methodology, theory, analysis and data. Thus all information pertinent to the major facets of the research was properly recorded and accounted for.

Raw data in the form of audio and video recordings had a five-part label, containing information on the date, site, text type, source of data and participant concerned. The following example illustrates this: 0214SIiabLLE in which “0214” is the date (14<sup>th</sup> February), “S” is the site label, “I” is the text type (informal letter), “iab” is the data source (background interview combined with pre-observation interview) and “LLE” is the participant’s identification code. A similar system was used for the observations, as illustrated by the following example: 0212WFob2JAT, wherein “0212” is the date (12<sup>th</sup> February), “W” and “F” the site and text type (formal letter) respectively, “ob2” the data source (observation of second lesson) and “JAT” the participant’s code. Transcripts of the interview and observation data and field notes taken by the researcher were also labelled with the same labelling system, according to the recording they were related to. The problem of overlapping labels did not arise because the three types of files attached to any one interview or observation were in three different forms: an audio file in the mp3 format for the original recording, a word processing document for the transcript and in handwritten form for the field notes.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis ran concurrently with data collection once fieldwork had commenced. This enabled the researcher to further refine the questions used in interviews, take more focused field notes, and explore emerging patterns found by getting further information from participants. This section presents the principles and procedures used in data analysis.

First of all, the concepts of Register and Genre form the core of the data analysis for both types of data. Accordingly, the text data was first analysed for the characteristics of Register and Genre that were present. These characteristics then became the focus in analysing the qualitative data. Focusing on the same elements



throughout data analysis prevented the analysis of the two types of data from becoming disjointed. Instead, it is believed that the entire process of data analysis was more systematic and coherent as a whole as a result of maintaining this focus across the analysis.

Secondly, no specialised software was used in the analysis of either text or qualitative data. The analyses were done manually by the researcher, albeit supported by conventional computer programs. The most compelling reason for this decision was the unavailability of a specialised program that could incorporate both text analysis and qualitative data analysis in the manner required by the objective of this investigation. Apart from that, the following additional considerations were also relevant. In the case of the text analysis, the initial situation before data analysis began was that software capable of automated SF-based analysis that fitted the purposes of this study could not be found. Even though the relevant software later became available, it was decided not to switch to a computer-aided analysis. This was because the researcher did not have sufficient time to invest in learning how to apply the software, since data analysis ran concurrently with fieldwork and the transcription of recordings from fieldwork, both of which were greatly time-consuming. In the case of the qualitative data, two issues that would arise if commercial qualitative-data analysis software were to be utilised were initially taken into consideration: licensing and the further training which would be needed to use the software. It was then decided that it was unnecessary to use such commercial software since the researcher was already familiar with and fairly adept at using conventional word-processing and spreadsheet applications already licensed to the researcher, which could serve the same purpose. The decision was also supported by the information found in the guide to carrying out qualitative data analysis by Hahn (2008). In addition, this form of manual analysis was also believed to provide a clearer

and more detailed view of the connections between text and transcript data, as well as facilitating the reporting of the findings later.

#### *4.4.1 Text analysis of model letters*

Text analysis was carried out in two parts, addressing research questions 1 and 2 respectively. The first part focused on the concept of Register, wherein the model letters were analysed in terms of their characteristics according to the three components of Register: Field, Tenor and Mode. The analysis was in terms of the context itself (Contextual Analysis), which was based in turn on the lexicogrammatical features of the texts which were realising the characteristics of Field, Tenor and Mode (Lexicogrammatical Analysis). To guide this analysis, a framework was drawn up based on the general guidelines found in Butt et al. (2000), Eggins (2004), Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and Thompson (2004).

The framework (shown in Figure 4.3 on the next page) was operationalized in four steps. The following example of an excerpt from a model letter used by three different teachers illustrates these four steps of text analysis, which are shown subsequently in Figures 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 on pages 92 to 95.

*On behalf of the students of Form 4C, I would like to lodge a complaint about the school canteen. First and foremost, the food served is not covered and flies can be seen hovering over the food.*

Excerpt taken from letters Kf2, Mf2 and Sf2

Figure 4.3: Framework for text analysis – Register characteristics

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS					
(A) FIELD		(B) TENOR		(C) MODE	
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Details of analysis</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Details of analysis</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Details of analysis</i>
Experiential domain	The general topic	Roles	Identity of writer and receiver	Role of language	Language as action or language as reflection
Goal / purpose	Short-term and long-term Rhetorical and practical	Status/power	Of writer and receiver, relative to each other	Type of interaction	Medium/channel One-way, two-way etc
Technicality	Technical language or common/everyday language	Social distance	Intimacy of writer and receiver based on relative status and affective aspect	Feedback	Immediate or delayed Expected or optional Form of feedback
LEXICOGRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS					
(A) FIELD		(B) TENOR		(C) MODE	
<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Details of analysis</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Details of analysis</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Details of analysis</i>
Process types	Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal, Existential or Behavioural	Mood selection	Declarative, Interrogative, Imperative or <u>Moodless</u> (Related: congruence with speech functions)	Thematic choices	Types of Themes, marked or unmarked Pattern of Thematic progression
Participants	According to Process type: Actor, Goal, <u>Senser</u> , Phenomenon, Carrier, Attribute, <u>Sayer</u> , Verbiage etc	Person	First, second, or third person reference to Participants (Related: Human or non-human Participants)	Cohesion	Through use of conjunctions, cohesive references, nominalisation or other means
Circumstances	Location, extent, manner, cause, role, or matter	Voice	Active or Passive, indicating Agency	Structural complexity	Lexical density and grammatical intricacy
Time and modality	Tenses, in relation to purpose Rhetorical use of modal auxiliaries	Modality	Use of modal auxiliaries to show obligation, inclination, probability or <u>usuality</u>	Nominalisation	Frequency and distribution Organisational function
Others	Choice of lexical items – formal or informal alternatives	Others	Use of vocatives Distancing phrases Conventional expressions for politeness		

The first step of analysis was the identification of the basic elements of Transitivity for every clause in the texts—Processes, Participants, and Circumstances, as illustrated in Figure 4.4 below. In doing so, relatively more complex structures like projected clauses were also highlighted, like the example shown in Figure 4.4 where the clause *to lodge a complaint against the school canteen* is projected by a clause containing a Mental Process, *I would like...* However, projection only applies to Mental and Verbal Processes; hence not all the cases of a Process immediately following another Process are considered projection, for instance *...and continue to behave as before* (Stc 8 in Kf4). The structure exemplified by this clause is identified as a verbal group complex by Thompson (2004, p. 124), whereas Lock (1996) explains it as a “phase” (pg. 96). A third example is known as “causation” (Thompson, 2004, pp. 125-126), exemplified by the clause *...has caused the residents to have sleepless nights* (Stc 9 in Sf3).

Figure 4.4: Example of analysis – elements of Transitivity

	On behalf of the students of Form 4C	I	would like	to lodge	a complaint	about the school canteen	
	Circ: role	Senser	Proc: mental	Proc: material	Goal	Circ: matter	
	First and foremost	the food served	is not covered				
	NA	Goal	Proc: material				

The next stage of analysis examined clause structure, including the number of finite and non-finite clauses, types of clause complexes—whether paratactic or hypotactic—and in the case of hypotactic relationships, the number of main and dependent clauses. This stage of analysis also included categorising the Processes found by type, as well as identifying the voice of clauses where relevant. Figure 4.5 on the next page shows how this information was compiled.

Figure 4.5: Example of further Transitivity analysis – clause structure and Process types

	Stc	Clause	Type	Reltn	Label	Wording	Voice	Proc
	1	1	IF	h	$\alpha$	On behalf of the students of Form 4C, I would <b>LIKE</b>	Act	Ent
		2	DI	h	$\beta$	to <b>lodge</b> a complaint about the school canteen.		Mat
	2	3	IF	p	i	First and foremost, the food ... <b>IS</b> not <b>COVERED</b>	Psv	Mat
		4	EI	e		<b>served</b>		Mat
		5	IF	p	ii	and flies can <b>BE SEEN</b>	Psv	Ent
		6	EI	e		<b>hovering</b> over the food.		Mat

The abbreviations used in the ‘type’, ‘relationship’ and ‘label’ columns in this example have the following meanings: ‘IF’ refers to independent finite clauses, ‘DI’ to dependent non-finite clauses, and ‘EI’ to embedded non-finite clauses. In the next column, ‘h’ indicates a hypotactic clause complex, wherein ‘ $\alpha$ ’ and ‘ $\beta$ ’ mark the main clause and dependent clause respectively. In the same column, ‘p’ indicates a paratactic clause complex (with ‘i’ and ‘ii’ marking the equivalent clauses), and ‘e’ indicates an embedded clause. The complete list of abbreviations used in the Transitivity analysis and their meanings is found in Appendix 4E.

The third step of text analysis focused on the Mood block, which refers to the Subject and Finite of a clause in Systemic-Functional grammar. Here, the Subject refers to “that of which something is being predicated (that is, on which rests the truth of the argument)” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 45), and the Finite is the element with the function of “making the proposition finite ... so that it is something that can be argued about” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 115). A Finite is usually identified as an auxiliary verb or modal auxiliary in traditional grammar, referring to the various forms of *be*, *do*, and *have* as well as *can*, *might*, *should* and the like (Lock, 1996). The position of the Subject and Finite relative to each other determines the type of Mood for that clause. A clause can therefore be Declarative (Subject before Finite), Interrogative (Finite before Subject), Imperative (Finite without Subject) or a Moodless minor clause

(Without Subject and Finite). Figure 4.6 below shows an example of this analysis and the information compiled from it.

Figure 4.6: Example of analysis of Mood block

Type	Voice	Proc	Prsn	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Mood	Sp Act	Congruence
IF	Act	Ent	fs	I	would	LIKE	DEC	Stmt	Distancing
DI		Mat							
IF	Psv	Mat	x	the food served	is not	COVERED	DEC	Stmt	Yes

Only finite clauses were included at this stage, since the analysis is based on the position of the Finite relative to the Subject in the clause. In the example in Figure 4.6, the clause *to lodge a complaint against the school canteen* is a non-finite clause because there is no Finite associated with the Process *to lodge*. Hence, this clause was not analysed for Mood. In addition to that, where the Subject of the clause was a human participant, the analysis also indicated whether this Subject was in the first, second or third person. Accordingly, in the example given, the Subject in the first clause, *I* is analysed as ‘first person’ since it is a human Participant, but *the food served*, being a non-human Participant, is not analysed for person.

Besides the Mood block, this stage of analysis also included the speech functions of the clauses for comparison with the Mood type. The result of this comparison is shown in the ‘congruence’ column. This analysis of speech functions is semantic and based on the concept of the exchange of information or goods and services (Eggins, 2004, pp. 145-147, citing Halliday, 1994), wherein each speech function is linked to a typical Mood type, as shown in Table 4.6 on the next page.

Table 4.6: Definition of speech functions with typical Mood types

Commodity	Requesting	Providing
Goods and services	Command (Imperative Mood)	Offer (No typical Mood)
Information	Question (Interrogative Mood)	Statement (Declarative Mood)

Source: compiled from Tables 6.1 and 6.3 in Eggins, 2004, pg. 146 - 147

The final part of the text analysis focused on the clause as a message, as realised by the Theme and Rheme choices. Firstly, the compulsory Topical Themes in the clauses were identified, followed by any other types of Theme present. Figure 4.7 below shows an example of how this analysis is laid out.

Figure 4.7: Example of analysis of Theme and Rheme

Type	Textual theme	Pos	IntPers theme	Topical theme	Rheme	Markedness	Secondary Thematic analysis
IF				On behalf of the students of Form 4C	I would like to lodge a complaint ... school canteen	Yes	Circ Adjunct as Topical theme
IF	First and foremost,	Usual		the food served	is not covered	Yes	Goal as Topical theme
							Conjunctive adjunct (temporal)

For textual Themes, the position of the element realising the textual Theme was also indicated, whether it is in the usual or optional position. In the example in Figure 4.7, this can be seen in the second clause, in which the textual Theme *first and foremost* is found in the usual position at the beginning of the clause. Hypotactic clause complexes in which the dependent clause preceded the main clause were also included in this analysis as a case of an entire clause acting as the Theme of a sentence, for instance the dependent clause *Once you understand the lesson* which acts as the Theme for the rest of the sentence, *you will be able to do your homework* (Stc 21 in Mi2). Based on this earlier analysis, the typicality of the configuration was established and recorded in the

‘Markedness’ column. Figure 4.7 contains two examples of marked Themes. In both cases, the Themes are considered marked because a Transitivity element other than the Subject is the Topical theme: a Circumstantial Adjunct (*On behalf of the students of Form 4C*) in the first clause, and the Goal (*the food served*) in the second.

After completion of the basic analysis, the results were collated and used for the contextual analysis of Field, Tenor and Mode. This is illustrated below in Figures 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 on pages 97 to 99, which are based on letter Kf2, the source of the earlier excerpt on page 90 that was used to illustrate the lexicogrammatical analysis. In addition to the contextual analysis per se, key elements in the analysis were also counted and simple percentages calculated. The elements counted were: clause types and complexes, lexical density, types and congruence of Mood, voice, person of subjects, types and congruence of Themes, references used in tracking Participants, and modal auxiliaries. These counts are not considered a major aspect of the text analysis, but reference is made to the statistics generated from the counts in order to provide an overall view and enrich the discussion of the findings where relevant.

The contextual analysis for the Field component of Register was concerned with the Ideational metafunction of language and consisted of seven main aspects. Figure 4.8 on the next page shows the Field analysis for letter Kf2. These seven aspects were included because they are directly related to the text as a representation of the world. The first two aspects, the experiential domain of a text and its goal or purpose, serve to narrow down the kind of outward or inward experience of the world that is represented by the text. These two aspects are therefore closely related to the lexical items that are likely to be found in the text, as discussed in section 3.2.1 of the previous chapter. In addition, the two aspects also affect the third aspect considered in the contextual analysis for Field—the degree of technicality for the lexical items in the text—in that technicality is likely to be greater in texts with less common experiential



domains and/or specific goals and purposes. These first three aspects were derived directly from the letters or the context in which the letters were written. As for the remaining four aspects, these were compiled from the analysis of Transitivity in the first two steps of the lexicogrammatical analysis, exemplified earlier by Figures 4.4 and 4.5.

Figure 4.8: Example of the contextual analysis of the Field component of Register

	Text	Experiential domain	Goal/purpose	Technicality	Process types	Participants	Circumstances	Time (tense)	Others	
	Kf2	Problematic situation: school canteen	Describe the situation and directly ask for authorities to rectify the problem	Every day language Commonly used words throughout	Half Material, some Relational and few Mental Describes the physical situation and perceptions of it	Predominantly non-human, human participants minimised with passive structure all human participants are in pronoun form or third person	Mostly extent, location and matter to describe the situation accurately	Predominantly present tenses to describe the problem (indicating ongoing situation) and state demands	This situation or a similar one is very likely to be encountered by the students	

The next part of the contextual analysis was concerned with the Interpersonal metafunction of language. The analysis was therefore focused on the Tenor component of Register and included eleven main aspects, as shown in Figure 4.9 on the next page. The first four aspects—which could be derived directly from the letters—were included because they are pertinent to the identity of the writers and receivers of the letters, and are therefore central to examining the interactions found in the text. This writer-receiver relationship affects in turn the choice of congruent or incongruent combinations of Mood type and speech function (discussed in section 3.2.2 of the previous chapter), which are the next two aspects considered in this analysis. Likewise, the remaining five aspects were also connected to the writer-receiver relationship in some manner. These aspects were based on the analysis of the Mood block and other elements in the third step of lexicogrammatical analysis exemplified in Figure 4.6 earlier.

Figure 4.9: Example of the contextual analysis of the Tenor component of Register

Text	Author	Receiver	Status/ power	Social distance	Congruence	Incon- gruence	Person	Voice	Modality	Vocatives	Lexis	Others
Kf2	A student, representing his classmates	Principal of the school	Receiver has higher status and power Writer has no position to make demands, can only "hope" for action	Unequal, hierarchic power Infrequent/o ne-off contact Low affective involvement (Not as far down the continuum)	Mostly congruent - Declarative/ Statement	Distancing - "I would like", "we would like" and "we hope" Declarative for command (x3)	1st and 3rd, referring to the writer and the people being complained about. The receiver is never referred to directly.	Mostly Act Psv is used when agency is uncertain	Extensive use of modals Mostly used with the meaning of 'possibility' Indirect commands are made with statements containing modals which places the moral responsibility on the receiver to do the right thing; volition tempered by "we sincerely hope"	No vocatives used	"complaint" is directly stated Action demanded is stated explicitly in the form of moral obligations or logical necessity	

The final part of the contextual analysis was concerned with the Textual metafunction of language and was thus focused on the Mode component of Register, covering nine main aspects. This analysis is shown in Figure 4.10 on the next page. In accordance with the Textual perspective, the first two aspects of interaction type and medium or channel were included because they are pertinent to the characteristics of the text as a message. Likewise, the role played by language and the feedback involved are also included here because these aspects affect how the message in the text is organised, as discussed in section 3.2.3 of Chapter 3. These first four aspects could be derived from the letters or the context in which the letters were written, whereas the other five aspects were based on the last step of lexicogrammatical analysis that was exemplified in Figure 4.7 earlier.

Figure 4.10: Example of the contextual analysis of the Mode component of Register

Text	Type of interaction	Medium / channel	Role of language	Feedback	Themes	Thematic progression	Tracking	Cohesion	Nominalisation	Others
Kf2	Initiating, possibly leading to 2 way exchange	Written Sent using the postal service	Nearer the "action" end of the spectrum (by writing this letter, I'm telling you to do something)	Reply/ response is invited but may not be in the same form (i.e. a letter) The feedback is expected within a fairly limited time frame	Mostly unmarked Marked themes are topical, textual and interpersonal	Predominantly zig-zag but also some reiterated themes and multiple rhemes	6 main parties Reference mostly with noun phrases Direct reference: writer (1), receiver (1)	Reference to title in opening paragraphs, repeated in concluding paragraph ( <i>canteen</i> ) Previous content summarised as a anaphoric reference ( <i>this</i> ) Conjunctions: sequential, additive, cause-effect	hope that the school would take prompt action (18) - unspecified action	Organising principle: statement of problem followed by suggested solution Facets of problem presented as a list with additive conjunctions

Following the investigation of Register in the first part of text analysis, the second part of the analysis then focused on the realisation of Genre in the texts, as seen in the stages or parts that can be identified in the texts. The identification of stages is a common procedure in the study of genres, as discussed in section 3.3.3 of the previous chapter, which also clarified the reasons for basing the analysis in this study on the Systemic-Functional model of genre. The stages of a particular genre is called the “schematic structure” in Systemic-Functional theory (Eggins, 2004, p. 59). The six-step procedure for identifying the schematic structure that was presented in Chapter 3 is reproduced below:

- i. Identify the general social function of the text.
- ii. Identify stages—sections in the text that have different functions.
- iii. Assign functional labels to the stages.
- iv. Identify compulsory and optional stages
- v. Identify order of stages
- vi. Formulate schematic structure

(Based on Eggins, 2004, pg. 61 – 65; first introduced in Chapter 3, pg. 67)

In implementing the procedure above, two basic principles were applied. The first principle was that analyses based on arbitrary interpretation of the text were avoided as far as possible to minimise subjectivity. Accordingly, all the analyses of the various functions of the different sections in the letters were supported with evidence from the letters, the writing task or the background information provided by the teachers who were using the letters for writing instruction. Likewise, the identification of boundaries between sections was based on lexicogrammatical patterns, wherein the basis for determining a boundary was the identification of a discernible contrast in the lexicogrammar of two adjacent sections, as far as this was possible. The second principle applied in analysis was that all the descriptive terms used in the analyses were derived from words and phrases that were found in the letters, wherever possible. This was done in naming the genres identified as well as in labelling the stages identified in the letters (step iii). For instance, the word *complain* was used to name the genre of the formal letters because this word was found in the majority of the letters analysed.

Once the stages were labelled, the decision on whether the stages were compulsory or optional was made based on whether that particular stage was found in all the letters exemplifying that particular genre. The order of stages was then worked out based on the pattern of occurrence for the stages in the entire group of letters as a whole. The final schematic structure was expressed using the system in Eggins (2004), which is shown in Table 4.7 on the next page.

Table 4.7: Notation system for the schematic structure of genres

Symbol	Meaning
$X^{\wedge}Y$	stage X precedes stage Y (fixed order)
$*Y$	stage Y is an unordered stage
$(X)$	stage X is an optional stage
$\lrcorner X$	stage X is a recursive stage
$\lrcorner\{X^{\wedge}Y\}$	stages X and Y are both recursive in the fixed order X then Y

Source: Eggins (2004, pg. 64)

#### 4.4.2 *Content analysis of transcripts*

A qualitative data analysis software package was not employed due to unavailability of licensing and training, as explained earlier in section 4.4. However, the researcher did use conventional software, namely Microsoft Word (word processing) and Microsoft Excel (spreadsheet) to assist with data management and to document the analysis. The word-processing software was first used in coding to attach codes to relevant portions of transcripts, which could then be repeatedly copied and sorted with the spreadsheet application. The built-in ‘search’ function available in these two applications was then used during the process of analysis, in addition to manually searching through the transcripts and fieldnotes.

At this point, it should be noted that the analysis of qualitative data that was carried out in this study is unlike the usual forms of content-focused analysis that are driven by linguistic theory, for instance those that discuss the ideological undercurrents of the interaction in the manner of critical discourse analysis, or examine the negotiation of meanings by the speakers in the manner of conversational analysis, or identify the specialised lexical items used by the speakers in the manner of sociolinguistics. Specifically, the approach to analysing the transcript data in this study is a content

analysis approach, which may be described as “a second-level, interpretative analysis of the underlying deeper meaning of the data.” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 246). In practice, this involved describing as well as interpreting what the participants said in the light of the research questions and the central concepts of this investigation, with the intention of relating what was said to the findings of the earlier text analysis for the relevant model letter.

Since the SF theoretical framework applied in this study encompasses both text analysis and qualitative data analysis, this study did not have the practice of beginning the content analysis without any preconceived codes, unlike the ‘grounded theory’ model of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Conversely, a list of broad categories was first drawn up for use as preliminary codes, based on categories that were already present in the text analysis and the protocols for interviewing and observations. These preliminary codes are shown in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Preliminary codes for qualitative data analysis

Source	Sub-categories	Codes
Text analysis	Contextual analysis – Field	Topic / Goal / Technicality
	Contextual analysis – Tenor	Role / Status / Tone / Politeness
	Contextual analysis – Mode	Written language / Organisation
	Genre analysis – purpose	Social purpose
	Genre analysis – stages	Steps
Interview and observation protocols	Views on role of materials in writing instruction	Type / Use
	Text selection criteria	Selection
	Valued features	Valued

Later, these codes were modified and restructured as coding progressed through three levels. The preliminary codes were expanded on in first-level coding, and then the number of codes was gradually reduced again in the second and third level of coding according to the standard procedure in qualitative coding of moving from concrete to more abstract categories. The number of codes involved at each level of

coding is shown in Table 4.9 below, whereas the complete list of codes used at each level is found in Appendix 4F.

Table 4.9: Number of Level 1, 2 and 3 codes in qualitative data analysis

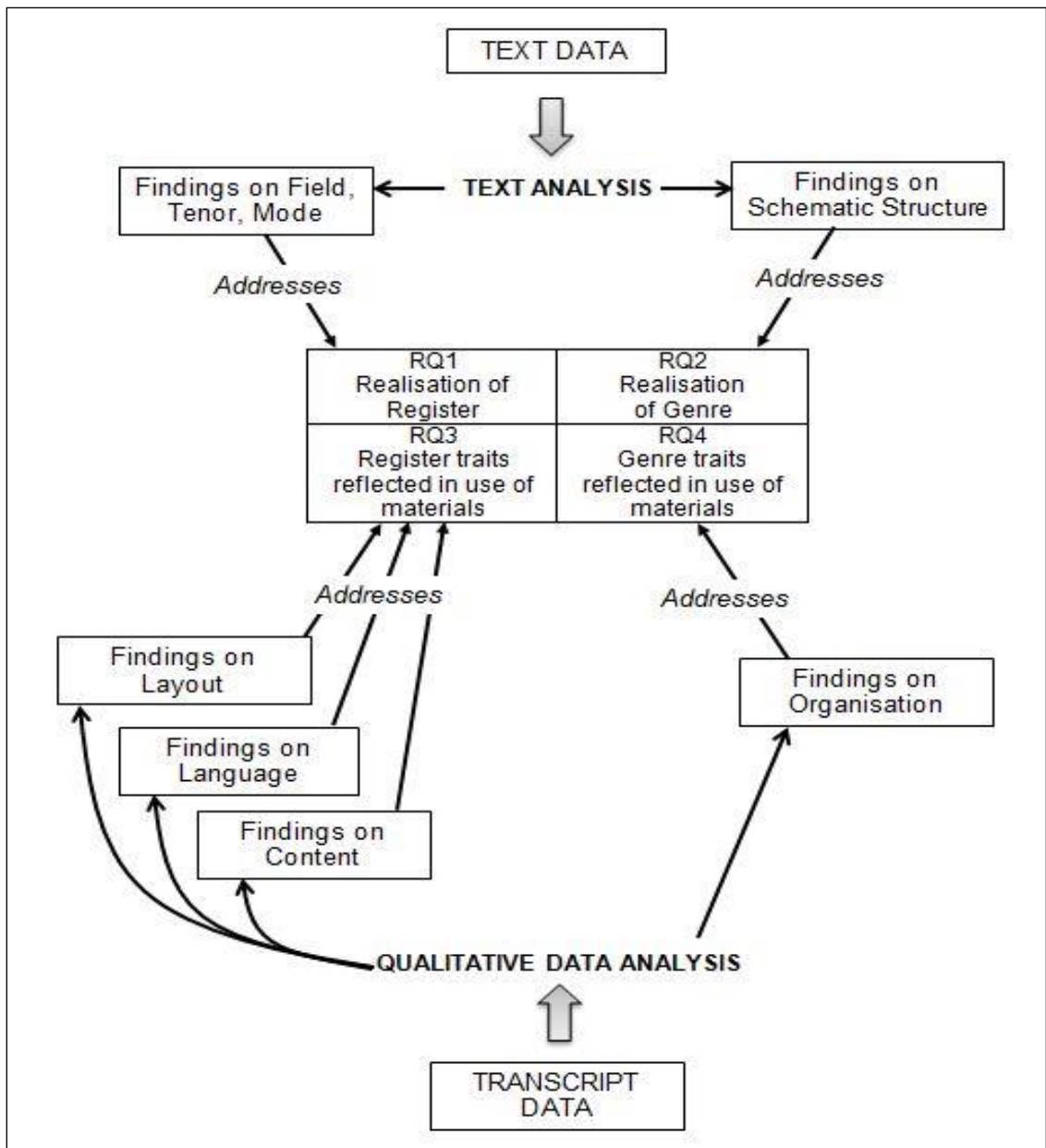
Coding level	Number of codes
Level 1	823
Level 2	119
Level 3	17

The three levels of coding may be described generally as:

- Level 1 coding involves sorting out sections of data into the preliminary categories while simultaneously generating finer categories based on what is present in the data. As a result, the number of codes increased greatly from the relatively few preliminary categories in the first level of coding.
- Level 2 coding involved consolidating the codes generated in level 1 by combining similar and redundant codes, removing irrelevant codes and generally moving towards broader categories.
- Level 3 coding involved connecting the broader categories in level 2 according to theoretical considerations in order to synthesise a coherent report of the patterns that were present in the data.

Lastly, the seventeen codes from the last level of coding were distilled into four primary findings and three secondary findings. The primary findings directly address the research questions, whereas the secondary findings further inform the discussion of the findings. Figure 4.11 on the next page shows in graphic form an overall view of how the methodology in this investigation addresses the four research questions.

Figure 4.11: Relationship between methodology and research questions



#### 4.5 Strategies to enhance the quality of research

Previously, it was noted in the general discussion on qualitative research in section 4.1.2 that the concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research is the main measure of quality that is applied in this investigation. In addition, it was also pointed out that the rigor of this research can also be considered in terms of the traditional measures of validity and reliability. The following sub-sections discuss both of these perspectives in relation to this investigation.



#### 4.5.1 Measures towards trustworthiness

Trustworthiness includes the five notions of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity (Creswell, 2009; Lichtman, 2006; Mertens, 2009), each of which is concerned with a different aspect of integrity in qualitative research. Table 4.10 below summarises the research practices that can enhance these five aspects, followed by a discussion of how these practices are applied in this investigation.

Table 4.10: Practices towards trustworthiness in research

Aspect	Description: refers to	Supporting practices
Credibility	the match between the researcher's interpretation and the participant's perceptions of their experiences or situation	Sufficient contact Feedback from peers and participants Critical self-reflection Negative evidence included Triangulation
Transferability	whether findings from the investigation can be applied to other settings	Thick description Multiple cases
Dependability	how clearly the decisions in an investigation are documented, particularly changes	Audit trail Protocols for data collection
Confirmability	whether findings can be independently corroborated by others based on the evidence	Audit trail Negative evidence addressed Researcher's background
Authenticity	whether the findings are a fair representation of the actual situation	Multiple viewpoints Member checks Follow up actions

Source: compiled from Mertens (2009), Lichtman (2006), and Creswell (2009)

To begin with, record-keeping is a key aspect of conducting qualitative research, with the intention of creating an audit trail in the interests of dependability and confirmability. Hence, systematic records were kept throughout the research process, including chronological and reflective logs on all important aspects of the research, the tracking of raw data (recordings and notes) and transcripts as well as analysed data, and

the stages of the analytic process. Apart from this, record-keeping also included the protocols that were used during interviews and observations. Among these, the records of adaptations in methodology and the evolution of the theoretical perspective were of particular significance, since they trace the growth and development of the findings which were eventually presented. In addition, reviewing the records of past decisions and questions raised also facilitated a more focused and consistent analysis of the data. If necessary, these records can subsequently be examined by independent parties to verify that the conclusions drawn by the researcher are indeed supported by the data.

In line with the qualitative paradigm of research, it is acknowledged that individuals have different points of view, even when it apparently concerns the same phenomenon. This includes the researcher's own particular interpretation of events and information gathered during research, wherein the researcher may be considered the "key instrument" of data collection (Creswell, 2009, p. 175). A proper account of the researcher's background and personal involvement in the research is therefore essential for credibility and confirmability. Accordingly, the researcher's background and previous professional experiences are presented in Appendix 4G, with an abridged version in section 1.4.1 of Chapter 1. This is meant to make explicit the values and possible biases that may be present in the researcher's analysis and subsequent discussion of the findings.

As for the actual data collection, sufficient contact in terms of frequency and duration between the researcher and participants is a basic requirement for credibility in qualitative research involving naturalistic fieldwork. On average, the researcher had at least six hours of contact in total with each participant from first contact to the completion of data collection, based on the following calculation: thirty minutes each for background, pre-observation and post-observation interviews, and ninety minutes of observation, all multiplied by two for the two text types. This does not include informal

interactions of a more social nature, which also helped in gaining the trust of the participants and building up a rapport with them. As a result, the researcher was able to develop a better understanding of the participants in terms of their background, point of view on teaching English in general and writing instruction in particular, and how they conceptualise text types. Most of the participants were amenable to clarifying points that were unclear or confusing for the researcher in follow-up sessions, hence the prolonged contact also enabled the researcher to fully explore some issues that had come up during data analysis in order to refine and strengthen the findings of this research.

All the participants were given a copy of all the audio and video recordings involving them and invited to check the relevant transcripts. They also had opportunities in every interview to make comments on any issues that they wished to further elaborate on. Similarly, the extended contact also enabled the researcher to obtain feedback from the participants on the emerging findings to prevent misunderstanding or misinterpretation of their perceptions, which is part of the process of “member checking” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). The participants were therefore provided with the means to be fully involved in the research process if they so desired, which is why they are also referred to as ‘participants’ and not just ‘teachers’ or ‘subjects’. This involvement enhances the credibility of the research.

In keeping with the principle of having a research process that can be audited, coding checks were also carried out for the analysis of the qualitative data. Two independent checkers were involved. Both checkers hold Masters Degrees in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and have fifteen years apiece of teaching experience at secondary level. At the time of the study, one of them was pursuing a doctorate in an Australian university, also in TESL, whilst the other was a full-time teacher at a secondary school in Malaysia. The checkers were provided with

the objective and research questions of the study and relevant background information, along with instructions on the coding procedure. All documentation related to the code-checking is found in full in Appendix 4H. Although face-to-face training could not be carried out because the checkers were geographically separated from the researcher, the checkers were in constant contact with researcher via e-mail and voice calls. Each checker was asked to code the transcripts from four different interviews and observations. A simple calculation then gave the percentage of agreement between the researcher and the code checker, based on the portions coded by the checker. In view of the resulting percentages of 84.5% for the first checker and 84.6% for the second checker, it was decided that it was unnecessary to re-code the transcripts in entirety, although some codes were modified based on the ideas and insights from the code-checkers. These ideas were also incorporated into the subsequent coding by the researcher.

The last remaining practice of triangulation is discussed separately in section 4.5.3, as it is related to both generalizability (an aspect of trustworthiness) and validity (a traditional measure of research quality).

#### *4.5.2 Measures towards validity and reliability*

Yin (2009) asserts that research design plays a prominent role in ensuring the overall quality of case study research in terms of traditional measure of research quality. Yin's recommendations as applied to this study are as follows:

- Construct validity is enhanced through systematic documentation and multiplicity in evidence. This is reflected in the data types and sources in this study, as well as in sound data management practices.
- Internal validity is enhanced by applying sound logic in explaining patterns, particularly when conflicting patterns arise. This was done

during data analysis, except that pattern matching in subsequently-selected cases could not be implemented because the cases had been pre-selected.

- External validity is enhanced by means of theoretical generalization, which has been discussed in section 4.1.2.
- Reliability is enhanced through the use of protocols and thoroughly documenting all procedures. The former is seen in the use of a framework in data analysis which corresponds with the protocols in interviewing and observations, whereas the latter is seen in scrupulous record-keeping throughout this investigation.

With regard to the relationship between validity and reliability and the notion of trustworthiness, the components of trustworthiness have been mapped onto various aspects of validity and reliability in numerous ways by different writers (Mertens, 2009). Similarly, Creswell (2009) uses the terms ‘qualitative validity’ and ‘qualitative reliability’ (pg. 190) rather than ‘trustworthiness’ in discussing sound practices in qualitative research. Yet even though the choice of terminology may differ from writer to writer, the practices that are recommended to ensure the rigor of the research are much the same. As far as possible, these practices have been applied in this investigation towards an acceptable standard of quality.

#### *4.5.3 Triangulation*

Triangulation as a research practice is discussed separately from the practices mentioned in the previous sections because it is relevant to both the qualitative as well as traditional standards of research quality. Cohen et al. (2007) define triangulation in terms of practice—as in the use of multiple methods in studying a phenomenon—

whereas Dornyei (2007) emphasises the principle underlying triangulation, which he describes as “validation through convergence” (pg. 165). Triangulation may also be considered a means of adding to the credibility of the interpretation of a phenomenon through the comparison of results from different perspectives, thus imparting a certain degree of objectivity to qualitative research (Lichtman, 2006). Cohen et al. (2007) describe triangulation as providing a more in-depth and holistic understanding of the phenomenon being studied by approaching it from different points of view, but point out that the practice of triangulation may be considered too positivistic for qualitative research by some parties; nor is triangulation a guarantee of consistency in qualitative research. Nevertheless, the benefits of triangulation may be heightened by sufficient depth in interpreting any divergence in triangulated findings (Dornyei, 2007).

The general concept of triangulation may be further sub-categorised according to the various dimensions of research which can be emphasised in triangulation: Guion (2002) suggests the sub-categories of data, investigator, theory, methodological and environmental triangulation (cited in Lichtman, 2006, p. 195), and Denzin (1970) suggests time, space, levels, theoretical, investigator and methodological triangulation (cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 142). The relevance of these various types of triangulation to this investigation is summarised in Table 4.11 on the next page. The table shows that the two main types of triangulation used in this study are the triangulation of data and methodology. This has already been discussed earlier in section 4.1.1. The table also shows that the practical constraints faced in this investigation exclude the application of some types of triangulation. As for theoretical triangulation, this is applied only to a limited extent, in that Systemic-Functional linguistic theory forms the theoretical backbone of the study. However, reference is made to other theories in data analysis and in the discussion of the findings, namely: the

theory underlying the role of model texts in writing instruction (discussed in Chapter 2), and other theories on the concept of genre (discussed in Chapter 3).

Table 4.11: Types of triangulation in relation to this investigation

Type	Description	Rationale
Types of triangulation excluded from the investigation		
Investigator	Data collection and/or analysis is carried out by more than one person, working in collaboration	The researcher did not have the means to recruit other investigators
Environmental or Time and Space	Data collection is carried out at different times or in different locations	The researcher had limited resources and needed to conclude data collection within a fixed time period, hence it was necessary to narrow the scope of the investigation
Level	A phenomena is studied at the individual, group and collective levels	
Types of triangulation included in the investigation		
Data	Data is collected from different sources	This study has a convergent bilateral approach in methodology which incorporates two types of data
Methodological	Different methods are used to study the same phenomena	
Theoretical	Different theories are applied in studying the same phenomena	The main theoretical framework for this study is Systemic-Functional linguistic theory

Source: Compiled from Guion, 2002 and Denzin, 1970 (op. cit.)

## 4.6 Ethical considerations

It is widely accepted that ethical considerations should underlie any form of research, and this includes three basic issues that need to be addressed: informed consent, privacy and effects from the research (Dornyei, 2007). Cohen et al. (2007) also emphasise that these issues are of particular significance in research that is conducted in educational settings, like this investigation. The following sections present the various measures that have been taken towards establishing a sound ethical foundation for this study.

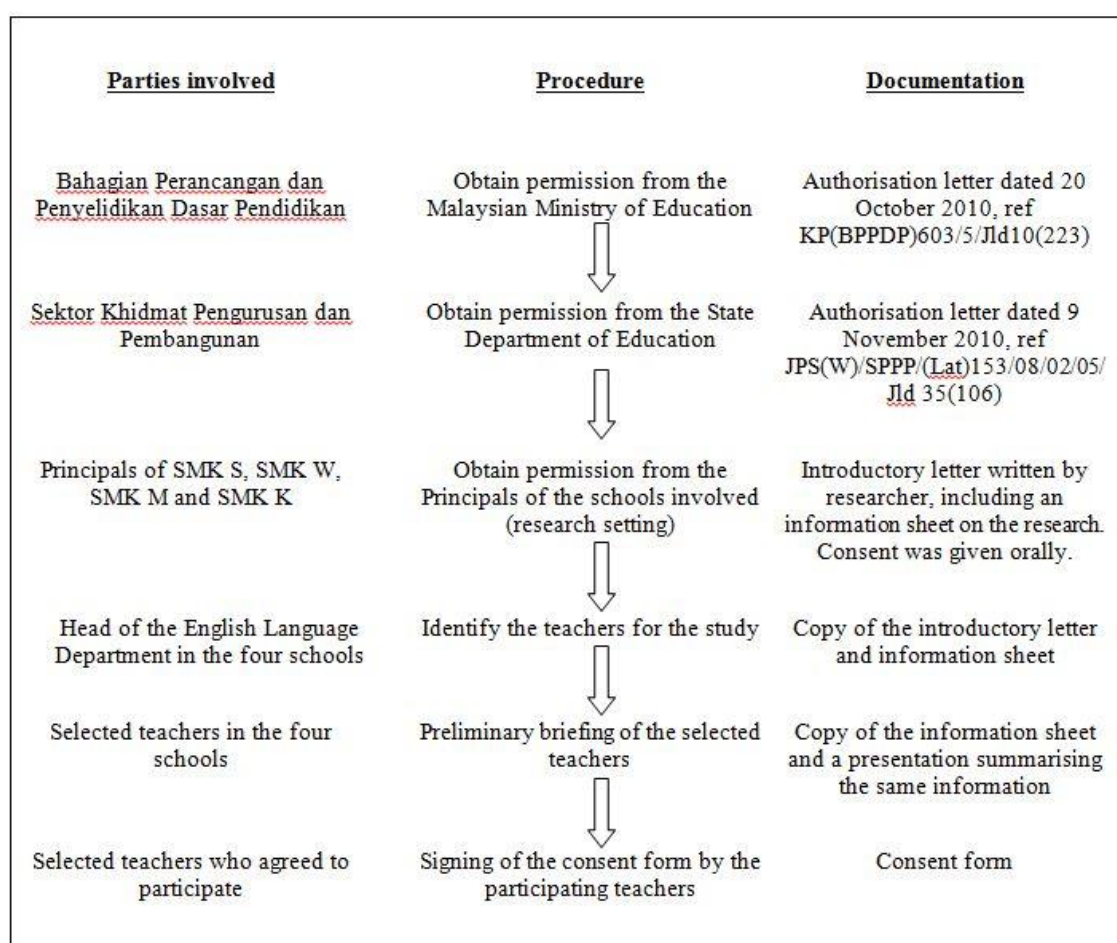
### 4.6.1 Informed consent

According to Dornyei (2007), the concept of informed consent is based on two conditions: firstly that the participants of the study are willingly involved, and secondly

that they are aware of the objectives of the research and the extent of their involvement. Dornyei also notes that exactly how clearly the objectives are explained may be an issue in some investigations, if only to prevent atypical behaviour by the participants. However, it is believed that this issue is not a major concern in the present study because the non-evaluative orientation of the study had been established from the very beginning and hence the participants had no overt reason to modify their behaviour.

For this investigation, all the paperwork necessary for authorisation at every administrative level was obtained before the commencement of the research. Similarly, written agreement from all the participants was secured before any fieldwork was carried out. Figure 4.12 below depicts the process of obtaining informed consent from all the parties involved, wherein the documents concerned are all found in Appendix 4I.

Figure 4.12: Process of obtaining informed consent for the study from involved parties





As indicated in Figure 4.12, written agreement was obtained only from the teachers involved in the study, because the research objectives and questions as well as data collection and analysis did not focus on the students; hence it was decided that it was unnecessary to include the students as participants of the research. Accordingly, all the teachers who participated in the study signed a consent form and subsequently all those who had signed received a copy of the form for their reference. The form contained the basic requirements listed in Dornyei (2007, pp. 70-71) and Cohen et al. (2007, p. 53), specifically:

- the purpose and procedures in the study
- the confidentiality of data collected, potential risks and benefits
- voluntary participation with the option of unconditional withdrawal
- the option to seek clarification on any aspect of the study and access to the findings of the research
- signatures and identification of the participant and researcher

#### 4.6.2 Privacy

The measure of how well the privacy of participants is protected in a study is how easily the true identity of the participants can be discovered from the report, and is related to the issues of confidentiality and anonymity (Cohen et al., 2007). To start off with, the information sheet provided to the school states that *Any information which can be identified with the school or the individual teachers that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential*, which indicates that due consideration is given to the matter of privacy in this investigation. In addition, among the conditions for agreement stated in the consent form are the following statements: *I understand that my name, and any other information, which I may give, will not be used in any way which might identify me, nor those whom I discuss and I give permission for direct quotations*

*from the interview and/or documents produced by me to be utilised within the thesis and future publications.* These statements represent a negotiated position between safeguarding the participants' privacy and enabling the researcher to satisfactorily report the findings from the investigation.

The first statement mentioned above was implemented by not revealing the exact geographical location or the actual names of the schools that constituted the research setting. Similarly, all participants are referred to by their initials throughout this thesis. As for the second statement, all the direct quotations of participants are tagged with an alphanumeric label according to the conventions explained in section 4.3.4 rather than with the participants' personal information, and any references to particular locations or personal names that may reveal the true identity of the participants were replaced with non-identifiable alternatives.

The issue of privacy also encompasses the sharing of participants' personal opinions which they do not wish to be made known to their superiors. The willingness of the participants to share such information with the researcher is seen as a reflection of their sincere involvement in the research and their confidence in the researcher's integrity. Such opinions were therefore not quoted directly in the report on the findings to ensure the participants' privacy, even though it was still necessary to transcribe the opinions and include them for consideration in data analysis for a complete understanding of the data.

#### *4.6.3 Follow-up to the research*

The ethical considerations in an investigation extend to the period of time after completion of the research and include two main matters: ownership and storage of data (Dornyei, 2007) and the contribution of the research to the individuals and institutions that have been involved in the research (Cohen et al., 2007). With regard to data, the

consent form signed by the participants contains the following statement: *I grant permission for the data related to me to be used in the process of completing a Ph.D. degree, and understand that this will include a thesis and future publications*, whereas the information sheet provided mentions that *The raw data collected will be kept in a secure location and will only be accessible to myself, my supervisor and the examiners for my Ph.D. thesis*. The first of these statements clarifies the ownership of the data collected, and the second addresses the storage of this data. Specifically, the data collected is considered to be jointly owned by both the researcher and the participants concerned. Accordingly, all the participants were provided with copies of all the audio and video recordings that involved them. As for the storage of data, multiple copies of the relevant recordings and transcripts that constitute the data for this investigation are being stored in a secure location by the researcher for the time being. This data will be disposed of in a responsible manner in future when there is no further necessity to retain it in storage.

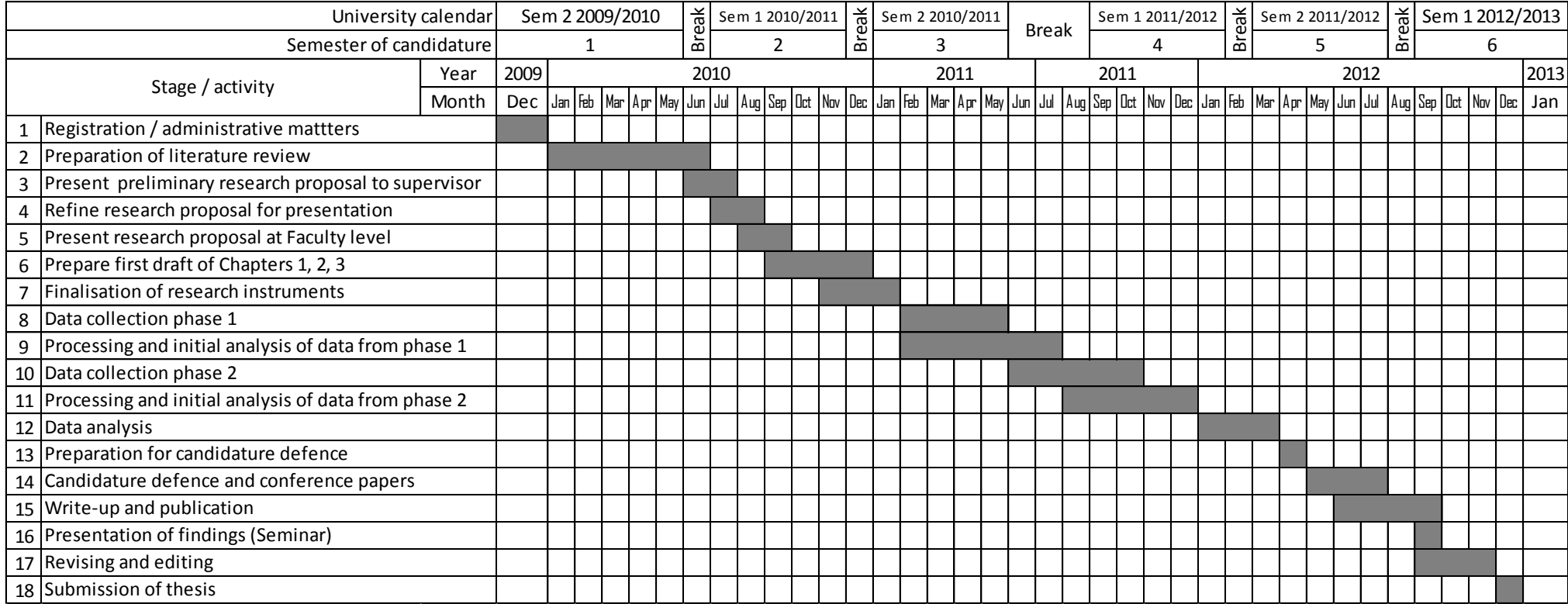
As for the contribution of the research to the individuals and institutions, the researcher did not negotiate a specific form of recompense with the teachers and schools involved prior to the research. However, the researcher's remaining financial resources when fieldwork had been concluded enabled the contribution of a 500 GB capacity external hard disk to the four schools for the use of the English Language Panel, as well as a personal token of appreciation to all the participants. These contributions were made in the researcher's own name as a sincere gesture of gratitude to the parties concerned for their support of the investigation. Some of the schools have also expressed interest in applying the findings of the research to their practice in terms of organising in-service training for the teachers by the researcher once the entire investigation is completed. The researcher fully intends to follow through with these plans should the schools continue to show interest in future, in the belief that classroom

practices should be informed by principles from theory and reciprocally, theory can also be enriched with evidence from practice.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has described the entire process of planning and implementing this investigation, highlighting the key decisions made and the rationale for these decisions. The duration of the research described in this chapter was approximately eighteen months excluding the time taken to write up the findings, as shown in the Gantt chart in Figure 4.13 on the next page.

Figure 4.13: Gantt chart showing the planning and implementation of data collection and analysis



## CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS ON THE REALISATION OF REGISTER IN THE MODEL LETTERS

### 5.0 OVERVIEW

In this chapter, the findings from text analysis with regard to how Register is realised in the model letters studied are presented, thus addressing research question 1. As mentioned in the previous chapters, two kinds of model texts for writing instruction are examined in this investigation: formal and informal letters. The findings for these two kinds of texts are presented separately and further sub-divided in terms of the three components of Register. It should be noted that the findings presented here are synthesised rather than the raw text analysis, which is found in full in Appendix 5A.

### 5.1 Findings on Register in Model Formal Letters

As stated in Chapter 4, thirteen model formal letters were analysed. The following sections present the findings for the contextual analysis of Field, Tenor and Mode which make up the Register characteristics of the letters. The complete contextual analysis is found in Appendix 5B.

#### 5.1.1 *Field in model formal letters*

Field in the SF conceptualisation of Register corresponds to the Ideational metafunction of language and may be understood as what a text is all about. In all the model formal letters, the writer was addressing some kind of problematic situation which he or she was unhappy with, with the basic purpose of describing the problem and seeking corrective action. In some letters, the desired action was stated in the form of suggestions, but many letters left the best course of action unspecified and stated this in general terms instead, for example: *attend to this matter* (ATf1), *immediate action to*

*solve our problems* (Kf3), *look into this matter* (Mf1), *take immediate action* (Mf4 and Sf1) and *take quick action to solve our problems* (Sf3).

Table 5.1 on the next page provides an overview of the Experiential domain for the model formal letters. The situations concerned are listed in column 2 of the table. These are predominantly set in the daily life of the students learning to write the letters, involving scenarios from school (Kf1, Kf2, Mf2, Mf3, Mf4, Sf2) and home (ATf1, Kf1, Kf4, Sf1, Sf2). Only the situation in letter ATf2 concerning water pollution is relatively unfamiliar to the typical 16-year-old student. As such, the likelihood of teenage students in Malaysian society actually making written complaints is not taken into consideration, and it may well be argued that this is much more likely for some of the situations than others among the selection of model letters studied. That aside, the general observation is that the situations in the letters were fairly commonplace and within students' experience. As a result, the vocabulary used—albeit formal—had a low level of technicality. Column 5 in Table 5.1 contains examples that illustrate how the formal version of words and phrases were used rather than possible informal synonyms.

Table 5.1: Experiential domain and lexical items used in model formal letters

1	2	3	4	5
Letter	Problematic situation	Action required	Lexical items used	Informal alternatives
ATF1	Burst pipe causing low water pressure	Unspecified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• draw your attention to</li> <li>• a report was lodged</li> <li>• rectify</li> <li>• causing a lot of inconvenience and disruption to our daily routine</li> <li>• attend to this matter</li> <li>• ease our burden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tell you about / let you know about</li> <li>• a report was made</li> <li>• solve</li> <li>• making our lives difficult</li> <li>• do something about this</li> <li>• help us</li> </ul>
ATF2	Water pollution by a factory	Stop the pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bring your attention to</li> <li>• your inconsiderate action has resulted in</li> <li>• because of your irresponsible action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tell you about</li> <li>• it is your fault / you acted without thinking and made it happen</li> <li>• because you messed up</li> </ul>
Kf1	Uncollected rubbish	Regular rubbish collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• produces unpleasant smell</li> <li>• pestering our daily life</li> <li>• to carry out a schedule rubbish collection</li> <li>• lodge a complaint</li> <li>• were down with diarrhoea after consuming food from the canteen</li> <li>• abusive language</li> <li>• the same menu is served</li> <li>• serve a variety of food at a reasonable price</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stinks</li> <li>• bothering us</li> <li>• collect the rubbish regularly</li> <li>• complain / make a complaint</li> <li>• had diarrhoea (or stomach aches) after eating food from the canteen</li> <li>• cursing / scolding</li> <li>• the food is the same</li> <li>• serve more kinds of food at cheaper prices</li> </ul>



Table 5.1: Experiential domain and lexical items used in model formal letters (continued)

1	2	3	4	5
Kf2, Mf2, Sf2	Problems with the school canteen	Suggestions given	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have a decent meal</li> <li>• foul stench</li> <li>• stringent checks</li> <li>• the cutlery</li> <li>• take prompt action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eat properly</li> <li>• very bad smell / stink</li> <li>• strict checks</li> <li>• the spoons and forks</li> <li>• do something quickly</li> </ul>
Kf3	Burst pipe	Unspecified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hardly any water flowing from their taps</li> <li>• immediate action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the taps are almost dry</li> <li>• act right away</li> </ul>
Kf4	Noisy tenants	Warn the tenants to change their behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• turn on the volume of the radio and television to the maximum</li> <li>• putting their young children to bed</li> <li>• approached the young men to advise them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have the radio and television on very loudly / as loudly as possible</li> <li>• making their kids go to sleep</li> <li>• tried to advise the guys</li> </ul>
Mf1	Conditions at the town library	Unspecified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• draw your attention</li> <li>• expanded and improved upon (passive)</li> <li>• books are outdated</li> <li>• the library is not stocked</li> <li>• quote just one example</li> <li>• assist users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tell you</li> <li>• make it larger and better (active)</li> <li>• books are old</li> <li>• the library does not contain / have</li> <li>• give an example</li> <li>• help users</li> </ul>
Mf3	Conditions in the classroom	Suggestions given	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keep the cleanliness of the classroom</li> <li>• bring to your attention</li> <li>• faulty</li> <li>• lacks the cleaning equipment</li> <li>• prevent removal from the class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keep the classroom clean</li> <li>• let you know</li> <li>• broken</li> <li>• not enough things/tools to clean with</li> <li>• so that they are not taken away</li> </ul>

Table 5.1: Experiential domain and lexical items used in model formal letters (continued)

1	2	3	4	5
Mf4	Conditions in the school	Unspecified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emitting a strong foul stench</li> <li>• limited sitting space</li> <li>• take immediate action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• produce a very bad smell / stinking badly</li> <li>• not enough seats for everyone</li> <li>• do something at once</li> </ul>
Sf1	Traffic congestion	Unspecified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bringing your attention</li> <li>• situation is aggravated</li> <li>• numerous times</li> <li>• request the Town Council to take immediate action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• letting you know</li> <li>• situation became worse because</li> <li>• many times</li> <li>• ask the Town Council to do something at once</li> </ul>
Sf3	Disruptive construction activities	Unspecified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to voice our dissatisfaction</li> <li>• caused considerable anxiety to the residents</li> <li>• a constant source of annoyance</li> <li>• compounded</li> <li>• health hazard</li> <li>• other respiratory problems</li> <li>• the presence of these workers</li> <li>• have sleepless nights</li> <li>• bringing these complaints to your attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to tell you we are not happy</li> <li>• made the residents very worried</li> <li>• gets us all heated up / a bother to us</li> <li>• made worse</li> <li>• danger to health</li> <li>• other breathing problems</li> <li>• because the workers are here</li> <li>• cannot sleep</li> <li>• telling you these complaints</li> </ul>

In terms of Transitivity, predominantly Material Processes were used in the model formal letters, making up approximately half of the total number of processes found in most of the letters. These Processes were used to describe the problem and desired actions in combination with Relational Processes, which also made up a substantial proportion of the total Process types. The detailed breakdown in percentages of Process types is found in Appendix 5C. In addition, the pattern of Process types found corresponds generally with the stages that characterise the Genre of the model letters, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. Some patterns that could be seen with regard to the distribution of Process types are as listed below. (Note: The abbreviation ‘Stc’ is used from this point onward to represent the word ‘sentence’.)

- i. At the beginning of the letters, the purpose of the letters was introduced with the phrases *draw your attention* (in ATf1, ATf2 and Sf1) or *I am writing to...* (in Kf1, Kf3, Mf1, Mf3 and Sf3) which contain the Material processes *draw* and *write* respectively.
- ii. Subsequently, past action taken with regard to the situation was referred to with *lodge* (Material Process) in combination with *complaint* or *report* (in ATf1, Sf2, Mf2, Kf2) or the phrases *fall on deaf ears* (in Sf1 and Kf4) and *no action taken* (in Kf3) which contain the Material Processes *fall* and *take*.
- iii. The situation was then described with Material and Relational Processes, or a combination. Some examples are: *many of us are unable to run our automatic washing machines or use the shower* (Stc 5 in ATf1), *The rotting rubbish also produces unpleasant smell* (Stc 5 in Kf1), *We do not have enough water to wash our dirty and muddy vehicles* (Stc 11 in Kf3), *They ignored the advice* (Stc 11 in Kf4) and *The traffic situation is*

*aggravated by a new housing project nearby as well as Their heavy vehicles are still using the public roads* (Stc 6 and 13 in Sf1).

- iv. The Relational Process *be* was quite extensively used to describe the unsatisfactory conditions, for instance *a few of us were down with diarrhoea, the food is also too expensive* (Stc 6 and 7 in Kf2), *the books are outdated, the librarians are unhelpful* (Stc 3 and 5 in Mf1), *the brooms are always missing, the blackboard dusters are spoilt* (Stc 17 and 19 in Mf3) and *another health hazard is the dust* (Stc 6, Sf3); or the feelings of those affected, as in *students are bored with nasi lemak* (Stc 13, Kf1) and *students are not happy, students are worried* (Stc 15 and 23 in Mf4).
- v. When actions required were specified, these were likewise referred to with Material and Relational Processes. Some examples of such suggestions are: *the canteen serve a variety of food at a reasonable price* (Stc 19 in Mf2), *Canteen workers should wear proper uniforms and observe cleanliness* (Stc 16 in Kf2), *The food should be properly covered* (Stc 19 in Sf2) and *...to get the school's technicians to repair the electrical appliances such as the lights and the fans* (Stc 22, Mf3).
- vi. The letters were ended with the Material Process phrase *take action* as a projection by the Mental Process phrase *we hope* in many of the letters (Sf1, Sf2, Sf3, Mf2, Mf3, Mf4, and Kf2).

Generally, the abundance of Material processes might possibly be related to the fairly concrete problems or situations being discussed, which is illustrated by contrasting this pattern with the one exception found: letter Kf4. This letter had more Verbal and Mental processes as it focused on relationships and affective effects rather

than a situation that was simply physically problematic. Some examples from Kf4 are: *The neighbours ... can no longer put up with these loud noises* (Stc 4), *the older children cannot concentrate on their schoolwork* (Stc 5), *A few elderly neighbours have approached the young men to advise them on the matter* (Stc 6) and *The neighbours would be very grateful if you could speak to your tenants personally* (Stc 9). This letter also differed from others in that it had more human Participants in comparison to the other letters. Here, human Participants refer to people, in contrast to inanimate objects or abstract qualities. To highlight this distinctive characteristic of Kf4, Table 5.2 below lists all the Participants in Kf4 in comparison to those in Sf3, since Sf3 has a set of Participants that is more typical of the model formal letters in general. The table shows that the ratio of human to non-human Participants is approximately 2:1 in Kf4, but just 1:3 in Sf3.

Table 5.2: Comparison of Participants in letters Kf4 and Sf3

Letter	Stc	Human Participants	Non-human Participants
Kf4	1	I, you, the tenants	
	2	the four young men	the volume of the radio and tv
	3	They	the loud music
	4	the neighbours	sounds, these loud noises
	5	parents, older children, working adults	difficulties, their schoolwork, relaxation
	6	neighbours, the young men, them	
	7		the advice
	8	they, they	the advice
	9	neighbours, you, your tenants	very grateful
	10	we, you, them	the volume of the radio and tv
	11	we, you, them, the police, they, x(passive)	the neighbourhood
	12	we, you, we	your quick action
	Total	28 (1 passive)	13

Table 5.2: Comparison of Participants in letters Kf4 and Sf3 (continued)

Letter	Stc	Human Participants	Non-human Participants
Sf3	1	I	
	2	We	this letter, our dissatisfaction
	3		the construction activities, constant source
	4		the deafening noise, the noise
	5	many residents	
	6		health hazard, the dust, asthma and other respiratory problems
	7	some of the workers, illegal workers	it, our attention
	8		the recent break-ins, a nagging worry
	9	the residents	the presence, sleepless nights
	10		it, an intrusion into our privacy
	11	we, you	these complaints, your attention, quick action, our problems
	Total	8	21

The complete list of Participants in all the letters is found in Appendix 5D. The relatively fewer occurrences of human Participants in most of the model formal letters are a feature of the formal register, which tends to minimise human agency. In the letters, this is accomplished by means of using the passive voice, as in *a report was lodged with your department, nothing has been done* (Stc 2 and 3 in ATf1); *the food is not covered and flies can be seen hovering over the food* (Stc 2 in Kf2, Mf2); *The matter was reported to your department ... no action has been taken* and *Our showers and washing machines cannot be used* (Stc 3 and 6 in Kf3); *the police will be informed* (Stc 11, Kf4); *The collections of library books and magazines needs to be expanded and improved upon, the library is not stocked with the latest titles and many activities can be organised* (Stc 2, 3 and 15 in Mf1) and *it is not swept daily* as well as *chalk marks are not completely erased* (Stc 6 and 12 in Mf3). However, not every letter contained passive constructions; in Mf4, Sf1 and Sf3, the active voice was used throughout, for example: *Many poor students cannot afford to buy the food* (Stc 22 in Mf4), *We have written numerous times to the developers* (Stc 11 in Sf1) and *We are writing this letter*

*to voice our dissatisfaction...* (Stc 3 in Sf3). Human agency can also be hidden by means of nominalization, as seen in the examples listed below, but this was not as common in the letters. In the examples, the structures containing nominalizations found in the model letters (italicized and with nominalizations underlined) are compared to an equivalent structure (with single quotation marks) to illustrate how the former does not show human agency, unlike the latter.

- *I would like to suggest solutions to overcome those problems* (Stc 21 in Mf3) rather than ‘I would like to suggest how you can solve those problems’
- *as there is a lack of cooperation* (Stc 24 in Mf3) rather than ‘as my classmates refuse to cooperate’
- (the presence of these workers) is also an intrusion into our privacy (Stc 10 in Sf3) rather than ‘the workers intrude into our privacy’

Also analysed under Transitivity was the element of Circumstances. The summary of Circumstance types in all the letters is found in Appendix 5E. With regard to the model formal letters, Circumstances were found to be mostly of location and matter, which serve to describe the situation accurately. In addition, Circumstances of extent were also used to show the seriousness of the problem, coupled with the use of present tenses when describing the problem to create a sense of immediacy. This urgency is illustrated by the following sentences:

- Stc 7 in ATf1: *The low water pressure has reduced the water flow to a trickle.* (Circumstance: Extent)
- Stc 7 and 8 in Kf3: *So they have to collect water from the pipes at the lower ground level (Circumstance: Location) and store them. This is very*

*inconvenient especially for those living on the higher floors*  
(Circumstance: Extent).

- Stc 2 in Kf4: *The four young men staying in the house often turn on the volume of the radio and television to the maximum* (Circumstance: Extent) *every evening* (Circumstance: Location).
- Stc 14 in Mf3: *It is dark in the early morning or when the weather is bad* (Circumstance: Location) *because the lights are not working*.
- Stc 3, 5 and 8 in Sf1: *We as residents have been putting up with this unbearable situation for the past ten months* (Circumstance: Extent). ... *The number of cars using the roads have increased ten-fold* (Circumstance: Extent) *but the roads remain narrow with only two lanes* (Circumstance: Extent). ... *fifteen accidents have occurred at the dangerous bottleneck on of the roads* (Circumstance: Location) *during the last six months* (Circumstance: Extent).
- Stc 5 in Sf3: *Many residents are now complaining about headaches, migraines and nausea* (Circumstance: Matter).

### 5.1.2 Tenor in model formal letters

In SF theory, Tenor is concerned with the text as a form of interaction and focuses on the Interpersonal metafunction of language. Accordingly, the central consideration underlying Tenor is the relationship between the writer and receiver of the letters. A consistent writer-receiver relationship was found in the majority of the model formal letters studied, wherein the receiver had a higher position in social hierarchy than the writer by virtue of the status of holding an official post with some degree of power over the writer's environment. Table 5.3 on the next page summarises the writer-receiver relationship in the letters. Under normal circumstances, the writer would have



little or no contact with the receiver; hence the degree of affective involvement between them would be correspondingly low.

Table 5.3: Relationship between writer and receiver in model formal letters

Letter	Writer's identity	Receiver's identity
ATf1	Representative of Taman Alam Indah residents (fellow resident)	Director of Waterworks Department
ATf2	Concerned citizens (students)	Manager of Syarikat Perniagaan XYZ
Kf1	A resident in the affected area	Secretary of Samarahan Municipal Council
Kf2	A student, representing his classmates	The Principal of the school
Kf3	A resident in the affected area	Director of Waterworks Department
Kf4	A resident in the affected area	Owner of the rented house (landlord)
Mf1	Concerned citizen (probably a library user)	Chairman of the Town Council
Mf2	A student, representing his classmates	The Principal of the school
Mf3	A student, representing his classmates	The Principal of the school
Mf4	Head Prefect, representing the school's students	The Principal of the school
Sf1	Representative of Taman Mandu residents (fellow resident)	Chairman of the Town Council
Sf2	A student, representing his classmates	The Principal of the school
Sf3	Representative of Taman Angsana residents (fellow resident)	Manager of the construction company

The relationship between writer and receiver also concerns their power relative to each other. This is closely connected to the purpose of the letters studied, since relative power is a basic consideration in the exchange of goods and services or information between two parties. This exchange in turn is associated with another dimension of Tenor, speech functions—named command, offer, question and statement—which are conceptualised semantically according to four basic dimensions, as shown in Table 5.4 on the next page (reproduced from Table 4.6 in the previous chapter). The request for action in the model letters would thus be considered a

“command” since it involves the writer requesting some kind of service from the receiver.

Table 5.4: Definition of speech functions with typical Mood types

Commodity	Requesting	Providing
Goods and services	Command (imperative Mood)	Offer (No typical Mood)
Information	Question (interrogative Mood)	Statement (declarative Mood)

Source: compiled from Tables 6.1 and 6.3 in Eggins, 2004, pg. 146 - 147

Based on the relative power between the writer and receiver and how this affects the dynamics of the speech function of commanding, the letters may be put into three groups in general along a continuum: At one end of the continuum are letters in which the writer has no standing to command or make any demands of the receiver (Group *i* in the list below), and on the other end are letters in which the writer as a consumer has indirect power to demand action from the receiver as a service provider (Group *ii* in the list below). In between are letters in which the writer is not able to make any demands of the receiver, nor is the receiver obliged to acquiesce to the writer (Groups *iii* and *iv* in the list below). These differences in the dynamics of the writer-receiver relationship are reflected in the lexicogrammar of the letters concerned, as follows:

- i. At the ‘writer has no standing’ end of the continuum are letters Kf2, Mf2, Mf3, Mf4 and Sf2. This is reflected in the wording of the appeal for action at the end of the letters, which do not refer to the demand or stipulate any specific action; that is: *We sincerely hope that the school would take action...* (Stc 18 in Kf2), *We would like to appeal to your sense of fairness and hope that prompt action will be taken...* (Stc 22 in Mf2), *I hope you will take immediate action* (Stc 25 in Mf3 and Stc 31 in

Mf4) and *We sincerely hope that you will take prompt action...* (Stc 22 in Sf2).

- ii. On the ‘writer has indirect power’ end of the continuum are letters ATf1, Kf1, Kf3, Mf1 and Sf3. However, instead of commanding the receiver outright, the writer places himself in a position of dependence when appealing for action by using phrases which place the onus on the receiver to take action, like *We sincerely hope you will attend to this matter...* (Stc in ATf1), *I am looking forward to a great change...* (Stc 10 in Kf1), *We hope for immediate action* (Stc 12 in Kf3), *I hope that the relevant authorities will look into this matter* (Stc 31 in Mf1) and *We hope that by bringing these complaints to your attention, you will take quick action...* (Stc 11 in Sf3).
- iii. In between the two poles of the continuum are letters Kf4 and ATf2, in which the writer and receiver do not have a direct relationship in the social hierarchy and thus neither party is of higher social status than the other. The writer and receiver therefore exert no influence over one another in terms of the making or granting of demands. Hence, in order to ensure their demands are met, the writers have to invoke a third party that has the necessary status and power over the receiver: the police in Kf4, and unspecified authorities in ATf2.
- iv. In Sf3, the writer and receiver also do not have a direct relationship in the social hierarchy, but the writer does not involve a third party. Instead, the writer is ostensibly appealing to the receiver’s ethics by pointing out the negative effects of their actions, but there is also a veiled threat in the mention of illegal foreign workers employed by the company. This is in contrast to the writer of Sf1, who is complaining about a similar situation

but writes to the Chairman of the Town Council instead of the construction company that is directly responsible for the problematic situation.

Since the writer does not have the power to compel the receiver to take action in most cases, alternative means of persuasion can be found in many of the letters. This takes the form of statements containing modal auxiliaries, which justify the required action on the grounds that the receiver is morally responsible to alleviate the distress of those affected. This is exemplified by *Many of them now have to collect and store water to ensure there is enough for them to use* (Stc 8 in ATf1), *A small plate of fried mee costs RM1.50 and many poor students cannot afford it* (Stc 8 in Mf2) and *Children are using it as a place to play and this can be dangerous* (Stc 10 in Kf3). The same strategy is used for the suggested actions, for instance *Canteen workers should wear proper uniforms and observe cleanliness* (Stc 16 in Kf2), *They should also ensure that the canteen serves a variety of food at a reasonable price* (Stc 19 in Mf2) and *the food should be properly covered* (Stc 19 in Sf2). Likewise, the perceived imbalance in power between writer and receiver is also reflected in how explicitly the command is worded. The service that the writer is requesting from the receiver undoubtedly depends on the problem involved, but in many cases the exact nature of this service is not specified, as pointed out in section 5.1.1 earlier. The nominalised form *action* is used in 9 of the 13 letters instead of an equivalent Process, as illustrated by the following instances, in which the forms that are found in the model letters (italicised) are compared with the alternative forms that contain a Process (with single quotation marks).

- *we hope for immediate action* (Stc 12 in Kf3) rather than ‘we hope you repair the burst pipe immediately’

- *We ... look forward to your quick action* (Stc 12 in Kf4) rather than ‘we expect you to speak to your tenants quickly’
- *we now request the Town Council to take immediate action* (Stc 14 in Sf1) rather than ‘we now request the Town Council to order the developers to build their own access roads for their heavy vehicles’

Apart from the overall purpose of the letter to bring about corrective action to a problematic situation, the model letters can also be analysed in terms of speech functions based on the Mood of every clause in the text. This is based on the premise that there is a typical or default Mood type for each of the speech functions, as shown in Table 5.4 earlier. The analysis of speech functions in relation to clause Mood found that the speech functions were largely congruent with the Mood, as shown in the examples below:

- declarative Mood for statements: *Two weeks ago a report was lodged with your department about a burst pipe along the road leading to Taman Alam Indah* (Stc 2 in ATf1), *A small plate of fried mee costs RM1.50 and many poor students cannot afford it* (Stc 8 in Mf2), *The toilet bowls are always blocked and smelly* (Stc 16 in Mf4), *We as residents have been putting up with this unbearable situation for the past ten months* (Stc 3 in Sf1) and *The presence of these workers all over the housing estate has caused the residents to have sleepless nights* (Stc 9 in Sf3). In fact, almost all the congruent configurations found in the model formal letters were declarative Mood used for statements.
- imperative Mood for commands: There were only two examples, both in the same letter, i.e. *Hold talks and exhibitions based on themes* and *Be more innovative* (Stc 19 and 29 in Mf1).

- interrogative Mood for questions: No examples were found for this category. This is probably because the purpose of the letters is to bring about action rather than to get information.

However, one notable finding was that for commands, most of the configurations of speech function and Mood type in the letters were incongruent, particularly the declarative Mood being used for commands. This was found most frequently in the sections on the suggested course of action and the final request for action.

- In the suggestions, the declarative Mood was combined with modal verbs in four letters (Kf2, Mf1, Mf2 and Sf2). The underlying message was that the action stated is expected or obligated, based on logic, necessity or morality. This is therefore an indirect command, since the goal is actually to request that a particular action be carried out by the receiver. The examples are: *Canteen workers should wear proper uniforms and observe cleanliness* (Stc 16 in Kf2); *The food should be properly covered...* (Stc 19 in Sf2) and *...the collections of library books and magazines need to be expanded and improved upon, ...prominent speakers should be invited to speak on it* (Stc 2 and 20 in Mf1).
- More commonly, in the final request section of all the letters, the declarative Mood was applied to a Mental Process that projected the Material Process that construes the desired action. This is likewise an indirect command because an action is actually being requested of the receiver. This is exemplified by *We sincerely hope that the school would take action...* (Stc 18 in Kf2 and the other sentences in point (ii) on page 12, *The neighbours would be very grateful if you could speak to your*

*tenants..., We hope you will remind them to turn down the volume..., We would also appreciate if you could warn them... (Stc 9,10,11 in Kf4), We really hope that you can get the new cleaning equipment from the store...(Stc 23 in Mf3) and We hope that by bringing these complaints to your attention, you will take quick attention (Stc 11 in Sf3).*

The incongruent configurations of speech functions and Mood type described above may be interpreted as part of an Interpersonal strategy to appear less aggressive, particularly when the writer cannot assume that the receiver will meet his demands based on their social status and power relative to each other. The demand is thus made indirectly in terms of Mood type. Along with this strategy, the passive voice is also deployed towards the same end, for instance:

- In the examples *Your cooperation is greatly appreciated* (Stc 10 in ATf1 and Stc 13 in Kf3) and *...your sensibility in solving the problem is much thanked* (sic) (Stc 17 in Kf1), the receiver's role is foregrounded by using the passive voice, which puts the onus on the receiver to take the necessary action.
- The passive voice is also used to circumvent the receiver's responsibility for the problem and highlight the problem itself instead, as in *nothing has been done* (Stc 3 in ATf1), *If the water in the stream is polluted...* (Stc 8 in ATf2) and *no action has been taken* (Stc 3 in Kf3). Similarly, in the examples *the food served is not covered* (Stc 2 in Kf2), *the plates are oily and not washed properly* (Stc 11 in Mf2) and *the same menu is served day in and day out* (Stc 14 in Sf2), the passive voice has the function of highlighting the result of certain actions rather than the

people who caused it. This accentuates the seriousness of the problem to encourage prompt action from the receiver.

Although the passive voice was used quite a lot in the letters, human agency was not completely absent, since all the letters were in the first person, using the first person pronouns *I* and *we* extensively. The letters were therefore not totally impersonal. However, there was a generally low level of intimacy in the letters because no vocatives were found at all. The distance between writer and receiver was further accentuated by the use of phrases showing respect and deference. In particular, the phrase *would like to* is used to announce the writer's intention to voice his opinion, which seems to indicate that it is somehow unusual or irregular for the writer to speak (or write) plainly to the receiver. Table 5.5 below lists these distancing phrases and compares them to the straightforward alternatives.

Table 5.5: Distancing phrases found in model formal letters

Phrases	Location	Alternative
I would like to draw your attention to the above matter	Stc 1 in ATf1	Give attention to the above matter / You should pay attention to this matter / This letter is about the matter of...
We would like to bring to your attention the above matter	Stc 2 in ATf2	
I wish to bring to your attention	Stc 4 in Mf3	
I would like to bring your attention	Stc 5 in Mf3	
I am pleased to suggest	Stc 6 in Kf1	I suggest
I would like to lodge a complaint	Stc 1 in Kf2, Stc 1 in Mf2, Stc 1 in Sf2	This is my complaint
...we would like to suggest	Stc 14 in Kf2, Stc 18 in Mf2, Stc 16 in Sf2	We suggest
I regret to inform you that the tenants ... are very noisy	Stc 1 in Kf4	The tenants ... are very noisy

It is also possible that the alternative phrases in Table 5.5 were not used because they may be perceived as impolite and thus, inconsistent with the overall polite tone of the letters. Apart from this, the incongruent configurations of Mood type and



speech functions discussed earlier are likewise associated with politeness. Similarly, politeness was also achieved by means of modal auxiliaries. For instance, many of the distancing phrases mentioned earlier (Table 5F) contained the modal auxiliary ‘would’ (*I/we would like to*). Likewise, the modal auxiliaries used to refer to the inclination of the receiver to accede to the writer’s command indicated that this was dependent on the receiver’s volition, as in *the school would take action* (Stc 18 in Kf2), *if you could speak to your tenants* (Stc 9 in Kf4) and *you can get the new cleaning equipment* (Stc 23 in Mf3). Hence, the underlying message is that the writer is not forcing the receiver to comply with his wishes, as this would be considered rude. Even when the auxiliary verb ‘will’ which indicates certainty was used, this was in a clause projected by the Mental process ‘hope’, thus the receiver’s volition was still acknowledged. Some examples are: *we sincerely hope you will attend to this matter* (Stc 9 in ATf1), *We ... hope that prompt action will be taken regarding these matters.* (Stc 22 in Mf2) and *We hope... you will take quick action to solve our problems* (Stc 11 in Sf3). Lastly, some formulaic expressions of politeness were found: *We thank you for your cooperation and look forward to your quick action* (Stc 11 in Kf4) and *Your cooperation is appreciated* (Stc 10 in ATF1, Stc 8 in Kf1 and Stc 13 in Kf3).

### 5.1.3 Mode in model formal letters

The analysis of a text in terms of Mode in SF theory examines the nature of the interaction and the role played by language. The model formal letters all had the same characteristics of being written and part of a two-way communication in which the receiver was expected to respond at least by way of action, even if there was no written reply to the letter. From another point of view, the letters also showed the use of language as action rather than reflection, in that the letters were aimed at bringing about a change in the situation rather than merely describing the existing conditions.

Structurally speaking, the model letters had general characteristics that were typical of written language in terms of lexical density and grammatical intricacy, as presented by Eggins (2004). The numerical values representing these measures were calculated as follows: Lexical density is calculated by dividing the number of content words (words with intrinsic meanings of their own) by the total number of words in the text, whereas grammatical intricacy is obtained by dividing the total number of clauses by the total number of sentences in the text. To begin with, the letters had sentences that were fairly lexically dense at a mean of 43.38%. The individual letters had very similar levels of density (ranging from 43% to 46%) except for one letter (Mf4) that was particularly dense at 51.74%. The sentences were also grammatically not unusually intricate. The number of clauses (including embedded clauses) per sentence ranged from 1.5 to 2.5, with an average of 2.3 clauses per sentence. The statistics for lexical density and grammatical intricacy are found in Appendix 5F. Cohesion-wise, sentences were largely linked by proximity to each other, with relatively few conjunctions to link sentences. In fact, letter Sf3 did not contain any conjunctions at all. These conjunctions can be categorised according to the manner in which they join sentences to other sentences in a semantic sense (after Eggins, 2004, pg. 47-51).

- Elaborating conjunctions: these made up the bulk of the conjunctions found, being present in 10 letters. Sequence connectors were particularly common, for instance *firstly*, *besides*, *secondly*, *moreover*, and *finally* in Kf2. Sentences joined with these conjunctions further clarified the meaning in an opening sentence, usually the various aspects of the general problem.
- Extending conjunctions: these included instances where a sentence added to the meaning of the preceding sentences or contained contrasting information. Examples of the adding type are *in addition* (Mf3),

*moreover* (Mf2) and *apart from that* (Sf2), and the contrasting type, *but* (Kf4), *however* (Sf1) and *otherwise* (ATf2).

- Enhancing conjunctions: these were the least most commonly found type. However, all these conjunctions developed the meaning of the preceding sentences in the same way: indicating a causal relationship by presenting a consequence. Some examples are: *They also do not clear the dustbins and rubbish daily. This is very unhygienic. As a result, there is a foul stench whenever we eat in the canteen* (Stc 15 – 17 in Mf2) and *If the water in the stream is polluted, it will... Then, we will lose another place for...* (Stc 8 – 9 in ATf2)

Apart from conjunctions, the structural resource of cohesive references also contributed to the overall cohesion of the letters. This includes third-person pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and comparative structures (Thompson, 2004). Of these, comparative structures were the least common; all of the examples were exophoric references found in Mf1 (*more willing* in Stc 8, *the same format* in Stc 12, *the other section* and *the same table* in Stc 24, as well as *more innovative* in Stc 29). Conversely, third-person pronouns were used in all but two of the letters (Mf3 and Sf3). As for demonstrative pronouns, these were mostly used for anaphoric reference, as illustrated below:

- The nominal groups *this matter* and *these matters* referred back to the entire contents of the letter and were used in ATf1, Mf1, Mf2 and Kf1. This mirrored the nominal group *the matter above* which referred to the topic or title line at the beginning of the letter, which was found in ATf1, ATf2 and Kf3.

- The pronoun *this* was used to directly point to a matter mentioned in the previous sentence in Sf2 and Kf2 (referring to flies and cheaper food), Sf1 (referring to traffic congestion and the 17 accidents that have occurred), Mf2 (referring to flies and uncleared waste), Kf3 (referring to the water shortage and children playing on a muddy road), and ATf2 (referring to the pollution of the stream).
- Nominal groups containing demonstrative pronouns served the same purpose, as seen in Sf1 (this unbearable situation) Sf3 (these activities, these workers, these complaints) Mf1 (people can go there) Mf2 (these workers, these matters) Kf4 (these loud noises) Mf3 (those problems) and Kf3 (those unwanted pests).

Another structural feature is nominalization, which tends to be found more in written texts than spoken discourse (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Cullip, 2000; Halliday, 1989). This feature was found in all but one (Kf1) of the 13 letters studied. Some effects of using nominalization have already been discussed earlier under Field (Section 5.1.1) and Tenor (Section 5.1.2). Hence what will be discussed here is the role of nominalization in the rhetorical organisation of the letters. Mostly, nominalization was used as a device to summarise what was previously stated to facilitate the discussion of cause and effect. This was seen in ATf1, where the nominalization *a lot of inconvenience and disruption to our daily routine* (Stc 4) summarises the problems caused by the burst pipe mentioned in a preceding sentence (Stc 2), thus setting up the cause and effect chain. These problems were then elaborated on in the subsequent sentences. In Kf4 (Stc 5), this use of nominalization also enabled parallel structures in a list of effects. The first effect was stated as *parents have difficulties putting their young children to bed* instead of 'it is difficult for parents to put their young children to bed',

which makes ‘parents’ the Subject of the clause. As a result, the clause has a parallel structure with the second and third clauses in the list, which begin with ‘the older children’ (*the older children cannot concentrate on their schoolwork*) and ‘working adults’ (*working adults cannot find relaxation in their own homes after a hard day’s work*) respectively.

With regard to the organisation of the model letters as messages, the complete analysis of Theme types in the letters is found in Appendix 5G. Apart from the obligatory Topical Theme in every clause, the next most common type of Theme was Textual for organisational purposes. There were very few Interpersonal Themes, which is consistent with the impersonal tone of the letters discussed in the previous section on Tenor. In fact, only three Interpersonal Themes were found in the model formal letters, all modal adjuncts:

- *sincerely* in letters Kf2 (Stc 18) and Sf2 (Stc 20)—*We sincerely hope that the school would take prompt action...*), used to indicate honesty for the purpose of persuasion.
- *even* in Mf1 (Stc 26—*Some libraries even have a coffee corner...*), used to indicate counter-expectancy, i.e. exceeding what is expected.

In terms of typicality, it was found that Themes were mostly unmarked in the letters, with marked Themes making up only approximately one fifth of the Themes in total. However, all the model letters contained at least one marked Theme, with the highest number (seven) being found in letter Kf3. The bulk of these were Transitivity elements put in the Theme position, with a few Textual and Interpersonal examples. In some cases, an entire subordinate clause was put in Theme position at the beginning of a hypotactic clause complex (or sentence), in which case the entire clause may be considered the Theme at clause level for that particular clause complex. This also

applies to cases of preposed subjects (Thompson, 2004), where the subject is mentioned in a separate clause. The various types of marked Themes are shown in Table 5.6 below with examples.

Table 5.6: Marked Themes in model formal letters

Type of marked Theme		Clause	Location
Transitivity elements in Topical Theme position	Goal as Topical Theme	<i>the food</i> served is not covered	Stc 2 in Kf2
		the collections of library books and magazines need to be expanded	Stc 2 in Mf1
		<i>many activities</i> can be organised	Stc 15 in Mf1
		<i>the same menu</i> is served day in and day out	Stc 14 in Sf2
		The deafening noise of these activities is further compounded by the noise	Stc 4 in Sf3
	Circumstantial Adjunct as Topical Theme	<i>Two weeks ago</i> a report was lodged	Stc 1 in ATf1
		<i>till today</i> no action has been taken	Stc 3 in Kf3
		<i>Last week</i> , a few of us had diarrhoea	Stc 6 in Mf2
		<i>In the afternoon</i> , students and teachers feel hot and uncomfortable	Stc 15 in Mf3
		<i>As the Head Prefect</i> , I represent all the students	Stc 1 in Mf4
Interpersonal Theme		<i>Surely</i> , librarians should be more willing to assist users	Stc 8 in Mf1
		We sincerely hope	Stc 20 in Sf2
Textual Theme		<i>Otherwise</i> , we have no choice	Stc 11 in ATf2
		<i>In fact</i> , a few of us were down with diarrhoea	Stc 6 in Kf2
Clause level Theme	Hypotactic clause in Theme position	If the water in the stream is polluted, it will...	Stc 8 in ATf2
		As sounds travel easily through thin walls and in a quiet neighbourhood, the neighbours can no longer...	Stc 4 in Kf4
		As there is a lack of co-operation...I humbly suggest	Stc 24 in Mf4
	Preposed subject	As for the people living in the flats, they face a great problem	Stc 6 in Kf3
		<i>The other section</i> , there are the same table and uncomfortable chairs	Stc 24 in Mf1

Thematic progression in the models letters was generally uncomplicated. Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 on pages 144 to 146 illustrate the two most common patterns (zigzag and reiterated) and one example of the least commonly found pattern (multiple Rheme), using the terms from Eggins (2004):

- Figure 5.1 – zigzag pattern: an element in the Rheme of the preceding clause is taken up as the Theme of the following clause.
- Figure 5.2 – reiterated Theme: the Themes of multiple clauses in sequence refer to the same things, although it may be worded differently.
- Figure 5.3 – multiple Rheme: various elements in the Rheme of a clause are taken up as the Themes of following clauses.

Figure 5.1: Example of zigzag pattern of Thematic progression in a model formal letter

<b>Zigzag pattern of Thematic progression in ATf1</b>			
Note: Themes are in bold and elements in the Rheme which are picked up in the Theme of the following sentence are underlined.			
<b>On behalf of the residents of Taman Alam Indah</b>	I would like to draw your attention to the above <u>matter</u> which has affected <i>the residents of Taman Alam Indah</i> .		
<b>Two weeks ago</b>	a <u>report</u> was lodged with your department about a burst pipe along the road leading to Taman Alam Indah.		
<b>(However) nothing</b>	has been done to rectify <u>the problem</u> .		
<b>The burst pipe</b>	causing <u>a lot of inconvenience and disruption to our daily routine</u> .		
	For instance, <u>many of us</u>	are unable to run our automatic washing machines or use the shower.	
	<b>Those living in flats</b>	are <u>worse off</u> .	
		<b>The low water pressure</b>	has reduced the water flow to a trickle.
	<b>Many of them</b>	now have to collect and store water to ensure there is enough for them to use.	
<b>We</b>	sincerely hope <u>you will attend to this matter</u> personally and promptly to ease our burden.		
<b>Your cooperation</b>	is greatly appreciated.		



Figure 5.2: Example of reiterated Theme pattern of Thematic progression in a model formal letter

Reiterated Theme pattern of Thematic progression in Kf4		
Note: Themes are in bold and elements in the Rheme which are picked up in the Theme of the following sentence are underlined.		
* 2 Themes are reiterated: 'tenants' and 'neighbours'		
	I regret to inform you that the <u>tenants</u> living in your house at No. 38, Jln. Tebrau, Tmn. Pelangi are very noisy	
	<b>The four young men staying in the house</b> often turn on the volume of the radio and television to the maximum every evening.	
	<b>They</b> often continue to play <u>loud music</u> from the hi-fi set until late at night, sometimes up to 1.00 a.m.	
	(As) <b>sounds</b>	travel easily through thin walls and in a quiet neighbourhood,
Neighbours	<b>the neighbours living along Parents</b>	can no longer put up with these <u>loud noises</u>
	<b>the older children</b>	have difficulties putting their young children to bed,
	<b>(while) working adults</b>	cannot concentrate on their schoolwork
	<b>A few elderly neighbours</b>	cannot find relaxation in their own homes after a hard day's work.
	<b>(But) the advice</b> has fallen on deaf ears	
	<b>They</b> ignored the advice and continue to behave as before.	
Neighbours	<b>The neighbours</b>	would be very grateful if you could speak to your tenants personally.
	<b>We</b>	hope you will remind them to turn down the volume of the radio, television and the hi-fi set.
	<b>We</b>	would also appreciate if you could warn them that the police will be informed if they continue to disturb the neighbourhood.
	<b>We</b>	thank you for your cooperation and look forward to your quick action.

Figure 5.3: Example of multiple Rheme pattern of Thematic progression in a model formal letter

<b>Multiple Rheme pattern of Thematic progression in Sf3</b>	
Note: Themes are in bold and elements in the Rheme which are picked up in the Theme of the following sentence are underlined.	
<i>* 'annoyance' in the Rheme of the third sentence was taken up in the Themes of 4 following clauses.</i>	
I	am writing on behalf of the <u>residents of Taman Angsana</u> .
We	are writing this letter to voice our dissatisfaction with <u>the construction activities</u> which have caused considerable anxiety to the residents.
The construction activities which begin in the morning and continue until dusk	is a constant source of <u>annoyance</u> to the residents.
The deafening noise of these activities	is further compounded by the noise made by the speeding lorries which move in and out of the construction every now and then.
Many residents	are now complaining about about headaches, migraines and nausea.
Another health hazard	on the rise.
It	has also come to our attention that some of the workers employed by your company are <u>illegal workers</u> who do not have proper work permits.
The recent break-ins reported in our housing estate	have become a nagging worry
The presence of these workers all over the housing estate	has caused the residents to have sleepless nights
It	is also an intrusion into our privacy
We	hope that these complaints to your attention, you will take quick action to solve our problems

## 5.2 Findings on Register in Model Informal letters

This section reports on the findings from the analysis of fourteen different letters which had been used by the teachers studied as model informal letters. As with the section on model formal letters, the following sub-sections are likewise arranged according to the Register components of Field, Tenor and Mode.

### 5.2.1 *Field in model informal letters*

The model informal letters studied had two different basic purposes: sharing the writer's past and current experiences with the receiver in the first five letters, and in the remainder, the writer giving advice to the receiver. This categorisation of the model informal letters into two groups is used throughout sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, as many of the Register traits in the letters differ according to their purpose. The Experiential domains for the letters are summarised in Table 5.7 on the next page. From column 2 of the table, it can be seen that the situations are well within a typical student's range of life experiences, particularly those related to visits and effective study habits. These situations were also fairly common, resulting in a low level of technicality. However, there were some exceptions which contained relatively formal words and phrases (Ki4, Si2) and even some that contained scientific terms (Mi3, Si3). These unusual words and phrases are highlighted in column 4 in Table 5.7, and may be compared to some less formal alternatives in column 5.

Table 5.7: Experiential domain and lexical items used in model informal letters

1	2	3	4	5
Purpose	Letter	Situation	Formal lexical items used	Less formal alternatives
Sharing events experienced	Wi2	Life in a foreign country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not applicable</li> </ul>
	Si1	A visit by a foreign friend		
	Ki2	A visit to Langkawi		
	Ki3	A trip to Ipoh		
	Wi4	A trip to Ipoh		
Giving advice	Ki4	Dealing with loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please accept our condolence</li> <li>• offering our prayers</li> <li>• how to overcome your depression</li> <li>• results were affected by scenario</li> <li>• Please put your trust in God and make a lot of prayer</li> <li>• all the livings have to leave this earthly world someday, somehow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are so sorry for your loss</li> <li>• we are praying</li> <li>• how to deal with your sadness</li> <li>• results were affected by what happened</li> <li>• Do trust in God and pray more</li> <li>• everyone has to go someday, somehow</li> </ul>
	Mi2	Dealing with stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not applicable</li> </ul>
	Mi3	Healthy weight loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The vitamins and fibres in fruits and vegetables is good for our body.</li> <li>• removing the skin and fat</li> <li>• reduces the amount of fat absorbed by our body</li> <li>• to reduce the amount of oil we consume</li> <li>• dehydration</li> <li>• carbonated drinks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruits and vegetables are good for us / good for our body.</li> <li>• taking away the skin and fat</li> <li>• we / our bodies take in less fat</li> <li>• to cut down how much oil we eat</li> <li>• --</li> <li>• fizzy / gassy / soft drinks</li> </ul>

Table 5.7: Experiential domain and lexical items used in model informal letters (continued)

1	2	3	4	5
Purpose	Letter	Situation	Formal lexical items used	Less formal alternatives
Giving advice	Mi4	Effective study habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not applicable</li> </ul>
	Mi5	Effective study habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not applicable</li> </ul>
	Si2	Effective study habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I hope this letter finds you healthy and in good spirits</li> <li>• I was rather distressed</li> <li>• your inability to perform well in your studies</li> <li>• I sympathise with your situation</li> <li>• hinder your determination to do well</li> <li>• do not underestimate your abilities and intelligence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I hope you are healthy and happy when you receive this letter</li> <li>• I was quite upset</li> <li>• you didn't do well in your studies</li> <li>• I feel bad for you</li> <li>• stop you from wanting/striving to do well</li> <li>• don't look down on yourself / what you can do</li> </ul>
	Si2	Effective study habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain regular revision of your subjects</li> <li>• do not hesitate to enrol yourself in a good tuition centre</li> <li>• be more confident and have faith in yourself</li> <li>• enhance your vocabulary</li> <li>• you would see marked improvement in your grades</li> <li>• do not hesitate to contact me if you need further assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keep up regular revision</li> <li>• sign up in a good tuition centre right away</li> <li>• believe in yourself more</li> <li>• improve your vocabulary</li> <li>• your grades would improve greatly / by leaps and bounds</li> <li>• feel free to contact me if you need more help</li> </ul>

Table 5.7: Experiential domain and lexical items used in model informal letters (continued)

1	2	3	4	5
Purpose	Letter	Situation	Formal lexical items used	Less formal alternatives
Giving advice	Si3	Losing weight safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discovered</li> <li>requires</li> <li>food that is high in fat content</li> <li>an effective weight control programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>found</li> <li>takes / needs</li> <li>oily food / food with a lot of oil</li> <li>--</li> </ul>
	Wi1	Effective study habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable</li> </ul>
	Wi3	Choosing the right stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable</li> </ul>

Transitivity-wise, the model informal letters had slightly different compositions in terms of Process types depending on their basic purpose. Generally, Relational and Mental Processes occurred the most frequently in all the letters, making up more than half of the total number of Processes. These were used to describe relationships and emotions. Appendix 5C contains the detailed breakdown in percentages of Process types in all the letters. A few examples also contained minor clauses (without a Process) at the end of the letter: *Bye* (Stc 18 in Ki2, Stc 37 in Mi4) *All the best* (Stc 24 in Mi5) and *Good luck* (Stc 36 in Wi3)

When the two groups of informal letters are considered separately, the letters describing experiences were less homogenous in that there did not appear to be a distinctive pattern in the distribution of Process types across these letters. It is also noted that there are only five letters in this group, hence they are very likely not as representative as the nine letters of advice. One observation that can be made, however, is that two of the letters, Wi2 and Ki2, had an unusually high number of Relational processes, due to repetitive sentence patterns of Carrier + Process: Relational + Attribute, for example *They are sisters / Annie is twenty years old and a dancer* (Stc 12 & 13 in Wi2) and *My aunt is a nurse / They have two children, Aliah, 16 and Afiq, 14* (Stc 3 & 4 in Ki2). Wi2 had eighteen instances of this pattern, while Ki2 had eleven. These two letters were also strikingly simple, considering that they were being used for secondary level learners.

The other group of letters had more discernible patterns of Process types. Although these patterns were not uniform across all the letters per se, some general trends could be seen, as listed below:

- Mental Processes were used quite frequently to describe the feelings and opinions of the parties involved, as illustrated by *I think they are among the best people to talk to* (Stc 11 in Ki4), *So you would not have to*

worry... (Stc 24 in Mi2), *I greatly hope that my tips... will benefit you* (Stc 35 in Mi3), *I always believe that a person who fails...* (Stc 9 in Mi5), *I sympathise with your situation* (Stc 5 in Si2) and *I know that you feel disappointed* (Stc 3 in Wi3).

- Emotional states were also described with Relational Processes, as in *I am glad / I am very sorry* (Stc 1 & 5 in Ki4), *...will make you happy* (Stc 31 in Mi2), *you are very concerned about...* (Stc 1 in Mi3), *I was shocked / I am very concerned* (Stc 3 & 4 in Mi4) and *be more confident* (Stc 17 in Si2).
- A pattern of Material and Relational Processes used in succession could be seen when certain actions were recommended or advised against, and then followed by a description of the effects of these actions. Some examples are *join other sports or co-curriculum activities in school to cheer up yourself. They could help you forget about your depression* (Stc 16 & 17 in Ki4); *you must take balanced meals. You will be healthy and present in school at all times* (Stc 8 & 9 in Mi2); and *Engage in sports activities so that you are physically active, which enables you to be mentally active* (Stc 18 in Si2).
- Although the model letters of advice are written texts, numerous Verbal Processes could also be found when the writer ‘speaks’ figuratively to the receiver, as in *I would like to advise you* (Stc 16 in Ki4), *I suggest you learn* (Stc 17 in Mi2), *I want to remind you* (Stc 34 in Mi3), *tell me how you are coping* (Stc 35 in Mi4), and *I would also encourage you* (Stc 12 in Si2).



The relative frequency of Mental and Verbal Processes corresponds with the many human Participants in the letters, since both these Process types typically occur with sentient, i.e. human Participants. However, the two groups of letters had different compositions of Participants. The letters describing experiences had more human than non-human Participants and all these letters referred to these Participants by personal names. Conversely, the advice letters had more non-human than human Participants and only one (Ki4) of these letters actually contained personal names. Instead, the Participants in the advice letters were referred to by means of noun phrases and pronouns. This difference is illustrated in Table 5.8 below, which shows the list of Participants in two letters, Ki3 (describing experience) and Wi3 (advice). The human Participants are grouped by grammatical category and the number in brackets indicates the number of times that particular Participant is mentioned in the letter.

Table 5.8: Comparison of Participants in letters Ki3 and Wi3

Type	Participants in letter Ki3 (describing experiences)		Participants in letter Wi3 (giving advice)	
Non-human participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• healthy and happy</li> <li>• at grandma's house</li> <li>• aunty's cooking</li> <li>• sumptuous</li> <li>• one of the highlights</li> <li>• the wonderful trip to Penang and Langkawi</li> <li>• the videotape</li> <li>• school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the coming exams</li> <li>• his SPM</li> <li>• my dog</li> <li>• eight puppies</li> <li>• your results</li> <li>• very good</li> <li>• disappointed</li> <li>• how disappointed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high fever</li> <li>• your poorer results</li> <li>• the problem</li> <li>• my advice</li> <li>• which stream</li> <li>• a bright student</li> <li>• well</li> <li>• Additional Mathematics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a difficult subject</li> <li>• able</li> <li>• prepared</li> <li>• a problem</li> <li>• my revision</li> <li>• in the middle of my exams</li> <li>• my advice</li> <li>• some help</li> </ul>

Table 5.8: Comparison of Participants in letters Ki3 and Wi3 (continued)

Type	Grammatical category	Participants in letter Ki3 (describing experiences)	Participants in letter Wi3 (giving advice)
Human Participants	Pronouns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you (4)</li> <li>• you all (1)</li> <li>• I (3)</li> <li>• Everyone (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we (10)</li> <li>• us (2)</li> <li>• he(1)</li> </ul>
	Names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jason</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you (12)</li> <li>• I (8)</li> <li>• me (2)</li> </ul>

In spite of the differences in distributions of human and non-human Participants, agency was clear in the bulk of the letters, even in those that had fewer human than non-human Participants. Only three instances of the passive voice in which agency was unspecified were found in the letters: *you will not be tempted to finish all the leftovers* (Stc 11 in Si3), *so that he will be forgiven and be placed among the souls of the faithful* (Stc 8 in Ki4) and *I was told there are about two hundred species* (Stc 18 in Si1).

As for the types of Circumstances found in the model informal letters, the most frequently occurring type was Circumstances of location; for instance in Mi2, *in this letter* (Stc 7), *in class* (Stc 12, 14 and 20), *on time* (Stc 22), *at all times* (Stc 30) and *soon* (Stc 39). When the two groups of informal letters were considered separately, it was observed that the letters of advice had more Circumstances of manner than the letters describing experiences. Some examples of these Circumstances of manner (also in Mi2) are *well* (Stc 15, 26 and 36), *in groups* (Stc 27), *hard* (Stc 34), and *calm* (Stc 36). This might be because the writer needs to be precise in describing the exact course of action that should be taken by the receiver. Appendix 5E contains the summary of Circumstance types in all the letters studied.

Thus far, three differences in aspects of Transitivity between the two groups of informal letters have been discussed: the distribution of types of Processes, Participants and Circumstances. One more difference was observed in the dominant tense used in

the letters. The present tenses were used in the letters for giving advice, mostly in the sense of ‘universal truth’ in statements like *it is God’s will that all the livings have to leave this earthly world someday, somehow* (Stc 15 in Ki4), *The study timetable helps you to manage your time well* (Stc 26 in Mi2), *Carbonated drinks contain a lot of sugar* (Stc 24 in Mi3), *A desk with papers, books and files strewn about can also distract you* (Stc 18 in Mi4) and *There are many ways of doing revision* (Stc 15 in Wi1). Many of these statements were also modified with modal auxiliaries, as discussed later in section 5.2.2. On the other hand, although the present tenses were also used in the letters describing experiences, more past tenses were used to position the events temporally, for instance *They took my family to a beach* (Stc 13 in Ki2), *We spent the whole afternoon shopping* (Stc 22 in Si1) and *Aunty’s cooking was indeed sumptuous* (Stc 8 in Ki3).

### 5.2.2 Tenor in model informal letters

The starting place for the discussion of Tenor is the relationship between the writer and receiver in the letters, as shown in Table 5.9 below. This relationship is quite consistent in all the model informal letters, wherein the writer and receiver are peers in a relationship of frequent contact and high affective involvement. Accordingly, in terms of power, the writer-receiver relationships are likewise in an equal, non-hierarchic position relative to one another.

Table 5.9: Relationship between writer and receiver in model formal letters

Letter	Writer’s identity	Receiver’s identity
Sharing experiences	Wi2	A female student in a foreign country
	Si1	Receiver’s sister
	Ki2	Receiver’s classmate
	Ki3	Receiver’s nephew
	Wi4	Receiver’s nephew

Table 5.9: Relationship between writer and receiver in model formal letters (continued)

Letter		Writer's identity	Receiver's identity
Giving advice	Ki4	Receiver's friend	Rosmah
	Mi2	Receiver's friend	Ronaldo
	Mi3	*	*
	Mi4	An older friend or relative, also studying	Shukri
	Mi5	An older friend or relative, also studying	Razif
	Si2	Receiver's friend	Hashim
	Si3	*	*
	Wi1	An older friend or relative, also studying	Razif
	Wi3	An older friend or relative, also studying	Nico

\* In these letters, the details of the writer and receiver were left out and students were supposed to fill in the information themselves.

The balanced power of the writer and receiver in the model informal letters affects the dynamics of the speech functions to a considerable extent in the letters of advice, but not in the others. As discussed in section 5.1.2, relative power is a basic consideration in the exchange of goods and services. In the letters sharing experiences, no action is required on the receiver's part. The aspect of relative power is therefore not a major issue in these letters. On the other hand, in the letters of advice, the writer can be seen as commanding the receiver, albeit indirectly, because the basic purpose of the letters is to request a certain course of action by the receiver. Since the writer and receiver are peers, the writer ostensibly has no position to command the receiver. The speech function of 'command' is thus modified in two ways in these letters. Firstly, it is indicated in many of the letters that the receiver has either requested or admitted that he needed the writer to suggest appropriate actions to deal with the problematic situation that he is facing. The former is exemplified by *I would like to emphasise a few things since you have asked my advice on this issue* (Stc 7 in Si2), and for the latter, *I heard that you need some advice on how to overcome your depression on losing your late grandfather* (Stc 9 in Ki4). The writer is thus given power to command the receiver by the receiver himself. Secondly, the writer's commands are presented as suggestions,

indicating that the receiver is not bound to abide by these commands. In some of the letters, this is done by explicitly stating that the actions mentioned are suggestions, for instance *if you follow all the suggestions I have outlined* (Stc 24 in Si2) and *I suggest you munch on a fruit* (Stc 19 in Mi3) or by referring to the advised actions as shared information, as in *So let me share with you some important study skills* (Stc 6 in Mi4) and *I greatly hope that my tips on losing weight in a healthy way will benefit you* (Stc 35 in Mi3). Only letters Mi5, Si3 and Wi1 did not use any of these three strategies. As it is, once it had been generally established that the writer was about to impart some advice, the advised actions in the letters were then presented in three main ways:

- The most frequently occurring combinations were commands with imperative Mood, which is a congruent configuration of Mood type and speech function, but not typical of suggestions. Examples are: *choose a quiet and conducive place to study / make it a point to study at the same place each time / keep your files and notes within easy reach* (Stc 7, 12 and 21 in Mi4), *Include all your subjects / Give emphasis to subjects you are weak in* (Stc 10 and 11 in Mi5 and Wi1), and *spend some money on revision books / be more confident / engage in sports activities* (Stc 11, 17 and 18 in Si2). Nevertheless, sentences with this configuration were always found together with the second type mentioned below, never in isolation.
- Less commonly found was an incongruent configuration of Mood type and speech function—commands with declarative Mood—which is consistent with giving suggestions, since the command is thus indirectly made. These also contain modal auxiliaries, as seen in the following examples: *you have to be strong facing this kind of situation* (Stc 13 in Ki4), *you ought to go for exercise at least three times a week* (Stc 13 in

Mi2), *you must not go starving to lost weight* (Stc 33 in Mi3), *you should tidy up your study table and bookshelves when they are messy* (Stc 20 in Mi4), and *you can also have group discussions* (Stc 17 in Mi5). This use of modal auxiliaries is discussed in more detail later.

- There were also two instances of statements with declarative Mood, which could nevertheless be interpreted as extremely indirect commands because they present certain actions on the receiver's part as being right or preferred in some way. These are found in the same letter, Mi4—Stc 16 and 17—(*It is also important for you to monitor the noise levels when you study. Therefore, it is advisable to switch off your hand-phone, television and radio when you want to study...*)

Apart from the incongruent configurations described above, the advice letters also contained several sentences with clauses containing Mental processes that functioned as Mood Adjuncts, since the proposition that is expressed is not found in the Mental process but rather the clause that it projects, or in the words of Halliday and Matthiessen, “the modality is realized by the projecting mental clause and the proposition by the projected idea clause” (2004, p. 614). To apply the explanation given in Halliday and Matthiessen (op. cit.), the example *I believe you have good and loving parents* (Stc 10 in Ki4) is semantically a variant of ‘You must have good and loving parents’ rather than a first-person version of ‘He believes in the fact that you have good and loving parents’. Other examples are: *I think they are among the best people* (Stc 11 in Ki4), *I always believe that a person who fails to plan...* (Stc 9 in Mi5 and Wi1), *I believe that you will be able to cope with it / I do think that your results were good* (Stc 22 and 3 in Wi3; Stc 3 is with a Finite for emphasis). These Mood Adjuncts mark the

corresponding projected clause as the writer's personal opinion, implying that the writer is not imposing his point of view upon the receiver.

In comparison, it is noted that no incongruences in Mood type and speech function were found in the letters sharing experiences. These letters also contained very few modal auxiliaries. In fact only 4 sentences containing modal auxiliaries were found throughout all the model informal letters: *we have to start revising* (Stc 12 in Ki3 and Stc 9 in Wi4) and *she must have bought a whole cartload of gifts / I have to stop here* (Stc 24 and 29 in Si1). This is in contrast with the letters of advice, in which modal auxiliaries played a major part in adjusting the interaction in the letters. The most outstanding use of modal auxiliaries was as an indirect way of getting the receiver to do something by stating the action as a necessity or obligation. Table 5.10 below presents some examples of the various ways in which modal auxiliaries were used in the letters of advice, based on Thompson (2004, pg. 67-72).

Table 5.10: Examples of modal auxiliaries used in model informal letters of advice

Aspect	Modal auxiliaries	Sentences
Probability	could	<i>they could help you forget about your depression</i> (Stc 17 in Ki4)
	would can may	<i>you would not have to worry about failing</i> (Stc 24 in Mi2) <i>Too much sugar... can cause obesity</i> (Stc 28 in Mi4) <i>You may even go to the library</i> (Stc 10 in Mi4)
Usuality	will	<i>Burning the midnight oil at the last minute will not enable you to get good results</i> (Stc 14 in Wi1)
	should	<i>Knowing you, this should not be a problem</i> (Stc 10 in Wi3)
Obligation (Necessity)	have to	<i>We all have to accept that lives would never last forever</i> (Stc 15 in Ki4) <i>you don't have to study all the time</i> (Stc 19 in Mi5)
	must should ought to	<i>you must pay attention in class</i> (Stc 10 in Mi2) <i>you should study consistently</i> (Stc 12 in Wi1) <i>you ought to go for exercise</i> (Stc 13 in Mi2) <i>you ought not let your bad grades prevent you from striving harder</i> (Stc 10 in Si2)
	need to	<i>you need to have good friends</i> (Stc 17 in Mi2) <i>so that you need not waste valuable time looking for them</i> (Stc 17 in Mi4)

Table 5.10: Examples of modal auxiliaries used in model informal letters of advice (continued)

Aspect	Modal auxiliaries	Sentences
Obligation (Morality)	ought to	<i>they ought to respect parents and teachers</i> (Stc 30 in Mi2)
Inclination (desire)	would	* Discussed later under ‘distancing phrases’
Inclination (volition)	may would	<i>with whom you may want to share your sadness</i> (Stc 10 in Ki4) <i>I would also encourage you to seek advice and help from friends</i> (Stc 12 in Si2)

The final aspect to be discussed under Tenor is intimacy in the model informal letters. A general sense of intimacy was created in the letters by means of using the first person on the writer’s part, even though relatively few vocatives were used. In fact, only six letters contained personal names within the text of the letter other than in the salutation. Even then, the names were addressed to the receiver only in Ki4; the personal names were part of the experiences being described in Wi2, Ki2, Si2, Ki3 and Wi4. However, this intimacy is contradicted by the presence in some model informal letters of distancing phrases such as those used in the model formal letters—with the ‘I would like to’ phrase: *I would like to advise you* (Stc 16 in Ki4), *I would like to share with you* / *I would like to encourage you* (Stc 7 and 18 in Mi2), *I would like to share with you* / *I would like to say* (Stc 4 and 12 in Mi3), and *I would like to emphasise a few things* (Stc 7 in Si2). Other examples were: *we want to thank you* / *We want to invite you all* (Stc 6 and 15 in Ki3, Stc 3 and 12 in Wi4) and *I want to remind you* (Stc 34 in Mi3). The effect is that those letters which contain the distancing phrases have a more formal tone than the others.

With regard to the letters of advice, the intimacy in the letters is consistent with the higher incidences of commands with the imperative Mood discussed earlier, since this implies that the writer is sufficiently intimate with the receiver to give him



some direct commands. Direct commands are especially common in the concluding sections of the letters as an invitation to respond to the correspondence, as in *Write to me soon* (Stc 22 in Wi2, Stc 19 in Ki2) and *don't forget to stay in touch* (Stc 24 in Mi5 and Stc 23 in Wi1). Nevertheless, to show that the writer is not being deliberately impolite, these direct commands were sometimes preceded with 'please', as in *Please accept our condolences / Please put your trust in God / Please convey our deepest condolence one more time* (Stc 11, 14 and 21 in Ki4) and *Please maintain regular revision / Please do not hesitate to contact me* (Stc 11 and 25 in Si2); or with an emphatic Finite to show sincerity, as in *Do remember* (Stc 26 in Mi4), *Do write often* (Stc 30 in Si1), *Do call or write* (Stc 16 in Ki3) and *Do write and tell me how you are coping* (Stc 35 in Mi4). The importance placed on politeness was also noticeable in the numerous formulaic expressions of politeness and benedictions found in the concluding sections of the letters, for instance *I wish you a happier future* (Stc 20 in Ki4), *Do take care / I hope to hear from you soon* (Stc 37 and 38 in Mi2), *I hope everyone at home is doing well and give my love to them* (Stc 36 in Mi4), *All the best* (Stc 24 in Mi5) and *I wish you good luck and best wishes in the coming examination* (Stc 26 in Si2).

### 5.2.3 Mode in model informal letters

In terms of Mode, the two groups of model informal letters had broad similarities as well as differences. The letters were all undoubtedly written forms of communication, but the advice letters represented language as action whereas the descriptive letters represented language as reflection. This is because the writer's intention in the former is to bring about a certain course of action by the receiver, versus presenting a description of events from his perspective in the latter. As for the lexical and structural properties of the letters based on the same calculations explained earlier in section 5.1.3 (pg. 138), the informal letters as a whole had a mean lexical density of

39.2%, and in terms of grammatical complexity, sentences had 2.1 clauses (including embedded clauses) on average, with an overall range from 1.2 to 2.9 clauses per sentence. Taken separately, the letters describing experiences were more lexically dense at a mean of 41.55% compared to the 39.2% of the advice letters. However, the letters of advice were grammatically more intricate, with an average of 2.3 clauses per sentence against the 1.8 clauses per sentence in the letters describing experiences.

At this point, it is noted that a comparison of the figures for lexical density and structural intricacy indicates that the informal letters show stronger characteristics of spoken language compared to the formal ones based on the general comparison found in Eggins (2004, pg. 98). However, this difference is superficial and cannot be taken as more than an observation specific to this investigation, since the sample size invalidates any generalisations. Appendix 5F contains the statistics for lexical density and grammatical intricacy in all the letters.

Based on these structural properties alone, the model informal letters were not strikingly unusual as written texts. Nevertheless, some letters also contained elements of spoken discourse as well, for instance the minor clauses without Processes mentioned in section 5.2.1 and continuatives like *Right, I have to...* (Stc 34 in Mi4), *One last word of advice.* (Stc 19 in Si3—minor clause) and *Well, that was a good choice* (Stc 12 in Si1). Other features suggesting oral discourse are contractions like *I'm fine* (Stc 2 in Wi2), *he won't be going anywhere* (Stc 10 in Wi4) and *how's everyone at home* (Stc 2 in Ki3); along with exclamative sentences like *Wow, that's really a lot! / We spent the whole afternoon shopping!* (Stc 19 and 22 in Si1) and *Time really flies!* (Stc 3 in Mi5 and Wi1).

Proximity of sentences was the predominant source of cohesion, rather than the use of cohesive conjunctions. The letters describing experiences had very few conjunctions, and three letters (Ki2, Wi2 and Ki4) contained no conjunctions to link

sentences at all. The conjunctions found in the other letters are as listed below, based on Eggins (2004, pg. 47-51).

- Elaborating conjunctions: these comprised more than half of the conjunctions found. The bulk of these were sequence connectors used in the letters of advice to list the various actions recommended to the receiver, for instance in Mi2, the series of sentences beginning with *firstly, secondly, thirdly, fourthly, next, besides, on top of that, and finally*.
- Extending conjunctions: these were all found in the letters of advice, functioning to build up the meanings in the sentences presenting the recommended actions. Two variants were identified, causal—like *so* (in Mi2 and Mi4) and *then* (in Mi2 and Mi3)—and concessive (*perhaps* in Mi4).
- Enhancing conjunctions: these were mostly used to mark contrasting meanings in the letters of advice. By far the most frequently occurring example was *however*, found in Mi2, Mi3, Mi4, Si2, Si3 and Wi3.

Apart from conjunctions, overall cohesion also came from the use of cohesive references—third-person pronouns, demonstrative pronouns and comparative structures. To begin with, third-person pronouns were used in all the letters except in Si2. The atypicality of Si2 was because the Participants apart from the writer and receiver were either referred to by their connection to the receiver (*your situation, your past failure, your friends*), mentioned only once and not referred to any further (*revision books, personal tutoring*), or referred to with the same phrases more than once (*tuition centre, sports activities*). Demonstrative pronouns were also fairly common, as illustrated in Table 5.11 on the next page. It is noted that these demonstrative pronouns were used for

all the types of reference except cataphoric reference. Lastly, the comparative structures that were found in the model informal letters were all exophoric references, including *Be more confident* (Stc 17 in Si2), *be more organised* (Stc 26 in Mi2), *just like other students* (Stc 26 in Mi4), *at the same place each time* (Stc 12 in Mi4), *steamed food is better than fried food* (Stc 11 in Mi3), and *as easy as one thinks* (Stc 6 in Si3).

Table 5.11: Examples of demonstrative pronouns used in model informal letters

Pronouns	Role in cohesion	Examples
this /these	Anaphoric reference	<i>This</i> (Stc 10 in Wi3) refers to the information in Stc 9. <i>These</i> (Stc 22 in Mi5) refers to the various pieces of advice given in preceding sentences
that / those	Anaphoric reference	<i>That</i> (Stc 6 in Wi3) refers to the background information given earlier as a starting point for giving advice <i>that</i> (Stc 4 in Mi4) refers to the writer's affective response to the receiver's problem as the reason for writing <i>that</i> (Stc 12 in Si1) refers to the activity mentioned in the previous sentence
that / those	Summarising previous content	<i>that is all</i> (Stc 11 in Wi3) summarises the contents of the entire letter <i>that</i> (Stc 4 in Ki4) summarises the reasons for the writer's delay in replying to the receiver's earlier letter
here /there	Anaphoric reference	<i>there</i> (Stc 17 in Si1) refers to the Butterfly Farm in Stc 16
	Endophoric reference	<i>I have to stop here</i> (Stc 29 in Si1) refers to that particular point in the letter <i>Here</i> (Stc 1 in Ki2) refers to the photographs which are presumably sent together with the letter <i>Here</i> (Stc 3 in Wi2) refers to the letter itself
	Exophoric reference	<i>over there</i> (Stc 30 in Si1 and Stc 3 in Ki3) refers to the current location of the receiver <i>here</i> (Stc 20 in Wi2) refers to the writer's current location
now	Exophoric reference	<i>now</i> (Stc 19 in Wi2) refers to the span of time surrounding the moment that the writer was writing the letter <i>now</i> (Stc 32 in Mi4) refers to the time the receiver reads the letter <i>now</i> (Stc 34 in Mi4) refers to the time the writer finished the letter

Table 5.11: Examples of demonstrative pronouns used in model informal letters (continued)

Nominal groups containing demonstrative pronouns	Anaphoric reference	<i>this subject</i> (Stc 5 in Wi3) refers to <i>Mathematics</i> in Stc 4
	Endophoric reference	<i>this letter</i> , used in Mi2, Mi3, Si2 and Wi3
	Exophoric reference	<i>this year</i> (Stc 6 in Si2) establishes the time frame for the advice given <i>this holiday</i> (Stc 12 in Wi4) refers to a future time <i>those extra calories</i> (Stc 14 in Si3) has no direct referent in the text itself
	Summarising previous content	<i>this matter</i> (Stc 7 in Si2) summarises the problem faced by the writer, on which the receiver's advice is needed <i>this kind of situation</i> (Stc 13 in Ki4) summarises the receiver's loss of her grandfather

As it is, it was noted that nominalization was not used with the function of cohesive device in the model informal letters in general. In fact, nominalization was not present at all in the letters describing experiences. However, in the advice letters, nominalization as grammatical metaphor (Eggins, 2004; Thompson, 2004) was found with notable frequency, as listed below (nominalized forms are italicized and alternative structures are shown by single quotation marks).

- In more than one letter, some commonplace activities were mentioned in the nominalized form instead of with the corresponding Processes, for example *you should get enough rest and sleep* (Stc 11 in Mi2) instead of 'you should rest and sleep enough', *revision* (Stc 23 in Mi2, Stc 5, 15 and 18 in Mi5 and Wi1, Stc 11 in Si2) instead of 'revise', *make the necessary preparations* instead of 'prepare properly' (Stc 4 in Mi5 and Wi1), *discussion* (Stc 16 in Mi5) instead of 'discuss', and *if you need further assistance* (Stc 25 in Si2) instead of 'if you need me to help you again'.

- Nominalized Processes in the form of gerunds were often used in combination with Relational Processes to set up equivalence structures, like *Keeping problems bottled up is not healthy* (Stc 33 in Mi2), *Eating steam food is better than fried food* (Stc 10 in Mi3), *passing exams will be a breeze* (Stc 29 in Mi4) and *Staying slim and healthy is not as easy as one thinks* (Stc 6 in Si3).
- In some letters, nominalization was used to compress information, as in A lack of water in your body will cause dehydration (Stc 16 in Mi3), the place has proper ventilation and lighting (Stc 11 in Mi4) and you do not need tutorial guidance for all the subjects (Stc 16 in Si2). It can be noted that some of these examples are also quite technical with regard to Field.
- Some emotional states were described using nominalization rather than with the Mental Process ‘feel’ or the Relational Process ‘be’, for instance *how to overcome your sadness* (Stc 9 in Ki4) instead of ‘how to make yourself feel less sad’ or ‘how to be less sad’, *hinder your determination to do well* (Stc 6 in Si2) instead of ‘prevent you from feeling determined to do well’ or ‘prevent you from being determined to do well’ and *when facing difficulty in understanding a lesson* (Stc 28 in Mi2) instead of ‘when you feel that a lesson is difficult to understand’ or ‘when a lesson is difficult for you to understand’.

Finally, with regard to the organisation aspect of the model informal letters as messages, the two groups of letters have different patterns of Theme types and progression. For Topical Themes, it was found that the most common Themes in the letters of advice were ‘you’ (57 occurrences) and ‘I’ (41 occurrences), which made up almost half of the total number of Themes in combination. This pattern was not seen in

the letters describing experiences. Instead, Themes related to people (pronouns, names and noun phrases with personal pronouns) were the most frequent in these letters, making up 52.9% of the total number of Themes. This difference can be related to the basic purpose of the letters. In the advice letters, a relationship needs to be established between writer (I) and receiver (you) so that the writer can get the receiver to take action. Such a relationship is not the central concern of the latter group of letters, but rather the description of experiences which involve other people.

For Interpersonal Themes, a fair number were found in the letters, which is consistent with the level of intimacy in the letters as discussed in section 5.2.2. Table 5.12 on the next page shows the types of Interpersonal Theme found. The complete analysis of Theme types in the letters is found in Appendix 5G.

Table 5.12: Types of Interpersonal Themes found in model informal letters

Type of Interpersonal Theme		Examples
Unmarked	interrogative Mood (Finite before Subject)	Stc 6 in Si1: <u>Do you</u> remember my friend, Eun-mi? Stc 1 in Wi1: <u>How are you?</u> Stc 3 in Si1: <u>Are you</u> busy studying for your exams?
	Negation (Finite and Process are not conflated)	Stc 14 in Si2: <u>do not hesitate</u> to enrol yourself Stc 33 in Mi4: <u>Don't wait</u> until the last minute Stc 24 in Mi5: <u>Don't forget</u> to keep in touch
Marked	Emphatic Finites	Stc 16 in Ki3: <u>Do</u> call or write to us soon Stc 38 in Mi2: <u>Do take care</u>
	Comment Adjunct	Stc 6 in Wi4: <u>Of course</u> we will also remember Stc 7 in Wi3: <u>Frankly</u> , you always struck me
	Modal Adjunct	Stc 5 in Mi5: <u>Perhaps</u> you are not using Stc 11 in Si2: <u>Please</u> maintain regular revision
	Vocative	Stc 5 in Ki4: <u>Rosmah</u> , I am very sorry to hear Stc 13 in Ki4: <u>Rosmah</u> , you have to be strong

As for Textual Themes, these were not notably unusual among the model informal letters in terms of distribution. The types of Textual Themes consisted predominantly of additive conjunctive Adjuncts (*and*), other conjunctive Adjuncts like the verificative *in fact* (Stc 11 in Ki3), the summative *finally* (Stc 32 in Mi2), the causal *thus* (Stc 20 in

Si2) and so on (as categorised by (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 541); and some continuatives such as *well* (Stc 12 in Si1) and *right* (Stc 34 in Mi4),

With regard to typicality, the Themes in the model informal letters were largely unmarked. Table 5.13 below summarises the types of marked Themes found in the letters, together with some examples.

Table 5.13: Marked Themes in model formal letters

Type of marked Theme		Clause	Location
Circumstantial Adjunct as Topical Theme		<b>Before her visit</b> , we carefully planned	Stc 8 in Si1
		<b>That evening</b> , we had a seafood dinner	Stc 25 in Si1
		<b>In this letter</b> , I would like to share	Stc 7 in Mi2
Imperative Mood block with emphatic Finite		<b>Do</b> call or write to us soon	Stc 16 in Ki3
		<b>Do</b> remember that you too have 24 hours	Stc 26 in Mi4
Inter-personal Theme	Comment Adjunct	<b>Of course</b> we will also remember the wonderful trip to Langkawi	Stc 6 in Wi4
	Vocative	<b>Rosmah</b> , you have to be strong	Stc 13 in Ki4
	Modal Adjunct	<b>Please</b> do not hesitate to contact me if you need further assistance	Stc 25 in Si2
Textual Theme	Conjunctive Adjunct	<b>By the way</b> , Eun-mi sends you her regards	Stc 28 in Si1
	Continuative	<b>Right</b> , I have to finish my own assignment now	Stc 34 in Mi4
Hypotactic clause in Theme position	Finite clause	<b>While we were away</b> , our dog Lucky gave birth to eight puppies	Stc 14 in Ki3
		<b>Once you understand the lesson</b> , you will be able to do your homework	Stc 21 in Mi2
		As the exam is still a few months away, you will have ample time	Stc 4 in Wi1
Hypotactic clause in Theme position	Non-finite clause	Rosmah, <b>to pen off</b> , I would like to hear	Stc 19 in Ki4
		In order to fare well in the SPM examination, you must have good study techniques	Stc 6 in Mi5
Minor clause in Theme position		<b>Wow</b> , that is really a lot	Stc 19 in Si1
		<b>Thanks</b> also for the many gifts	Stc 7 in Ki3
		Good luck!	Stc 15 in Wi3

The pattern of Thematic Progression most commonly found in the letters was that of reiterated Themes in combination with the zigzag pattern of progression. Two examples from each of the two groups—letters describing experiences and letters of



advice—are shown respectively in Figures 5.4 and 5.5 on pages 170 and 171. This is followed by Figure 5.6 on page 172, which shows how the feature of nominalization plays a role in the organisation of the letter as a message in letter Mi2. Here, nominalization has turned a Process in the Rheme of the preceding clause into a gerund. The gerund functions as a nominal group and is thus able to act as the Theme of the next clause, which enables a zigzag pattern of Thematic progression to be maintained in the letter.

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, all the findings pertaining to the realisation of Register in the entire sample of model letters studied were presented. The contents of the chapter are therefore directly applicable to the first research question in this study: “What is the realisation of Register in the model texts being studied?” At this point, no specific comparison has been made for the findings on formal and informal letters as yet, since this is not a main focus of the investigation. However, this matter will subsequently be addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

Figure 5.4: Example of pattern of Thematic progression in a model informal letter describing experiences

Pattern of Thematic progression in Si1 (model informal letter describing experiences)		
Note: Topical Themes are in bold and elements in the Rheme which are picked up in the Theme of the following sentence are underlined. Reiterated Themes are in bold italics ('I', 'we' and 'she'). Textual Themes outlined with boxes show how the letter is organised chronologically.		
are	How	<u>you</u> , John?
	Dad, Mum and I	are fine
	I	hope <u>you</u> are well, too.
Are	<u>you</u>	busy studying for your final exam?
	<b>We</b>	had the most fantastic time last weekend
Do	<u>you</u>	remember <u>my Korean friend</u> , Eun-mi?
	<b>She</b>	came to <u>visit us</u> last weekend
Before her visit	<b>we</b>	carefully planned a list of <u>places to bring her</u> for the two days.
	<b>Our itinerary</b>	<u>Prince Shopping Complex</u> , the <u>National Zoo</u> , and the <u>Butterfly Farm</u> .
On Saturday morning	<b>we</b>	woke up early.
After breakfast	Dad	drove us to the <u>National Zoo</u> .
Well	that	was a good choice, for Eun-mi loves animals.
	<b>She</b>	had a wonderful time looking at them
	I	lost count of the number of pictures she took of the animals.
	<b>She</b>	told me that she has several albums, all with pictures of animals.
Next	<b>we</b>	went to the <u>Butterfly Farm</u> which is in another part of the city.
There	<b>we</b>	saw many butterfly species
	I	was told there are about two hundred species
Wow	that	is really a lot
On Sunday	<b>we</b>	went to <u>Prince Shopping Complex</u> .
	Eun-Mi	wanted to buy souvenirs and T-shirts for her family and friends
	<b>We</b>	spent the whole afternoon shopping!
	<b>We</b>	browsed through practically all the shops and boutiques.
By evening	<b>she</b>	must have bought a whole cartload of gifts.
That night	<b>we</b>	had a seafood dinner at a nearby restaurant
	The prawn and lobster dishes	were really delicious.
	I	wish you had joined us last weekend
By the way	Eun-Mi	sends you her regards
	I	have to stop here
Do	write	often
(do)	tell	me how you spend your weekends over there

Figure 5.5: Example of pattern of Thematic progression in a model informal letter giving advice

Pattern of Thematic progression in Mi5 (model informal letter of advice)		
Note: Topical Themes are in bold and elements in the Rheme which are picked up in the Theme of the following sentence are underlined. Reiterated Themes are in bold italics ('I' and 'you').		
	I	received your letter two weeks ago.
	I	wanted to write an immediate reply.
but	<b>my assignments</b>	have kept me busy.
	<b>Time</b>	really flies
As the exam is still a few months away,	<i>you</i>	will have ample time to make the <u>necessary preparations</u> .
	<i>You</i>	don't have to wait until the eleventh hour to start your revision.
In order to fare well in the SPM examinations,	<i>you</i>	must have good study techniques.
Firstly	<i>you</i>	should have a <u>time table</u> .
	<b>A time table</b>	will help you plan your activities for study and for relaxation.
	I	always believe that "a person who fails to plan, plans to fail".
	Include	all your subjects.
	Give	emphasis on subjects you are weak in.
Next	<i>you</i>	should <u>study consistently</u> .
	Make	it a habit to study at least five to six hours a day.
	<b>Burning the midnight oil at the</b>	will not enable you to get good results.
	<b>There are</b>	many ways of <u>doing revision</u> .
	<i>You</i>	can make short notes to help you jot down important points and to remember them.
	<i>You</i>	can also have group discussions.
	<b>It</b>	will be fun to discuss past year questions and do revision with your friends.
Of course	<i>you</i>	don't have to <u>study all the time</u> .
	Have	enough fun and relaxation
	Take up	a hobby or a game,
	go	for walks,
	watch	a few of your favourite programmes on television
	<b>These</b>	are only some of the <u>study tips</u> .
	<b>The most important thing</b>	is to manage your time well
All the best and don't	forget	to keep in touch

Figure 5.6: Example of how nominalization is related to the zigzag pattern of Thematic progression

The role of nominalisation in maintaining a zigzag pattern of Thematic progression in Mi2		
Note: Topical Themes are in bold and elements in the Rheme which are picked up in the Theme of the following sentence are underlined. Nominalizations as Topical Theme are italicised.		
are	How	you?
	I	hope you are fine.
is	How	school life?
	It	has been quite a while since I last heard from you.
	<b>As students</b>	we are always busy with our studies and school activities.
	<b>Most students</b>	feel that studies and school activities cause them to be stressed.
	<b>In this letter</b>	I would like to share with you ways to overcome stress
Firstly	<b>you</b>	must take a balanced meal.
	<b>You</b>	will be healthy and present in school at all times.
	<b>You</b>	will never miss lessons.
Secondly	<b>you</b>	should have enough rest and sleep.
	<b>You</b>	will not get tired in class.
Thirdly	<b>you</b>	ought to go for exercise at least three times a week.
	<b>Exercise</b>	keeps you fit and alert in class.
	<b>You</b>	will then be able to study well.
Fourthly	<b>you</b>	should hang out with friends.
	<b>You</b>	need to have good friends to have fun and someone to share problems with.
Next	<b>I</b>	would like to encourage you to take up a hobby.
	<b>Having a hobby</b>	will help you to destress.
Besides	<b>you</b>	must pay attention in class when the teacher is teaching.
Once you understand the lesson	<b>you</b>	will be able to do your homework.
Then	<b>you</b>	can finish your homework on time.
	<b>You</b>	need to hand in your work to be marked by teachers
and	<b>you</b>	will learn from mistakes by doing corrections.
On top of that	<b>you</b>	must do constant revision to be able to answer questions in exams.
So	<b>you</b>	would not have to worry about failing your tests.
	<b>It</b>	is also important that you have a study timetable.
	<b>The study timetable</b>	helps you to manage your time well and be more organized.
	<b>I</b>	suggest you learn to work in groups.
	<b>Being in a group</b>	helps you to find support when facing difficulty in understanding a lesson.
	<b>Working in groups</b>	also helps you get new ideas from friends through discussion.
	<b>All students</b>	must know that they ought to respect parents and teachers at all times.
	<b>The good rapport</b>	will make you happy.
Finally	<b>you</b>	need to go for counselling to clear your doubts, to pour out your feelings and to find ways to solve problems.
	<b>Keeping problems bottled up</b>	is not healthy.
	<b>Students</b>	need a little stress to study and work hard to obtain success.
However	<b>too much stress</b>	is not good.
	<b>You</b>	must be able to learn to stay calm and to think well in order to go through stages in growing up.
	<b>I</b>	greatly hope that my sharing will help lessen your stress.
Do	take	care.
	<b>I</b>	hope to hear from you soon.

## **CHAPTER SIX      FINDINGS ON THE REALISATION OF GENRE IN THE MODEL LETTERS**

### **6.0      OVERVIEW**

In this chapter, the findings from text analysis that address research question 2 are presented, on how Genre is realised in the model letters. The chapter begins with a brief summary of the procedure for text analysis. Subsequently, sections 6.2 and 6.3 contain the findings for the formal and informal letters respectively. Section 6.3 is also further subdivided according to the two different genres identified among the model informal letters. Finally, section 6.4 relates the findings in a general sense to the theory on genre analysis that was presented earlier in Chapter 3.

### **6.1      General Procedure for Analysing Genre in Model Letters**

As stated in Chapter 4, the procedure for identifying the features of the model formal letters that characterise it as a genre is based on Eggins (2004, pp. 61-65), as discussed in Chapters 3 (section 3.3.3) and 4 (section 4.4.1). The general procedure consists of six basic steps. Each of these steps is explained in more detail in the following sub-sections.

#### *6.1.1    Identifying the general social function of the text*

In Systemic-Functional linguistic theory, a genre is conceptualised as being specific to the social group in which it is used, and serving a particular function as part of the social interaction of that group. A genre is therefore identifiable by the members of that social group based on its social function. Accordingly, identifying this social function was the first step in carrying out text analysis of the model letters with regard to Genre. At this point, it is acknowledged that since the model letters are being used for

pedagogic purposes, it may be argued that the letters have no true social purpose. Nevertheless, this view is not taken in this investigation, wherein the model letters are taken as exemplars of actual instances of language use which the learners are expected to be able to produce independently outside the classroom. The general social function of any one model letter was determined in one or any combination of the following three ways: from the content of the letter itself, from the writing task which the letter is meant to address, or from the background information provided by the teacher. The name of the genre is also derived from these criteria, most prominently the terms used by the teachers to refer to the text.

#### *6.1.2 Identifying the sections in the text that have different functions—the stages of the genre*

With most texts, it is usually possible to identify sections in the text that have different functions, which are working towards the achievement of an overall purpose—the general social function of the text. Hence, once the general social function of a model letter had been identified, the analysis proceeded with the identification of the various sections with different functions in the model letters. The boundaries of a particular section were not determined arbitrarily but based on how semantic content was realised by particular lexicogrammatical patterns. Hence, the primary consideration for setting a section boundary was a distinct difference in the lexicogrammar of two adjacent sections. Only when the grammar or structure of two adjacent sections was identical was a section boundary determined based on comparing just lexical items alone. It is also acknowledged that these section boundaries were not always clear-cut, wherein one section could overlap with another. The boundaries were therefore at clause level rather than at sentence or paragraph level.

### *6.1.3 Assigning functional labels to the stages*

Naming the various stages identified was the logical next step in the process. The labels given to the stages were also stated in functional rather than grammatical terms, given that function is the basic criteria on which the various stages in the model letters were determined. These labels were either terms found in the text itself, where appropriate, or set by the researcher.

### *6.1.4 Identifying compulsory and optional stages*

Although all the model formal letters studied had the same basic social function, the various letters did not achieve this function with the same degree of straightforwardness, in that certain letters had more stages than others. It can therefore be inferred that certain stages are not essential to achieving the overall social function, since some letters were able to fulfil this function without those stages. The stages identified in the model letters were thus divided into two categories—compulsory or optional—based on whether or not the stage occurred in all the letters in the sample. It should be noted that whereas the term ‘compulsory stage’ is used in this thesis to refer to these stages that are ubiquitous in all the samples, Eggins (2004) uses the terms “defining or obligatory elements” (pg. 64). The compulsory stages were then considered the most basic—or what Eggins (2004) terms as “minimal” (pg. 64)—schematic structure for that genre

### *6.1.5 Identifying the order of stages*

Another consideration in the identification of the schematic structure of a particular genre is the order in which the various stages occur. This involved determining which of the stages always occurred in a particular sequence relative to others, and which others occurred in an “unordered” (Eggins, 2004, pg. 64) or variable

order. A variable order does not, however, affect how the overall social function of the text is achieved. This applies to both compulsory and optional stages.

#### 6.1.6 *Formulating the schematic structure of the genre*

The final step in the analysis of the model letters with regard to Genre was the formulation of the schematic structure of the genre exemplified by the letters. The notation system used for this purpose is shown in Table 6.1 below (reproduced from Table 4.7 in Chapter 4).

Table 6.1: Notation system for the schematic structure of genres

Symbol	Meaning
$X^{\wedge}Y$	stage X precedes stage Y (fixed order)
$*Y$	stage Y is an unordered stage
(X)	stage X is an optional stage
$\downarrow X$	stage X is a recursive stage
$\downarrow \{X^{\wedge}Y\}$	stages X and Y are both recursive in the fixed order X then Y

Source: Eggins (2004, pg. 64)

## 6.2 Findings on Genre in Model Formal Letters

The model formal letters were found to have the same basic social function of seeking corrective action for a problematic situation. The method used to identify the basic social function of the various letters varied according to the letter, whether based on the content, the writing task, or the background information concerned. This is summarised in Table 6.2 on the next page. The genre represented by the model formal letters was then identified as ‘formal letter of complaint’ on the basis of the most commonly used terms found in the references.



Table 6.2: Method of identifying the basic social function of model formal letters

Letter	Method of identifying social function	Reference
ATf1	The kind of text is mentioned in the notes Function given in background information provided by teachers	We write a <i>letter of complaint</i> because we are unhappy over... Teacher mentions <i>model letter of complaint</i> (Transcript 0224WFob1RJ, Line 234) Teacher mentions <i>letter of complaint</i> (Transcript 0225WFob1OBL, Line 26)
ATf2	Function given in background information provided by teachers	Teacher mentions formal letter of complaint (Transcript 0222WFob1ALK, Line 202) Teacher mentions letter of complaint (Transcript 0426SFob1LSF, Line 495) Teacher mentions complain letter (Transcript 0211WFob1JAT, Line 316)
Kf1	Function stated in letter	I am writing to complain about... (Stc 1 in Kf1)
Kf2, Mf2, Sf2	Function stated in letter	I would like to lodge a complaint about... (Stc 1 in Kf2, Mf2 and Sf2)
Kf3	Function stated in letter	I am writing this letter to complain about... (Stc 1 in Kf3)
Kf4	Function given in background information provided by the teacher	Teacher mentions <i>letter of complaint</i> (Transcript 0929KFob1MEM, Lines 27-28)
Mf1	Writing task includes the function Function is mentioned in background information provided by the teacher	You decided to write a letter to the Chairman of the Town Council <i>to complain</i> ... Teacher mentions <i>letter of complaint</i> (Transcript 0914MFib1BI, Line 26)
Mf3	Function stated in letter	I am writing to complain about... (Stc 1 in Mf3)
Mf4	Function stated in letter	...we would like to make a complaint on... (Stc 3 in Mf4)
Sf1	Function found in writing task for model letter	On behalf of the residents in your housing estate, you decided to write a letter to the Town <i>Council to complain</i> about this.
Sf3	Function found in background information provided by the teacher	Teacher mentions <i>written complaint</i> (Transcript 0405SFibNEP, Line 46)

In the model formal letters studied, a total of sixteen stages were identified in the letters. It was possible for the section boundaries in the letters to be determined

largely based on patterns of lexicogrammatical characteristics. Hence, considerations of lexical items were prominent only when the sections concerned occurred in too few letters to establish a reliable lexicogrammatical pattern. Table 6.3 on the following pages lists these stages with their functional labels, as well as the corresponding lexicogrammatical patterns on which section boundaries were based.

Table 6.3 also shows the basis for determining the compulsory and optional stages of the genre of ‘formal letter of complaint’, in that the four stages found in all the letters (in bold in column 2 of Table 6.3) are considered compulsory stages. These four stages occurred in the same order in all the letters involved, hence the basic schematic structure for this genre is *State purpose*, followed by *State general topic*, followed by *State details of dissatisfaction*, and finally *Present expectation of prompt follow-up*. On the other hand, some of the optional stages were in variable order or recursive. As represented by the entire sample, the full schematic structure is formulated as  $(1)^2 3^4 (5)^6 7 \downarrow \{8^9\}^{\downarrow} \{(10)^{11}\}^* 12^{13} (14)^{15} (16)$ . The numbers in this formula correspond to the numbers of the stages in Table 6.3 and the symbols are from Eggin’s (2004) notation system presented earlier in Table 6.1.

Table 6.3: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model formal letters

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
1. State writer's role	All letters except Kf1, Mf1 and Mf4	i. The writer's role is indicated with a Circumstantial Adjunct of role, or  ii. The writer identifies himself with a Relational Process	<i>On behalf of the residents of Taman Alam Indah, I would like...</i> (Stc 1 in ATf1) <i>I am writing on behalf of the residents of Taman Angsana</i> (Stc 1 in Sf3) <i>I <u>am</u> a resident of Taman Indana and I am writing...</i> (Stc 1 in Kf3)
2. State purpose	All letters	i. A distancing phrase containing the Mental Process 'like' projects the clause describing the purpose of the letter, or ii. The purpose of the letter is found in the dependent clause of a hypotactic clause complex, or iii. The purpose of the letter is projected by a Mental Process, or iv. The purpose of the letter is stated directly	<b><i>We would like</i></b> to bring to your attention the above matter (Stc 1 in ATf2) <i>...<b><u>I would like</u></b> to lodge a complaint about the school canteen</i> (Stc 1 in Kf2) <i>I am writing <u>to complain about</u>...</i> (Stc 1 in Kf1) <i>...I represent all the students <u>to voice out our unhappiness with</u>...</i> (Stc 1 in Kf4) <i>I regret <u>to inform you that</u>...</i> (Stc 1 in Kf4) <i>...I am bringing your attention to this problem</i> (Stc 1 in Sf1)

Table 6.3: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model formal letters (continued)

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
<b>3. State general topic</b>	<b>All letters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The general topic is found in a Circumstantial Adjunct of matter, or</li> <li>ii. A Comment Adjunct as Interpersonal Theme highlights the general topic, or</li> <li>iii. The general topic is found in a projected clause, or</li> <li>iv. The general topic is found in the verbiage to a Verbal Process, or</li> <li>v. The general topic is stated with an Existential Process</li> </ul>	<p><i>...I would like to lodge a complaint <u>about the school canteen</u> (Stc 1 in Mf2)</i></p> <p><i><u>For your information</u>, the rubbish... (Stc 2 in Kf1)</i></p> <p><i>I regret to inform you that the tenants living in your house at No. 38, Jln. Tebrau, Tmn. Pelangi are very noisy (Stc 1 in Kf4)</i></p> <p><i>to voice out our unhappiness with the condition of the facilities that we use daily in the school (Stc 1 in Mf4)</i></p> <p><i>There is <u>a serious problem of traffic congestion</u> in my housing estate, Taman Mandu (Stc 1 in Sf1)</i></p>
4. Describe specific problem	All letters except Kf2, Mf1, Mf2 and Sf2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A Material Process is used for a mainly physical problem, or</li> <li>ii. A Mental Process is used for a problem involving attitudes, or</li> <li>iii. A Relational Process is used for a problem involving cause and effect</li> </ul> <p>Predominantly present tenses are used in this section.</p>	<p><i>Two weeks ago, the main pipe leading to Taman Indana <u>burst</u> (Stc 2 in Kf3)</i></p> <p><i>My classmates <u>refuse</u> to cooperate to keep the cleanliness of the classroom (Stc 2 in Mf3)</i></p> <p><i>The construction activities which begin in the morning and continue until dusk <u>is</u> a constant source of annoyance to the residents (Stc 3 in Sf3)</i></p>
5. Reiterate purpose	Only in Mf3 and Mf4	The reiterated purpose is in a lexicogrammatically different form.	<p><i>In Mf3, I am writing to complain is used in Stc 1 and I wish to bring to your attention the problems in Stc 4.</i></p> <p><i>In Mf4, to voice out our unhappiness is used in Stc 1 and we would like to make a complaint in Stc 3.</i></p>

Table 6.3: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model formal letters (continued)

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
6. State past action taken	ATf1, Kf3, Kf4 and Sf1	To show that the actions have been completed, past tenses or Processes with the perfect aspect are used.	<i>a report was lodged with your department</i> (Stc 2 in ATf1) <i>A few elderly neighbours have approached the young men to advise them</i> (Stc 6 in Kf4)
7. State result of past action	ATf1, Kf3, Kf4 and Sf1	The results follow immediately after the past actions, retaining the same tense or aspect while being marked with a contrastive Conjunctive Adjunct.	<i>but till today no action has been taken</i> (Stc 3 in Kf3) <i>However, our petitions have fallen on deaf ears</i> (Stc 12 in Sf1)
8. State details of dissatisfaction	All letters	Predominantly present tenses are used and Conjunctive Adjuncts mark a new effect or aspect.  These effects or aspects may also be identified based on the Multiple Rheme pattern of thematic progression, wherein the Theme of a new effector or aspect is derived from the Rheme of the general description of the problem (stage 4).	<i><u>For instance</u>, many of us are unable</i> (Stc 5 in ATf1) <i><u>First and foremost</u>, the food served is not covered / <u>Moreover</u>, the food served is also not fresh / <u>Apart from that</u>, the food is also too expensive</i> (Stc 2, 4 and 7 in Sf2) <i>the construction activities which have caused considerable <u>anxiety</u> to the residents / The <u>deafening noise</u> of these activities is further compounded / Another <u>health hazard</u> is the dust</i> (Stc 2, 4 and 6 in Sf3) and <i>some of the workers employed by your company are <u>illegal workers</u> / recent <u>break-ins</u> ... have become a nagging worry / <u>presence</u> of these workers ... has caused the residents to have sleepless nights</i> (Stc 7, 8 and 9 in Sf3)

Table 6.3: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model formal letters (continued)

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
9. Personalise effect or aspect of main problem	All letters except Mf1, Mf3, Mf4, Kf4 and Sf1	The use of the first person pronouns indicate that the effect being discussed is directly affecting the writer and/or the people he is representing.	<i>a few of us</i> were down with diarrhoea after consuming food from the canteen (Stc 6 in Kf2) <i>Our</i> showers and washing machines cannot be used (Stc 5 in Kf3) <i>It is also</i> an intrusion into <i>our</i> privacy (Stc 3 in Sf3)
10. Specify desired action	All letters except ATf1, ATf2, Kf3, Mf2, Mf4 and Sf3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The desired actions are projected by the Verbal Process ‘suggest’ or</li> <li>ii. The desired actions are projected by Mental Processes, or</li> <li>iii. Where multiple desired actions are involved, Conjunctive Adjuncts are used to indicate new actions.</li> </ul>	<i>I am pleased to suggest</i> that the responsible ... (Stc 7 in Kf1) <i>We hope</i> you will remind them (Stc10 in Kf4) <i>We would like</i> you to inform (Stc 22 in Mf3) <i>Thus, we would like to suggest</i> that the school / they should <i>also</i> ensure / The canteen should <i>also</i> have (Stc 18, 19 and 21 in Mf2)
11. State rationale for specified action	Only in Kf1, Kf2, Mf2 and Sf2	The rationale follows immediately after the action is specified. The cause-effect relationship is indicated with a Conjunctive Adjunct or anaphoric reference.	<i>By doing so, those unwelcome...</i> (Stc 7 in Kf1) <i>This is to enable</i> (Stc 15 in Kf2)
12. Emphasise severity of problem	Only in Kf3 and Kf4	Semantic considerations were applied; the stages were identified based on lexical items.	<i>The situation has become worse</i> (Stc 12 in Kf3) <i>The neighbours... can no longer put up with these loud noises</i> (Stc 4 in Kf4)
13. Present expectation of prompt follow up	All letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Mental Processes are used to project the expectation, or</li> <li>ii. The expectation is expressed with Material Processes, often with the receiver as the Actor</li> </ul>	<i>we hope for immediate action to solve our problems</i> (Stc 12 in Kf3) <i>we look forward to your quick action</i> (Stc 12 in Kf4) <i>We sincerely hope that the school would take prompt action</i> (Stc 18 in Kf2)

Table 6.3: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model formal letters (continued)

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
14. State rationale for compliance	Only in ATf1, Kf1, Mf2, Mf3, Mf4 and Sf3	The rationale is found with the expectation of prompt follow-up (Stage 13): i. in a subordinate clause in a hypotactic clause complex, or ii. in a paratactic clause	<i>...you will attend to this matter ... <u>to ease our burden</u> (Stc 9 in Atf1)</i> <i>you will take immediate action...<u>as we need a conducive environment to study well</u> (Stc 25 in Mf3)</i> <i>We would like to appeal to your sense of fairness and hope that immediate action...(Stc 22 in Mf2)</i>
15. State consequence of non-compliance	Only in ATf2 and Kf4	The consequences are indicated with a contrastive Conjunctive Adjunct or conditional clause.	<i>Otherwise, we have no choice but ... (Stc 11 in ATf2)</i> <i>...the police will be informed if they continue to disturb the neighbourhood (Stc 11 in Kf4)</i>
16. Offer appreciation in advance for compliance	Only in ATf1, Kf1, Kf3 and Kf4	The lexical item ‘your cooperation’ (‘your sensibility’ in Kf1) was taken as the basis for determining this section’s boundaries	<i>Your cooperation is greatly appreciated (Stc 13 in Kf3)</i> <i>We thank you for your cooperation (Stc 12 in Kf4)</i>

### 6.3 Findings on Genre in model informal letters

In the Genre analysis of the model informal letters, the same procedure described in section 6.1 was applied. However, it was found that the letters fell into two groups according to their purpose, hence the two groups were analysed separately. Accordingly, the findings are also presented in two sub-sections.

#### 6.3.1 *Informal letter of advice*

The first group of nine model informal letters were analysed as having the basic social function of advising a certain course of action by the receiver to deal with a problematic situation being experienced by the receiver. This purpose was almost entirely derivable from the contents of the letters themselves, as shown in Table 6.4 below. However, an additional reference is also given for the letters in which the function was indirectly stated. Based on the terms most commonly found in these references, the genre exemplified by this group of nine letters was identified as ‘informal letter of advice’.

Table 6.4: Method of identifying the basic social function of model informal letters of advice

Letter	Method of identifying social function	Reference
Ki4	Function stated in letter (direct)	I heard that you need some advice on how to overcome ... (Stc 9 in Ki4)
Mi2	Function stated in letter (indirect) and the writing task	In this letter I would like to share with you ways to ... (Stc 7 in Mi2) Write a letter to your friend <i>advising</i> him or her...
Mi3	Function stated in letter (indirect) and the writing task	In this letter I would like to share with you how... (Stc 4 in Mi3) Complete the letter of <i>advice</i> on how to...
Mi4	Function stated in letter (indirect) Function found in writing task for model letter	So, let me share with you some important study skills... (Stc 6 in Mi4) ...your brother ... is unable to concentrate in his studies and has done badly in his exam. You decide to write a letter to <i>advise</i> him



Table 6.4: Method of identifying the basic social function of model informal letters of advice (continued)

Letter	Method of identifying social function	Reference
Mi5	Function stated in letter (indirect) Function found in writing task for model letter	These are only a few of the study tips (Stc 22 in Mi5) Your friend ... wants your <i>advice</i> on proper study habits. With the help of the notes below, write a letter to <i>advise</i> him
Si2	Function stated in letter (direct)	I would like to emphasise a few things since you have asked my advice on this issue (Stc 7 in Si2)
Si3	Function stated in letter (direct) Function found in writing task for model letter	There are some important pointers to bear in mind / One last word of advice (Stc 8 and 19 in Si3) ... write a reply letter to your friend. <i>Advise</i> him/her on how to stay slim and healthy.
Wi1	Function stated in letter (indirect) and found in background information given by the teacher	These are only a few of the study tips (Stc 22 in Wi1) Teacher mentions that the letter is for giving advice (Transcript 0712WlibALK, Line 14)
Wi3	Function stated in letter (direct)	That brings me to the problem that you asked my advice on (Stc 6 in Wi3)

A total of sixteen stages were identified in the nine letters, as summarised in Table 6.5 on the following page. The functional labels for the various stages are also found in this table. This genre was found to have five compulsory stages, which make up the basic schematic structure for this genre: *\*Reference to previous communication*, followed by *Comment on previous communication*, followed by *State purpose*, followed by *State advice*, and finally *\*State rationale for advice*. It was noted the stages in this structure were not in a fixed order, wherein the stages marked with \* were found in a different order in some letters. The full schematic structure of the genre of ‘informal letter of advice’ as represented by the entire sample of nine model letters studied is (1)^\*2^(3)^\*(4)^┘(5)^6^7^(8)^┘\*(9)^10^\*11^(12)^(13)^\*(14)^\*(15)^(16), in which the numbers correspond to the numbers of the various stages listed in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model informal letters of advice

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
1. Greeting	Only Ki4 and Si2	The affective aspect of either writer or receiver is described with Mental and Relational Processes in the Present tenses.	<i>I <u>am</u> glad to be able to write to you after quite a long break</i> (Stc 1 in Ki4) <i>I <u>hope</u> this letter finds you healthy and in good spirits</i> (Stc 1 in Si2)
<b>2. Refer to previous communication</b>	<b>All letters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Past tenses are used to refer to the previous communication, which is often referred to specifically as a ‘letter’, or</li> <li>ii. Verbal Processes are used to refer to the contents of the previous communication</li> </ul>	<i>Your last <u>letter</u> <u>took</u> me by surprise</i> (Stc 1 in Mi4) <i>I <u>received</u> your <u>letter</u> two weeks ago</i> (Stc 1 in Mi5) <i>It has been quite a while since I last <u>heard</u> from you</i> (Stc 4 in Mi2) <i>You <u>said</u> that your mid-year examination results were affected</i> (Stc 12 in Ki4) <i>You also <u>mentioned</u> in your letter that</i> (Stc 24 in Mi4)
3. Request status update	Only Ki4, Mi2 and Wi3	The same conventional interrogative clause is used in all the examples.	<i>How are you</i> (Stc 1 in Mi2, Stc 2 in Ki4 and Stc 1 in Ki3)
4. Give status update	All letters except Mi2, Mi3 and Si3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Past tenses and the perfect aspect are used to refer to recent activities, or</li> <li>ii. Circumstantial Adjuncts show the current time frame of the status report, or</li> <li>iii. Relational Processes show the current situation of the writer</li> </ul>	<i>My parents and I just came back from a holiday</i> (Stc 3 in Ki4) <i>I wanted to write an immediate reply but my assignments have kept me busy</i> (Stc 2 in Mi5) <i>I have to finish my own assignment now</i> (Stc 34 in Mi4) <i>I am actually in the midst of my exams</i> (Stc 12 in Wi3) <i>my dad is still on medication</i> (Stc 2 in Si2)
5. Request status update repeated	Only Mi2	The status request is repeated with a different structure.	<i>How are you?</i> (Stc 1) and <i>How is school life?</i> (Stc 3)

Table 6.5: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model informal letters of advice (continued)

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
<b>6. Comment on previous communication</b>	<b>All letters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Relational Processes are used for the writer's emotional state upon receiving the previous communication, or</li> <li>ii. Mental Processes are used for the writer's reaction to the previous communication, or</li> <li>iii. The receiver's activities or situation are referred to in the comments</li> </ul>	<p><i>I <u>am</u> very sorry to hear that...</i> (Stc 5 in Kf4)  <i>I <u>was</u> shocked when I heard that...</i> (Stc 3 in Mi4)</p> <p><i>I can <u>imagine</u> your horror...</i> (Stc 3 in Si3)  <i>I do <u>think</u> that your results were very good...</i> (Stc 3 in Wi3)  <i><u>you</u> will have ample time to make the necessary preparations</i> (Stc 4 in Mi5)  <i><u>You</u> sounded very dejected and unhappy</i> (Stc 4 in Si2)</p>
<b>7. State purpose</b>	<b>All letters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The statement of purpose contains the term 'advice' with direct reference to the problem faced, or</li> <li>ii. The statement of purpose begins with a Mental Process indicating an indirect command, or</li> <li>iii. The purpose is found indirectly in the form of a thesis statement summarising the contents of the letter.</li> </ul>	<p><i>I heard that you need some advice on how to overcome your depression</i> (Stc 9 in Ki4)  <i>that brings me to the problem that you asked my advice on</i> (Stc 6 in Wi3)  <i>I would like to share with you ways to overcome stress</i> (Stc 7 in Mi2)  <i>let me share with you some important study skills</i> (Stc 6 in Mi4)  <i>In order to fare well in the SPM examinations, you must have good study techniques</i> (Stc 6 in Wi1)</p>
8. Comment on problem faced	Only Mi4 and Mi5	The receiver's past actions with regard to the problem faced is addressed directly, but using the present tense.	<p><i>Perhaps you are not using the correct study skills</i> (Stc 5 in Mi4)  <i>You don't have to wait until the eleventh hour to start your revision</i> (Stc 5 in Wi1)</p>
9. Reiterate purpose	Only Mi3, Mi5 and Wi3	The advice given is summarised in the reiterated purpose.	<p><i>I greatly hope that my tips on losing weight in a healthy way will benefit you</i> (Stc 35 in Mi3)  <i>These are only some of the study tips</i> (Stc 22 in Mi5)</p>

Table 6.5: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model informal letters of advice (continued)

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
<b>10. State advice</b>	<b>All letters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The advice is preceded with Conjunctive Adjuncts and stated in declarative Mood with modal auxiliaries, or</li> <li>ii. The Advice is stated in imperative Mood, also with modal auxiliaries, or</li> <li>iii. Mental Processes project the advice in declarative Mood, without auxiliaries</li> </ul>	<p><i>First, you must take / Secondly, you should have</i> (Stc 8 and 11 in Mi2)</p> <p><i>First, choose a quiet and conducive place / On top of that, get rid of distractions</i> (Stc 7 and 14 in Mi4)</p> <p><i>I believe that you have good... to share your sadness</i> (Stc 10 in Ki4) and <i>I believe that you will be... if you are willing to work at it seriously</i> (Stc 9 in Wi3)</p>
<b>11. State rationale for advice</b>	<b>All letters</b>	<p>The rationale is found immediately following or very close to the relevant advice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Modal auxiliaries are used to show the benefits of the advised action, or</li> <li>ii. Relational Processes are used to show the positive effects of the advised action, or</li> <li>iii. The desired effects of the advised action are stated in a dependent clause in a hypotactic clause complex</li> </ul>	<p><i>They could help you forget about your depression</i> (Stc 17 in Ki4)</p> <p><i>You need to have good friends to have fun</i> (Stc 17 in Mi2)</p> <p><i>The vitamins and fibres in fruits and vegetables are good for our body</i> (Stc 6 in Mi3)</p> <p><i>you always struck me as a bright student</i> (Stc 7 in Wi3)</p> <p><i>so that you are physically active which enables you to be mentally active</i> (Stc 18 in Si2)</p> <p><i>because food that is high in oil content will make us...</i> (Stc 18 in Si3)</p>

Table 6.5: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model informal letters of advice (continued)

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
12.State result of complying with advice	Only Mi2, Mi3, Mi4 and Si2	The benefits are stated as a cause-effect chain marked with Conjunctive Adjuncts	<i>Exercise keeps you fit and alert in class / you will <u>then</u> be able to study well</i> (Stc 14 and 15 in Mi2) <i>Try <u>and</u> you will see results soon</i> (Stc 36 in Mi3)
13.Summarise advice	All letters except Mi4, Si2 and Wi3	i. Conjunctive Adjuncts or comparative structures indicate that this is an overall point of view, or  ii. The present tense is used for statements of general truth that sum up the advice given.	<i>to pen-off, I would like to hear that you are able to cope</i> (Stc 19 in Ki4) <i>The most important thing is to manage your time well</i> (Stc 23 in Mi5) <i>An effective weight control programme requires discipline, exercise and ...</i> (Stc 22 in Si3) <i>Students need a little stress to study and work hard to obtain success / However, too much stress is not good</i> (Stc 35 and 36 in Mi2)
14.State positive expectations	All letters except Mi2 and Mi3	The positive expectations are conveyed with the Verbal Process ‘wish’ or Mental Process ‘hope’	<i>I wish you good luck and best wishes</i> (Stc 26 in Si2) <i>I wish you all the best for your studies</i> (Stc 14 in Wi3) <i>Hope everyone at home is doing well</i> (Stc 36 in Mi4)
15.Present ending exhortation	Only Mi2, Mi4 and Wi3	Conventional phrases are used (signing-off phrases), in the imperative Mood; one example uses an Existential Process	<i>Do take care</i> (Stc 39 in Mi2) <i>give my love to them</i> (Stc 36 in Mi4) <i>that is all for this letter</i> (Stc 11 in Wi3)
16.Extend invitation to respond promptly	All letters except Ki4, Mi3 and Wi3	Conventional phrases are used, containing Mental Processes and emphatic Finites.	<i>I hope to hear from you soon</i> (Stc 40 in Mi2) <i>Do write and tell me how you are coping</i> (Stc 35 in Mi4) <i>don’t forget to keep in touch</i> (Stc 24 in Mi5) <i>Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further assistance</i> (Stc 25 in Si2)

### 6.3.2 *Informal descriptive letter*

The second group of five model informal letters is the smallest group within the sample. This relatively small sample size may have contributed to the less straightforward findings for this group, wherein the lexicogrammatical patterns and sections found in these letters were not as distinct as in the other two groups. Nevertheless, some regularities could be seen, which enabled the same procedure to be applied for the identification of the genre represented by the letters.

Accordingly, in the first step of identifying the social function of the letters based on the content, writing task or background information related to the letters, it was concluded that this function is the maintenance or strengthening of social ties by the writer through sharing information with the receiver on a past experience. In this regard, it was necessary to distinguish between ‘purpose’ and ‘social function’. This was because letters Ki3 and Wi4 had multiple stated purposes—informing the receiver of their safe arrival, thanking the receiver for various reminisced experiences, and inviting the receiver to share a similar experience in future—all of which were consistent with the function of maintaining social ties. However, all these purposes were actually accomplished by sharing information on the pertinent experiences; hence this sharing of information was taken as the overall function of these two letters. Also, the purpose and function of letter Ki2 were not given any attention at all by the teacher, who emphasised only the informal register of the letter. The genre was named ‘informal descriptive letter’ based on the terms most commonly associated with the letters in the references. Table 6.6 on the next page summarises the considerations and references used in determining the function of the various letters.

Table 6.6: Method of identifying the basic social function of model informal descriptive letters

Letter	Method of identifying social function	Reference
Ki2	No direct mention of the function of the letter in the contents, task or background information	The teacher refers to the letter as an ‘informal letter’ throughout the interviews and observations (Transcript 0406KIob1MEM, line 20 and 38)
Ki3	Multiple purpose stated in the letter (indirect) and found in the background information given by the teacher	<i>I am writing to <u>let you know</u> we arrived safely</i> (Stc 4) <i>We want to <u>thank</u> you and your family for making our trip to Ipoh ...</i> (Stc 6) <i>we also want to <u>invite</u> you all over to Kuching</i> (Stc 15) The teacher refers explicitly to the many purposes of the letter (Transcript 0620KIob1ANC Line 131 and 136)
Si1	Function found in writing task for model letter	<i>you write a letter to your brother who is in another town to <u>describe</u> to him...</i>
Wi2	Function stated in letter (direct)	<i>I’m writing to <u>tell</u> you about my school, the girls... (Stc 5 in Wi2)</i>
Wi4	Function found in writing task for model letter	<i>Write a letter to your uncle, <u>thanking</u> him/her for the wonderful time you had.</i> However, the notes given on the main points for the task are mostly descriptive information, hence the focus of the letter is taken to be the description of the ‘wonderful time’ rather than the thanking of the uncle

Subsequently, twelve stages were identified in the letters, as summarised in Table 6.7 on the next page with their functional labels.

Table 6.7: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model informal descriptive letters

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
1. Request status update	All letters except Ki2 and Wi4	The same interrogative clause is used in all the examples.	<i>How are you</i> (Stc 1 in Ki3, Si1, Wi2 and Wi4)
2. Give status update	Only in Si1 and Wi2	Both phrases are variations of the same Relational Process and Attribute	<i>Dad, Mum and I <u>are fine</u></i> (Stc 2 in Si1) <i>I'm <u>fine</u></i> (Stc 2 in Wi2)
3. Comment on receiver's status	Only in Ki3 and Si1	Both phrases begin with the same Mental Process, projecting different clauses	<i>I <u>hope</u> everyone at home is healthy</i> (Stc 3 in Ki3) <i>I <u>hope</u> you are well, too</i> (Stc 3 in Si1)
<b>4. Provide background information</b>	<b>All letters</b>	i. Background information is given by means of a Relational Process and Attribute in the present tenses, or ii. Material Processes in the past tenses are used for background information related to activities	<i>My aunt <u>is</u> a nurse / They <u>have</u> three sons</i> (Stc 3 and 7 in Ki2) <i>She's <u>very nice</u></i> (Stc 10 in Wi2) <i>Dad <u>was waiting</u> for us at the airport</i> (Stc 5 in Ki3) <i>Before her visit, we carefully <u>planned</u> a list of places</i> (Stc 8 in Si1)
<b>5. Introduce general topic</b>	<b>All letters</b>	i. The topic is found in a subordinate clause of a hypotactic clause complex, or ii. The topic is introduced with the declarative Mood.	<i>I'm writing to tell you about my school, the girls...</i> (Stc 5 in Wi2) <i>We want to thank you and your family for making our trip to Ipoh ...</i> (Stc 6 in Ki3) <i>Here are the pictures of my trip to Pulau Langkawi</i> (Stc 1 in Ki2) <i>She came to visit us last weekend</i> (Stc 7 in Si1)
<b>6. State record of experiences</b>	<b>All letters</b>	i. Activity-related experiences are described mainly with Material Processes ii. State-related experiences are described mainly with Relational Processes	<i>They took my family to a beach</i> (Stc 13 in Ki2) <i>Jason will be sitting for his SPM</i> (Stc 13 in Ki3) <i>Dad drove us to the National Zoo</i> (Stc 11 in Si1) <i>She had a wonderful time looking at them</i> (Stc 13 in Si1) <i>I have classes in English at ...</i> (Stc 6 in Wi2)



Table 6.7: Lexicogrammatical patterns realising semantic content that were used as the basis for determining section boundaries in model informal descriptive letters (continued)

Stage	Present in	Lexicogrammatical pattern	Examples
7. Comment on experiences	Only in Ki3, Si1 and Wi4	Mental and Relational Processes are used for opinions, often with a pronoun referring to the writer.	<i>We <u>regret</u> that we were not able to...</i> (Stc 7 in Wi4) <i>The prawn and lobster dishes <u>were</u> really delicious</i> (Stc 26 in Si1)
8. Related given information to the receiver	Only in Si1 and Wi2	The pronoun 'you' is used to refer directly to the receiver	<i>I wish <u>you</u> had joined us last weekend / ...Eun-mi sends <u>you</u> her regards</i> (Stc 27 and 28 in Si1) <i>It's good practice for <u>you</u> and me</i> (Stc 4 in Wi2)
9. Summarise contents in general	Only in Ki3, Wi2 and Wi4	The summary is related to the purpose of the letter. Mainly semantic considerations were used for this section.	<i>Once again, we want to thank you for your hospitality</i> (Stc 15 in Ki3, Stc 12 in Wi4) <i>I'm very happy here</i> (Stc 20 in Wi2)
10. State future plans	Only in Ki3 and Wi4	A Circumstantial Adjunct indicates the future time frame.	<i>we also want to invite you all over to Kuching this holiday</i> (Stc 15 in Ki3, Stc 12 in Wi4) <i>School will be starting in a few days' time</i> (Stc 12 in Ki3, Stc 9 in Wi4)
11. Sign off	Only in Si1 and Wi2	Conventional phrases are used to indicate the end of the communication.	<i>I have to stop here</i> (Stc 29 in Si1) <i>That's all my news</i> (Stc 20 in Wi2)
12. Invite receiver to respond	All letters	The imperative Mood is used to command the receiver, with an emphatic Finite in Si1 and Ki3. The phrases used are also conventional.	<i>Write to me soon</i> (Stc 18 in Ki2) <i>Do write often</i> (Stc 30 in Si1)

The following decisions were made in determining the stages in the letters in Table 6.7:

- Letter Wi4 is actually a shortened version of Ki3, from which stages 1, 3, 10 and 12 were left out by the teacher who used it. As such, stage 12 was included as the last compulsory stage of the genre represented by the 5 letters even though technically, it was not found in letter Wi4.
- The purpose of these descriptive letters was not as explicitly stated compared to the formal letters and informal letters of advice. The relevant stage was thus labelled as ‘introduce general topic’ rather than ‘state purpose’.
- Both activities (involving Material Processes) and states (involving Relational Processes) were recognised as experiences in the ‘State record of experiences’ stage.

Based on the analysis summarised in Table 6.7, the four compulsory stages which make up the basic schematic structure for this genre were identified as \*↓*Provide background information*, followed by *Introduce general topic*, followed by ↓*State record of experiences*, and finally *Invite receiver to respond*. However, this configuration is not as straightforward as in the previous two genres. This is because the first stage of *Provide background information* is found in variable order, in that this stage may occur after the other stages in some letters. Also, the stages marked with ↓ are recursive—occurring more than once throughout the letter. This complexity is also seen in the full schematic structure for this genre, that is ↓(1)^↓(2)^(3)^↓\*4^5^↓6^↓\*(7)^↓\*(8)^(9)^↓(10)^(11)^12, in which the numbers correspond with the stage numbers in Table 6.7 above.

#### **6.4 Genre in model formal and informal letters**

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, a distinction was made between rhetorical genres and practical genres, the former of which are called ‘text types’ in the Sydney school. These text types can be considered ‘school genres’; given the application of the Sydney school genre theory in schools. Table 6.8 on the next page provides a comparison of the schematic structure of the genres in this study with these school genres. The strongest reason for treating the genres identified in this study as different from the genres in the Sydney school (Humphrey et al., 2012; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012) is the fact that the latter are taught and learnt in an environment where English is the medium of instruction, but not the former. Apart from that, the three genres in this study are considered practical genres because of their expected use by learners outside the school environment. Nevertheless, the comparison in Table 6.8 reveals some striking similarities.

To begin with, it would appear that the genre of informal letters of advice in this study (no. 2 in the table) is very similar to the exposition genres (nos. 4 and 5 in the table), particularly the hortatory exposition genre (no. 5 in the table) in Humphrey et al. (2012). The difference lies mainly in the Register dimension, wherein the hortatory exposition is usually considered to belong to a relatively formal register. Another difference may be the source of the appeal, in that the appeal in the hortatory exposition originates from the writer, whereas the advice in the letter of advice is actually in response to the receiver’s appeal in an earlier communication. The broad similarity to the exposition genre can also be extended to the genre of formal letter of complaint (no. 1 in the Table). In fact, a letter of complaint is provided as an example of a text for the exposition genre in Humphrey et al. (2011, p. 187). However, one major difference is that not all of the model letters exemplifying the genre of complaint letter set out the arguments that justify the follow-up action that is being appealed for.

Table 6.8: Comparison of schematic structures in school genres and genres in this study

No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Source	Present study	Present study		Humphrey, Droga, and Feez (2012)			Rose and Martin (2012)	Martin and Rose (2008)	
Page	Model formal letters	Model informal letters		Page 190 – 191	Page 192	Page 196	Page 130	Page 51	
Genre name	Formal letter or complaint	Informal letter of advice	Informal descriptive letter	Exposition (Analytical)	Exposition (Hortatory)	Literary recount	Recount	Observation	
Stages	Purpose	Reference to previous communication	Background information	Position	Appeal	Orientation	Orientation	Orientation	
	General topic	Comment on previous communication	General topic	Arguments	Arguments (suggested actions)	Record of events		Record of events	Event description
	Details of dissatisfaction	Purpose	Record of experiences	Reinforcement of position	Reinforcement of appeal	Reorientation			Comment
	Expectation of prompt follow-up	List advice	Invitation to respond promptly						(Coda)
		Rationale for advice							

As for the last remaining genre, informal letter of advice (no. 3 in the table), its similarity is strongest to Martin and Rose's (2008) genre of observation (no. 8 in the table) when the optional stage of 'comment on experiences' which was present in some of the model letters exemplifying this genre is taken into consideration. This is because the genre of observation also includes the stage of 'comment' apart from the record of events. Nevertheless, even if only the basic schematic structure is considered, the genre can still be said to be similar to Humphrey et al.'s recount genre (op. cit.) and Rose and Martin's (2012) literary recount genre (nos. 6 and 7 in the table), based on their common focus on a record of events or experiences.

Based on the comparison presented above, it would appear that the genres being taught to the Malaysian learners being studied in this investigation are not greatly different from the genres that learners in an Australian school would typically work with. This is in spite of the fact that English is sociolinguistically dominant in the Australian setting in general whereas the Malaysian setting is an ESL one. This is a point of interest, given that this investigation is focused on the relationship between the form of language and the context of its use. This matter will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapter.

## **6.5 CONCLUSION**

This chapter contains all the findings on the realisation of Genre in the entire set of formal and informal letters studied. Hence, the chapter contents directly address the second research question in this study: "What is the realisation of Genre in the model texts being studied?" The preliminary discussion of the findings on the three genres included a comparison with other genres that are found in an educational setting. However, findings have not yet been compared amongst the three genre types thus far. This will be done later on in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN FINDINGS FROM CONTENT ANALYSIS OF TRANSCRIPTS**

### **7.0 OVERVIEW**

The findings from the content analysis of transcript data from interviews and observations are presented in this chapter, addressing research questions 3 and 4 on how the realisation of Register and Genre in the model letters studied is reflected in the use of the model letters for writing instruction. The chapter begins with a general presentation of the findings from the transcript analysis in relation to the Register and Genre traits identified in the text analysis that had been presented earlier on. Subsequently, the four primary findings from the content analysis of the transcript data are presented, with a discussion in each sub-section of how the findings from the content analysis are related to the findings of the text analysis.

### **7.1 General findings related to text analysis**

This section examines what was found in the transcript data in relation to the findings of the text analysis that was presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Hence, this section is organised into sub-sections according to the three components of Register, with a separate sub-section on Genre. However, the findings here are not differentiated according to the two types of texts, unlike in the previous two chapters, but discussed in a more general manner. Each of the sub-sections contains a summary of the main findings for the element concerned, together with a discussion of how this is reflected in the transcript data.

It is noted that the findings from text analysis are expressed using terms used in Systemic-Functional (SF) grammar, but it is not expected that the participants concerned would be using these terms since they are not trained in SF theory. However,

these teachers would be reasonably familiar with traditional grammar since they are all formally trained in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL). Hence, it is believed that a discussion of the use of the model letters from the perspective of lexicogrammar is still feasible since SF grammar is based on the same underlying concepts and use many terms which are found in traditional grammar.

One final note for this chapter is that the extracts that are used to illustrate and exemplify the discussion throughout this chapter are all taken from the data generated by fieldwork, that is, the transcripts of the recordings of interviews and observations conducted. It is impractical to include the entire corpus of this transcript data in this thesis, as this would run to 3,088 pages' worth of text (with reference to Table 4.3 in Chapter 4). However, one sample each of an interview and observation transcript are included in Appendices 7A and 7B. Broad translations are provided for the extracts containing phrases in Malay.

### *7.1.1 Realisation of Field*

The Register component of Field is concerned with how the model text represents the experiences of the interactants concerned, and is realised mainly in the Transitivity system and choices of lexical items. With regard to lexis, the general conclusion from sections 5.1.1 and 5.2.1 of Chapter 5 is that none of the model letters studied had very specialised Fields. In this regard, the lexical items used in the model letters were not highly unusual, nor could they be considered jargon. However, what could be noted was that some of the letters had rather inappropriate choices of lexical items, in that formal vocabulary was found in informal letters and vice versa. In examining the transcript data, it was found that working on vocabulary was a major aspect of the work done with the model letters in teaching-learning activities. The two main ways in which attention was given to lexical items were:

- Most commonly, the teacher would identify certain vocabulary items that might be difficult for the students to understand, whether in advance or as the items come up during comprehension-based discussions. The teacher would explain these by various means, including providing more familiar synonyms or quick explanations (all the participants did this, albeit to different degrees depending on the proficiency of the students they were teaching), asking students to look up the unfamiliar vocabulary in dictionaries (Participants CAL, LSF and OBL), and using translation into Malay (Participants ANC, LAH, MEM, OBL).
- The teacher might identify a particular aspect of vocabulary to focus on and work on this in an earlier lesson prior to the writing, as done by participants ALK, MSG and RJ for the model informal letters. ALK focused on modal auxiliaries (Transcript 0712WiibALK lines 28 and 37), MSG on phrases for giving advice (Transcript 0805MiibMSG lines 81 – 84) and RJ on writing sentences to give advice using modal auxiliaries (Transcript 0714WiibRJ lines 70 – 72). As for the model formal letters, participant TAR focused on sequence connectors (Transcript 1006fTARob1lines 51 – 53), as did LSF except that she did so during the course of going through the model letter with her students rather than in a separate lesson (Transcript 0426fLSFob1lines 206 – 212).

One salient point that can be made about the vocabulary work done is that one aspect which received little attention was appropriateness in terms of register. Teachers were generally satisfied with getting across the basic meaning of words and phrases to their students, and rarely mentioned alternative ways of expressing the same meaning



according to the formality of the context. For instance, in Extracts 1 to 3 below, the teacher provides less formal alternatives for terms found in a model formal letter, but does not mention the appropriateness or relative formality of the items.

Extract 1 – fWPob331, 333

*/draw your attention/ ... It means that I would like you to look at this matter, ok, that I'm going to complain about  
Rectify the problem means to correct the... problem*

Extract 2 – fSTob331, 551

*//have been putting up with this unbearable situation// That means you cannot, what, stand the situation anymore*

*/unsatisfactory school canteen/ means you are not happy about the school canteen*

Extract 3 – fMTob201, 232

*Workers not properly attired, that means they are not wearing proper clothes*

*/there is a foul stench/ means? ... Yes, very bad smell, strong bad smell... Another one more, /foul language/, what is it ... Bad language, ok*

Apart from the work on lexis discussed above, the major aspect of lexicogrammar related to Field—Transitivity—was not given very much attention in the use of the model letters. The findings of the text analysis related to Field is summarised in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Summary of lexicogrammatical findings from text analysis related to Field

Aspect	Summary
Participant types and agency	There were relatively fewer occurrences of human Participants in most of the model formal letters, wherein human agency was minimised by means of using the passive voice. The informal letters had relatively more human Participants, particularly the letters describing experiences; agency was clear in most of the letters.
Circumstance types	The most frequently occurring type of Circumstance in all the letters was Circumstance of location.

Table 7.1: Summary of lexicogrammatical findings from text analysis related to Field (continued)

Distribution of Process types	Predominantly Material and Relational Processes were used in the model formal letters to describe the problem and desired actions, whereas Relational and Mental Processes occurred the most frequently in the model informal letters
Dominant tense	The present tenses dominated in the model formal letters and model informal letters giving advice, whereas mainly past tenses were used in the model informal letters describing experiences.

Even when it was taken into consideration that the teachers would not be using the SF terms of Process, Participants and Circumstances, it was found that the use of verbs (to use the term in traditional grammar) was rarely mentioned, apart from emphasising the dominant tense of a model text. This is shown by the statements made by many of the teachers during their interviews, as illustrated by Extracts 4 to 6 below.

Extract 4 – iMTtv477, 479; bkgd2163 (Participant TAR)

*I'll be looking into their grammar here ... tenses la, what are the tenses they should use ... because I noticed that they are poor in tenses. Sometimes they really mix their tenses.*

*...whenever I give them the sample or model essay, I ask them to underline, look at the sentence, what is the tense used? Ask them to underline the tenses, stress on the tenses*

Extract 5 – iMTtv373 (Participant MSG)

*... and then tenses... tenses /I hope you do it well/... because she was talking about ...the first semester exam, /how's your result in your first semester exam? I hope you did well/ right? Supposed to be past tense*

Extract 6 – fSTtv653, 655 (Participant NEP)

*...this one I will emphasise on the use of the past tenses... and then of course past tenses plus the present tense if they are going to give suggestion*

Subsequently, these teachers did indeed carry through with this emphasis during the lesson observations, as seen in Extracts 7 to 9 below. Nevertheless, these

explanations are not inextricably connected to the Field of the letters, being more closely related to the overall purpose of the letters to give advice to the receiver than the Field of the letter per se.

Extract 7 – iMTbv401 (Participant TAR)

*...when you give advice, you use present tense... Ok, present tense and future tense; /will/, if you can see, /they will/, it will be future tense*

Extract 8 – iMTbv286 – 290 (Participant MSG)

*...if you talk about your daily routine, things that you always do on daily basis, not necessarily on daily basis, on weekly basis, you should write in present tense*

*Ok, you want to talk about what happened in the past, you must use past tense. //Last year, before my PMR exam// ... I always studied until midnight// What is the past tense here?*

Extract 9 – iSTob379 (Participant NEP)

*This letter that you're going to write is about what you want your friend to do, it's about what, how you want to help your friend. So this is not something that has happened. So what type of tenses must you use? Is it past tense? ... Present tense, so remember, use only present tense. Don't say, "He was playing badminton." Alright?*

The connection between using the present tense and the goal of getting the relevant parties to take the desired action in the model formal letters is likewise shown in Extract 10 below.

Extract 10 – fWPbv874

*...what if I change /is/ to /was/?... The place is not dirty anymore. You are right. So what's the point of complaining? ... I want to remind you that when you write complaint letter, always use present tense. ... If you use past tense, it means you have no problem anymore. That thing has passed. But now the problem is still there, so use present tense.*

Apart from tenses, only one participant, ALK, gave a fairly detailed explanation of how modal auxiliaries function in giving advice, as shown in Extract 11 on the next page.

*Ok, mesti or harus [Translation: must or obliged to] ...That's in BM, but in English, it's a must, it's ... an order. You must do it. Ok, if you want to use it as a suggestion, how do you make it softer? How to make it not like an order?*

*You can still use the word /must/ but you ... add on the word /try/, /you must try to respect your younger siblings/. Then you can use the modal /must/ as an advice, alright? So remember when you give people advice, you should use words like /can/, /must/, /try/ ok, /must try/, /should/...*

### 7.1.2 Realisation of Tenor

The second component of Register, Tenor, is concerned with the relationship and interaction between the writers and receivers of the model letters, and it was in this aspect that the greatest difference in Register traits was found between the formal and informal letters. To begin with, the writer-reader relationship is radically different in the letters, which also reflects differently on the purpose of the letters in terms of the main speech function being enacted. This difference is summarised in Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2: Summary of writer-receiver relationships in model letters

Letter type	Purpose	Writer-receiver relationship	Comments
Formal letter of complaint	To describe a problem faced by the writer and seek corrective action	The writer and receiver are in a relationship of infrequent contact and low affective involvement; the receiver is either higher in social hierarchy than the writer or the writer has no direct social connection to the receiver	The writer is either in a poor position or has no position at all to command the receiver to take action based on relative power
Informal letter of advice	To suggest action in response to a problem faced by the receiver	The writer and receiver are peers in an equal, non-hierarchical relationship of fairly frequent contact and high affective involvement	The writer has no position to directly command the receiver to take action based on relative power
Informal descriptive letter	To describe various experiences of the writer		Relative power is not a factor as no demand is made of the receiver by the writer

In presenting the two types of letters, the participants appeared to have different strategies for the formal and informal letters, as summarised in Table 7.3 on the next page. The majority of the participants introduced the formal letters directly or based on the purpose of the letter, and the informal letters based on the typical recipients. Nevertheless, for the formal letters, the participants concerned also referred to the identity of the recipient later in the lesson.

Table 7.3: How participants introduced genre exemplars to students

Genre	How the genre was introduced	Paraphrase	Participants
Formal letter of complaint	Directly	“Today we’re going to write a formal letter.”	MAT, MEM, IBI, LAH, CAL, LLE
	Through the identity of the receiver	“A formal letter is a letter we write to...”	None
	Through the purpose (complaining)	“If we want to make a complaint, we write a formal letter.”	SAB, TAR, LSF, NEP, ALK, JAT, OBL, RJ
Informal letters of advice and informal descriptive letters	Through the task (directly)	“Today we’re going to write an informal letter for this question.”	IBI, LAH, CAL, LSF, ALK
	Through the identity of the receiver	“An informal letter is a letter we write to our friends and family.”	ANC, MAT, MEM, SAB, LAH, MSG, TAR, LLE, NEP, JAT, OBL, RJ
	Through the purpose	“If we want to give advice/share our news, we write an informal letter.”	None

The findings presented in Table 7.3 indicate that the participants were well aware that the identity of the receiver was an important factor in determining the register of the letters, although the identity of the receiver was not linked to the writer per se in that the writer-receiver relationship was not analysed in detail. Nonetheless, even if the formal letters were not introduced via the receiver’s identity, this matter was invariably brought up during discussions with the students, including the thought-provoking exchanges in Extracts 12 and 13 on the next page.

Extract 12 – iWPob344, 346

*... your boss? Would you write an informal letter to your employee? <SS> Most probably, you will write something which is not in a formal letter, but most probably that would be a memo, that's what we call a memo. Memo is less formal in terms of format, but in terms of content, if the memo is from a boss to... the people working under him, then the content is still formal. (Student's name), say you... like somebody in the office, who happens to be your <SS> ... your staff, alright, and you would like to bring her out, do you write a formal letter to her? You don't ...*

*... the context of boss and—employee-employer relationship, when the boss writes to the employee, means that it has to go through some kind of formality , and ... if it's not letter which is formal in format, you go for memo writing*

Extract 13 – fKSob347 – 349, 351

*...why is it formal? <SS> Because you're writing to ...? <SS> To the teacher, so every time you write to me, it's going to be formal?*

*...it is an official document, so that is why it is formal. You're not writing to me as a friend, alright?*

As it is, the writer-receiver relationship shown in Table 7.2 above is played out in various lexicogrammatical patterns, as shown in Table 7.4 below.

Table 7.4: Summary of lexicogrammatical findings from text analysis related to Tenor

Issue	Aspect	Summary
Intimacy and politeness	Use of first person	All the letters studied used the first person.
	Use of vocatives	Very few vocatives were found, even in the informal letters.
	Use of distancing phrases	Distancing phrases, in particular 'I/we would like to...' showed the writer's respect and deference to the receiver. This was found mostly in the model formal letters but also in the model informal letters, which is unusual.
	Use of formulaic expressions	Formulaic expressions of politeness were mostly frequently found being used to end informal letters.

Table 7.4: Summary of lexicogrammatical findings from text analysis related to Tenor (continued)

Giving commands versus inequality in relative power	Demands are made as projected clauses	A hypotactic clause complex is used, in which the main clause contains a Mental Process which projects the Material Process of the command as a subordinate clause. This was most commonly seen in the model formal letters of complaint.
	Demands are made with incongruent Mood types	Many commands were in the declarative Mood—which is usually used for statements—rather than the typical Mood type of imperatives for commands. These declarative Mood structures also contained modal auxiliaries, which justify the required action on grounds of morality, logic or necessity.
	The passive voice is used to highlight or downplay agency	The passive voice enables the omission of agency and the emphasis of the Goal by placing it in Theme position. The former is used to minimise the receiver's part in exacerbating the problem, and the latter is used to highlight the desired action on the receiver's part.
	Mood Adjuncts and the anticipatory 'it' structure were used to present the desired action	Mood Adjuncts and the anticipatory 'it' structure were used to present the desired action—which is actually the command—in a very indirect manner by framing the command as an opinion (I think...) or an objective fact (It is important to...). This was only seen in the model informal letters of advice.

The first section of Table 7.4 summarises the patterns related to politeness in all the letters as well as intimacy in the informal letters, whereas the second section summarises the patterns that reflect strategies to deal with the discrepancy between the writer and receiver's relative power and the need for the writer to command the receiver. However, these patterns were largely not given attention by the participants except for one exception: agency in the model formal letters was mentioned in passing by participant ALK during the interview before the lesson observation (Transcript fALKib Line 33 – *And then they have to learn how to write in the passive form, has greatly reduced...*), but this was not followed up on in the lesson itself. However, as discussed earlier at the end of section 7.1.1, ALK did give a relatively detailed explanation of how modal auxiliaries are used in statements which are then seen as 'advice' rather than 'orders'.

### 7.1.3 Realisation of Mode

The Register traits of the model letters in terms of Mode were not greatly unusual in general, nor was there a very noticeable difference found between the two kinds of letters in terms of lexical density or grammatical intricacy. This was not entirely unexpected, given that the model letters were fundamentally the same form of communication in that all the letters were written texts which formed part of a two-way interaction. By and large, the participants did acknowledge the letters as part of a two-way written communication, although this was not always stated explicitly. Some of the participants compared letter-writing to other forms of communication, particularly electronic mail and texting (ANC, LAH, TAR, LLE, ALK, RJ, OBL), but only one participant, JAT, carried out activities that compared emails and informal letters. Generally, it would appear that it was assumed that students already know what letters are in general and how the postal system works. Extracts 14 to 16 represent the few references that were made to Mode by participants.

#### Extract 14 – iKSob53

*And then you write the address of the recipient on the envelope. So if you want to know uncle Vernon's address, you have to look at the envelope, right?*

#### Extract 15 – fWPbv297

*So that the letter don't get sent to another place, right? If you want to write to the Waterworks Department and then the address is Xxxx xxxxx, then the letter will come here! So the person will never receive your letter, isn't it?*

#### Extract 16 – fWPbv831

*Sender's address, you do not have to write down your name. Why? Because your name will only appear after you sign the letter. That's where you write down your name*

In terms of the organisation of the letters as messages, the Theme-Rheme patterns in the various types of letters were similar in some aspects and quite



distinctively different in others, as shown in Table 7.5 below. In this regard, the teachers did not pay very much attention in general to the organisation of the letters as messages, that is, how sentences are connected to each other and how the message is developed as a whole. As for the findings on the lexicogrammatical patterns related to Mode, these are as summarised in Table 7.6 below. These patterns likewise received little attention, apart from some work done on connectors by participants TAR and LSF, which was discussed earlier in section 7.1.1.

Table 7.5: Summary of findings from text analysis related to Mode (Theme and Rheme)

Facet	Aspect / Type of letter	Theme-Rheme pattern
Similarities	Markedness of Themes	Themes were mostly unmarked in the majority of the letters, regardless of type
	Frequency of Interpersonal Themes	Interpersonal Themes were more frequently found in the model informal letters
	Thematic progression	The most common pattern of Thematic progression was reiterated Theme and the zigzag pattern of progression
Distinctions	Model formal letters	There was no outstanding pattern in terms of Theme types
	Model informal letters of advice	The pronouns ‘you’ and ‘I’ made up the bulk of the Themes in these letters.
	Informal descriptive letter	Themes related to people were the most frequent in these letters, but not restricted to just ‘you’ and ‘I’.

Table 7.6: Summary of lexicogrammatical findings from text analysis related to Mode

Aspect	Summary
Types of conjunctions	The most commonly used type of conjunctions was elaborating conjunctions in both types of model letters, particular sequence connectors.
Cohesive references	The most common form of cohesive reference in the majority of the model letters was anaphoric reference by means of demonstrative pronouns.
Nominalization	The effect of nominalization to ‘pack’ information more densely in a structure was made use of to summarise previous content so that it could be referred to in a general sense, particularly in cause and effect relationships. However, no nominalizations at all were found in the model informal letters describing experiences

#### 7.1.4 Realisation of Genre

Apart from the configurations of Field, Tenor and Mode that make up a particular situation in which a particular genre is used, a text of that genre is also characterised by the stages in the text that work towards the overall social purpose of the text. To recapitulate, three genres were identified among the model letters studied, which are:

- Formal letters of complaint, with the basic schematic structure of *State purpose*, followed by *State general topic*, followed by *State details of dissatisfaction*, and finally *Present expectation of prompt follow-up*, which was found in the same order in all the model formal letters.
- Informal letters of advice, with the basic schematic structure of *\*Reference to previous communication*, followed by *Comment on previous communication*, followed by *State purpose*, followed by *State advice*, and finally *\*State rationale for advice*, wherein the stages marked with \* were found in a different order in some model letters.
- Informal descriptive letters, with the basic schematic structure of *\*↵Provide background information*, followed by *Introduce general topic*, followed by *↵State record of experiences*, and finally *Invite receiver to respond*; in which the stage of *Provide background information* is found in variable order and the stages marked with ↵ are recursive.

A fair amount of attention was given to the staged nature of the letters by the participants during teaching and learning activities. One point that was emphasised by all the participants was the purpose or reason for writing, which was to be stated at the beginning of the letter, as illustrated by Extracts 17 to 20 below.

Extract 17 – fKStv432

*...the first paragraph here, because it's a complaint letter, so the purpose of writing it...*

Extract 18 – fWPob607

*Ok, the first paragraph, you state the reason why you write the letter*

Extract 19 – iKSob105

*What is the purpose of the letter? <SS> You can find it in the first paragraph.*

Extract 20 – iKSbv417

*That will be the introduction, correct. ... Ok, then after that... the most important thing here... it would be, you must add in the purpose of the letter*

As for the organisational structure of the various letters that was presented by the teachers, this could be summarised in the formal letters as: *purpose of writing*, followed by *explanation of problem*, then *suggested solution* and finally *hope for action*, as exemplified by Extracts 21 and 22 below.

Extract 21 – fKSob53 to fKSob55 (irrelevant parts are left out)

*So in the second paragraph, you are going to state the main problem ... what you are going to complain.  
And then the third paragraph, right, ... You can see this fellow is telling about ... his suggestion towards the problem, alright?  
And then 4 is ... what should be done by the authority towards this problem.  
And the final paragraph is what?... what you hope and... it's like your appreciation ... towards what the authority has done ... you hope something good is coming up*

Extract 22 – iKSbv105 to iKSbv109 (irrelevant parts are left out)

*What is the purpose of the letter? <SS> You can find it in the first paragraph  
... every paragraph has a complaint, right?  
What are the suggestions made by this Nur Salam to the principal?  
Where can you find the answer? It's in paragraph 6 ... //what did the writer say at the end of the letter?//  
Look at the last paragraph. He hoped that the school will take prompt action, right, regarding the unsatisfactory condition of the canteen*

For the informal letters, the general structure presented by the participants was: *introduction* or *purpose*, followed by *content*, *conclusion* and finally *closure*. This is illustrated by Extracts 23 and 24 below.

Extract 23 – iMTbv258 to iMTbv266 (irrelevant parts are left out)

*//You may begin your introduction in any of the following ways// ...  
Now, in your second paragraph, what should you do? /You may write  
the main reason for writing your letter, if you have not done so in the  
first paragraph...  
/Subsequent paragraphs/ means paragraph 3, 4, 5 ...  
in your concluding paragraph, what must you do? <SS> /inform the  
reader that you are ending the letter/ You don't stop abruptly, ok, you  
don't stop abruptly, you have to give a signpost*

Extract 24 – iMTbv62 to iMTbv70 (irrelevant parts are left out)

*Introduction <writes the word in full> Ok, this is where you can say  
/Hi, how are you? What have you been doing now?/  
... for the points part, you can do... as many paragraphs as you can,  
depending ... on your points  
... what do people usually write for the closure? ... I hope, or what  
you wish for ... maybe you say /I hope to see you soon/  
... Signature, you sign... here? <pointing at the bottom left corner>  
Ok, love...*

In terms of presenting the structure to the students, participants generally did so more directly and systematically for the model formal letters, with many of them providing notes on the contents of a typical letter of complaint (MEM, LAH, TAR, MSG, CAL, LLE, LSF, ALK, OBL, RJ). An example of such notes is found in Figure 7.1 on page 213. However, for the informal letters, the notes given—if any—covered the layout of the letters but did not include details on the organisation of contents. One example of these notes is found in Figure 7.2 on page 214. The only exception was participant ANC, who came up with a set of questions that helped the students to analyse both types of letters in terms of the organisation of ideas in the various paragraphs as well as various characteristics of the letters. These questions are found in Figure 7.3 on page 215. One possible reason for this discrepancy is that the genre of the

formal letter is stipulated in the syllabus for Form 4 (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003d, p. 12), but informal letters cover several genres, including letters of advice, descriptive letters, letters of appreciation and so on (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003d, pp. 10, 17). It is therefore not as straightforward to provide notes on the organisation of this variety of informal letters compared to the formal letter of complaint.

Figure 7.1: Example of notes provided for a model formal letter


### Making and Responding to Complaints

We write a letter of complaint because we are unhappy over a service provided or when a situation upsets us.

- A letter of complaint takes the form of a formal letter.
- Formal letters should be brief and precise.
- The language used should be formal. Short forms or contractions should be avoided.

Generally a formal letter should have the following features:

<p>sender's address →</p> <p>recipient's name and address →</p> <p>salutation →</p> <p>subject heading →</p> <p>the first paragraph • is not numbered • begins at the same margin as the salutation and heading →</p> <p>the second and subsequent paragraphs are • numbered • indented on the first line →</p> <p>the last paragraph is not numbered →</p> <p>closing remark →</p> <p>the ending →</p> <p>signature of sender →</p> <p>name of sender is written in: • capital letters • brackets →</p>	<p>23 Jalan Sementar Taman Alam Indah 15200 Kota Bahru Kelantan</p> <hr/> <p>The Director Water Works Department 1653 Jalan Mahmud 15200 Kota Bahru Kelantan</p> <p>4 MARCH 20__</p> <p>Dear Sir</p> <p><u>Burst Pipe Along the Road Leading to Taman Alam Indah</u></p> <p>On behalf of the residents of Taman Alam Indah, I would like to draw your attention to the above matter which has affected the residents of Taman Alam Indah.</p> <p>2. Two weeks ago a report was lodged with your department about a burst pipe along the road leading to Taman Alam Indah. However, nothing has been done to rectify the problem.</p> <p>3. The burst pipe has greatly reduced the water pressure in our homes causing a lot of inconvenience and disruption to our daily routine. For instance, many of us are unable to run our automatic washing machines or use the shower.</p> <p>4. Those living in flats are worse off. The low water pressure has reduced the water flow to a trickle. Many of them now have to collect and store water to ensure there is enough for them to use.</p> <p>We sincerely hope you will attend to this matter personally and promptly to ease our burden. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.</p> <p>Thank you.</p> <p>Yours faithfully</p> <p><i>Seng Jia</i> (LIM SENG JIA)</p>	<p>the date written in capital letters</p> <p>the first paragraph • state the reason</p> <p>the second and subsequent paragraphs • describe and elaborate on the problem • include examples to support your purpose</p> <p>the last paragraph • express your hope</p>
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Source: Tan and Ng (2002, p. 29)

Figure 7.2: Example of notes provided for a model informal letter

<u>Guidelines on writing an informal letter</u>	
1. Write your <b>address</b> at the top right-hand corner of the letter.	
2. Write the <b>date</b> below your address.	
3. Write the <b>greeting and salutation</b> below the date but on the left hand side of the letter. Begin your greeting/salutation with "Dear...". For close friends and family, you may use "Dearest..." or "My dear..."	
4. Start by writing the <b>introduction or opening remark</b> of your letter <b>below the salutation</b> . You may begin your introduction in any of the following ways:	
a) <b>asking about the person's health</b>  Example: How are you?  How's life been treating you?	
b) <b>telling the person that you have received his/her letter</b>  Example: I received your letter <u>yesterday/ last week/ on the 2 of August.</u>	
c) <b>expressing happiness</b>  Example: I'm so glad to hear...	
d) <b>expressing sorrow</b>  Example: I'm sorry to hear ...	
e) <b>apologizing</b>  Example: I'm sorry for not writing ...	
f) <b>thanking the person for something</b>  Example: Thank you for the lovely gift...	
5. In the <b>second paragraph</b> you may <b>write the main reason for writing your letter</b> , if you have not done so in the first paragraph.	
6. In the <b>subsequent paragraphs</b> you must <b>write based on the notes given</b> .  *Remember to elaborate on all the points given.  Add two more points if you are required to do so.	
7. In the <b>concluding paragraph</b> , you must inform the reader that you are ending the letter.  Example: I have to pen off now, I'll write again soon.  You can also convey your regards or best wishes.  Example:  Please give my regards to...  I wish you all the best in ...	
8. Make sure <b>all the paragraphs are indented</b> .	
9. Write the <b>closing or subscription on the right-hand side of the letter, below the conclusion</b> . The <b>first word</b> of the subscription must begin with a <b>capital letter</b> .  Example: Yours sincerely  With love  Your loving son/daughter	
10. Finally <b>sign your name at the bottom</b> of the letter on the <b>right-hand corner</b> .    Reminder: When you have finished, read through your letter to check for mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Make corrections if necessary.	

Source: Compiled by participant MSG from various commercial sources in combination with her personal input

Figure 7.3: Questions used to help students analyse formal and informal letters

22 Jalan Besar,  
74300, Kuching.  
12 June 2011

Dear Uncle Venon,

How are you? How's everyone at home. I hope everyone is healthy and happy over there. I am writing to let you know we arrived safely in Kuching last night. Dad was waiting for us at the airport and we managed to be at grandma's house for dinner.

We want to thank you and your family for making our trip to Ipoh a memorable one. Thanks also for the many gifts and souvenirs you bought us. Aunty's cooking was indeed sumptuous and was one of the highlights of the trip. Of course we will also remember the wonderful trip to Penang and Langkawi. We regret that we were not able to stay longer. In fact, dad has promised to come along the next holiday after watching the video tape of our trip.

School will be starting in a few days' time and we so have to start revising for our coming exams. Jason will be sitting for his SPM and so, he won't be going anywhere for a while, but you can be sure that I will be coming over during the long December break. While we were away, my dog, Lucky, gave birth to eight puppies.

Once again, we want to thank you for your hospitality and we also want to invite you all over to Kuching this holidays. Do call or write to us soon.

Love,  
Joel

Read the letter above and answer the following questions.

1. **Who** wrote this letter?
2. **Where** does he live?
3. Who did he write the letter to?
4. What is the main **purpose** of this letter?
5. **Where** does Mr Venon live?
6. State one of the **highlights** of the stay at Uncle Venon's house.
7. During their stay at Uncle Venon's home, **where** did Uncle Venon take his two nephews to?
8. What did Joel say before he ended the letter?

Nur Salam b Osman,  
SMK Kota Samarahan,  
93400 Kota Samarahan

Pn Hj Juita bte Hj Sanusi,  
The Principal  
SMK Kota Samarahan,  
94300 Kota Samarahan.

11 MAY 2011


Dear Madam,

Unsatisfactory School Canteen

On behalf of the students of form 4C, I would like to lodge a complaint about the school canteen.

1. First and foremost, the food served is not covered and flies can be seen hovering over the food. This may lead to food poisoning. Moreover, the food served is also not fresh. In fact, a few of us were down with diarrhoea after consuming food from the canteen.
2. Apart from that, the food is also too expensive. A small plate of curry noodles costs RM2 and many poor students cannot afford it.
3. Besides, the canteen workers do not wear aprons and caps as required. They are also rude to students. One can even hear them using abusive language.
4. Another complaint is that the same menu is served day in and day out. The students are bored with fried noodle and nasi lemak.
5. Thus, we would like to suggest that the canteen serve a variety of food at a cheaper price. Canteen workers should wear proper uniforms and observe cleanliness. The food should be properly covered to keep away the flies and dust.
6. We sincerely hope that the school would take prompt action regarding the unsatisfactory condition of the canteen. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

  
(Nur Salam b Osman)

Answer the following questions.

1. Who is **writer** of the letter?
2. **Who** is this letter addressed to?
3. What is the **purpose** of writing this letter?
4. List down three **complaints** about the canteen.
5. **Why** are the students bored with the canteen food?
6. State the **suggestions** made by the writer to the principal.
7. What did the writer say at the end of his letter?

Source: From participant ANC

## 7.2 General findings on emphasis in writing instruction

The following section provides an alternative perspective on the findings from the transcript data, in that it constitutes a more holistic view of the way in which the model letters were used by the teachers in writing instruction. The sub-sections are organised according to the four primary findings on the aspects of the texts which were emphasised by teachers: layout, language, content and overall structure. Since the focus in this section is on how the participants make use of the model letters in writing instruction, the findings here are initially presented in the terms used by the participants themselves, and subsequently discussed in terms of the findings from text analysis.

### 7.2.1 *Emphasis on layout*

When the participants were asked what aspect of the letters they would emphasise to their students, all sixteen participants gave some kind of response related to ‘format’, as exemplified by Extracts 25 to 27 below. In fact, the focus on format was stated explicitly as a lesson objective in eleven of the fifteen lessons observed on formal letters and six of the sixteen lessons observed on informal letters.

Extract 25 – bkgd2052

*I will always go for the format first. Y’know, I will make it clear to them that this is how it looks like, y’know, and then I will go, like drilling them, right, this is how you write the address*

Extract 26 – fKStv394

*So most probably I’ll start with... going into the format first la, because it’s my first lesson with them*

Extract 27 – fWPtv675

*Mostly on the format, the features that they need to know when they want to write the letter*

What the participants meant by ‘format’ was the physical layout of the letters, which was subsequently also reflected in teaching and learning activities, whether it was



teacher-centred explanations or individual guidance given to students. Format, as presented by the participants, included such elements as:

- the precise position of the date (e.g. fMTob37, 39 – *Date... where? Left or right?... Right, the same line as where you put ... maybe you put /Sarawak/ here*)
- how the date is written (e.g. fWPob831 – *The date is written in capital letter, the month. Date goes to the right hand side and the month, spell it out in full in capital letters. So if you write this date, not acceptable ... /24.2.11/ ... /24 Feb 2011/ Also not acceptable. What other format do we have for dates? ... Alright, talking about the “th” ... not necessary. You do not have to put the “th”, the “nd” or the “rd”, ok? You don’t have to. It must be spelled using ... capital letters*)
- the precise position of addresses (e.g. fSTob321 – *Where? Where are you supposed to write the address, (student’s name)? ... Top left hand corner, ok, this is left, this is right. ... Ok, you must remember. So you must write the address at the top left hand corner*)
- the type of phrase for salutation and signing off (e.g. fWPbv33 – *Dear Sir, if he’s a man. If the person is a lady? ... Dear Madam, or Dear Miss, ok, Ms or Miss; and iWPob342 – For formal letter, you write /yours faithfully/, you don’t write there /your friend/ or... or /warmest regards/.... But in your informal letter, you can write and make your signing off more personal. It says there, //your loving cousin//*)
- the precise position of the salutation and signing off (e.g. iSTob36 – *Ok, (student’s name)... where are you going to write the salutation? Show us where you write. <Student hesitates> Right, right; and iMTbv193 – Ok, the ending? Where do you write the ending? Left or right? When you*

*sign your name, where do you write, class? ... Look at it, /your friend, Shakira/ Where do you write that?)*

- line spacing (e.g. fSTob374 – *So you leave a line here ... a space, so make sure you write no. 2 ... and then at least 1 cm ... and then you start*)
- numbering (e.g. fMTob53 – *for the first paragraph you don't have to number, you don't have to number. As you see there, there's no number 1, but the second paragraph then you have to number with number 2*)
- spelling (e.g. fMTob58 – *When you write /yours sincerely/... don't forget to write the 's' you keep on forgetting to write the 's'*)
- aspects of text formatting, like:
  - underlining (e.g. fKSob180 – *you have to underline. Remember to underline your reference; and fMTob53 – Left, ok, sender's address. So after you write, blablabla, Jalan blablabla, postcode ... Then what do you do?... You make a line or you draw a line*)
  - capitalisation (e.g. fWPob412 – *February you spell in capital letter, alright, and make sure you spell the month correctly*)
  - punctuation (e.g. fSTob543 – *do you notice, you see your book there...there is no comma, no punctuation, right? But here, ok now... you have comma here, you have full stop here ...Now this is not compulsory, but you have to be consistent. Means that once you put comma here, the first part comma, means all this part you must put comma until the end here.*)
  - paragraphing (e.g. fKSob55 – *That is your first paragraph. ... //Begin at the same margin as the salutation and heading// So it*

*means that you have to write it the same margin, going down, yeah, the same margin.)*

To relate this emphasis on layout to the findings of the text analysis, the most relevant aspects here are Tenor and Mode, the former because many of the elements of the layout are tied to the identity of writer and recipient and the latter because the layout helps to organise the letter as a message. This was not entirely unrecognised by the participants, since some teachers did include explanations that pointed to the underlying concepts of Tenor and Mode, for instance:

- iMTtv149, referring to the signing off for an informal letter – *...because this is somebody whom you know so you can just sign your name*
- fWPob301, referring to the “subject heading” component of formal letters – *So you must state what is your letter all about so that people will know immediately, when they open the letter they will know what is the whole letter about*

However, such explanations were the exceptions rather than the rule, and the bulk of explanations given were of the type exemplified by Extracts 28 to 30 below, which could generally be paraphrased as “This is how the letter is set out because that is the format of a formal/informal letter.”

Extract 28 – iMTtv143

*They should know how to differentiate writing the address between formal and informal and they know how to... they can tell me*

Extract 29 – iSTob408

*Remember, no numbers. Don't put number 2, this is not an official letter. I thought you've done it in the lower forms? Yes... Informal letter, there is no 1, 2, 3, no numbers*

Extract 30 – fSTob446

*You have to put, because that is the format, ok?*

7.2.2 *Emphasis on language*

Language was another major emphasis of the participants, particularly when they were talking about what aspects of their students' work they paid attention to. However, this focus on language was not in the sense of appropriateness according to register and genre, but rather general grammatical accuracy, spelling and punctuation. This concern appears to be consistent no matter what level of proficiency the students concerned were at, as shown by Extracts 31 to 36 below.

Extract 31 – bkgd343: Mixed proficiency (intermediate) class;  
participant is talking about the problems faced by students in writing.

*I notice that most of the students, they are weak in spelling also, it's not going to talk about grammar, but they are also weak in spelling.*

Extract 32 – iMTob136, 138: Lower-proficiency class; participant is giving guidance as students write in class

*Ok, let's say you still want to use this sentence... Let's say you still want to use this sentence, how are you going to correct this one? Here are some? Some step, here are some step? Some step? /Some step/ or /some steps/?*

*This is correct but it might be better if you put /here are some steps you can follow/*

Extract 33 – iMTtv317, 331, 333: Higher-proficiency class;  
participant is talking about the work done by students

*...and then the introduction, no mistake, just like they know what they are writing, ... They use idioms also, y'know, /donkey years/... What else? Ah, you see, /I have to pen off now/*

*As good one, but still got a lot of grammar mistake...*

*More errors. ... Usually for the exercise, most of the comments I give is "Good effort", "Well done" because they know how to write. Because since this is a second good class, ok... "Good try". "Good Try" means I don't really understand the essay, but at least*

Extract 34 – fWPtv790, Lower-proficiency class; participant is talking about work done by the students

*Language... compared to others, I think she has less ... spelling mistake, and language is better than the others, I noticed.*

Extract 35 – iMTbv290: Higher-proficiency class; participant is giving input to students before they start writing

*...so actually when you write, you have to think. You have to think, oh, should I use past tense or present tense? Or other tenses—past continuous, present continuous? Ok, you have to think, don't just write without thinking, because that is the—if you write without thinking, you will commit a lot of mistakes, ok?*

Extract 36 – fWPtv790, Higher-proficiency class; participant is talking about work done by the students

*he didn't manage to use proper words to describe, to describe his idea, for example //the placed for cook is dirty//... //the food surrounded by flies// ok, I got what he's trying to say, but being a formal letter, this is ... there are too many mistakes. //This matter has beens three month past.// So... without looking at the other paragraphs, this sentence is meaningless.*

Apart from grammatical accuracy in general, some participants did give attention to more specific aspects of grammar, for instance tenses and connectors (Adjuncts), as discussed earlier in section 7.1.1, and also gender-specific pronouns, as done by participant OBL (iWPtv522 – 534). The findings presented thus far indicate that teachers do indeed pay substantial attention to language use in writing, but it is noted that the aspects which were highlighted have generally not been directly related to any specific aspect of Register, whereas structures that were much more directly connected to Register were not highlighted, for instance distancing phrases that characterise the Tenor of formal letters (discussed in Chapter 5, pg. 134 – 135).

Nevertheless, it is noted that there were some exceptions to this tendency. To begin with, some of the language foci presented by certain participants were related to the purpose of the letters, specifically the use of modal auxiliaries and other typical

phrases for giving advice like “it is important to” (Letters Mi2 & Mi4) and “Remember to...” (Letters Si3 and Mi4), which were given attention by participant MSG (shown in Extract 37 below). The link to purpose relates this aspect of language use to the Field of the letter concerned.

Extract 37 – iMTtv406, 408

*...most of them, like /most importantly/, /it is advisable/, especially the word /remember/, they remembered that <laughs> Because if not, they will be using /you should do this/, /you must do this/, y'know? That's the way they write when they give advice*

*I said, When you were in form 1, maybe it's ok, /you must do this/, /you must do that/, but now you are in form 4 so have to add some words, sophisticated words.*

Likewise, some teachers pointed out to their students that that their letters need to have the appropriate tone, politeness and level of formality, which is a direct reference to Tenor. This is illustrated in Extracts 38 to 42 below.

Extract 38 – fKSob428, 430

*And when you do that, the tone of your letter must be right. If you start to write and you say, I want you to look at it now ... will they look at your letter? They will do that and they will just throw it away. ... Ok, so writing this kind of letter, you have to have the appropriate, the right ... tone. No strong words*

Extract 39 – iMTob439

*...when you write to a friend, just be—use simple sentences, be very informal, ok, don't have to be formal. Use short, short, simple sentences, and be informal, ok?*

Extract 40 – fWPbv287

*...when you write an informal letter, you are writing to somebody that you know, so you can be very casual. When it is formal, it is something serious. Ok, it is something serious, it is something formal. So the language that you use should be formal. And also, it should be precise*

Extract 41 – iKSbv170

*when you are writing a friendly letter, the language that you use—bahasa, gaya bahasa—the language, the style of language, very informal, friendly, just like you are talking to somebody, ok, conversational type of language. And then you can talk about... you can even put in some jokes, alright, jokes—you know what is jokes? Alright, you can put in some jokes, you can also ... even talk about your feelings, alright, your emotion, how you feel.*

Extract 42 – fWPbv340

*It's more personal and conversational, meaning that the way you write, as if you are talking to someone. It's more relaxed. Of course, talking to someone but in actual fact you are writing. Ok, formal letter you don't do that. Whatever you have in your heart, especially complaint letter, even though you're very angry, disappointed, you don't express it in words. You have to be very careful with your choice of words.*

However, it can be noted that for the most part, these mentions of tone and register are expressed in very general terms, without giving many explanations of the lexicogrammatical resources to actually realise the desired tone and level of formality. The only exceptions were the following attempts (Extract 43 and 44), which were actually given ad hoc during explanations in class. Both extracts were from lessons by participants in the same school and involved students with above-average proficiency.

Extract 43 – fWPbv835 (Involves the best class in the school)

*That is the reason why you want to write, that is to attract the recipient's attention—Look, there's a problem in my place, so I'm writing this to let you know. So that is /Purpose of letter/ but you don't write down like how I said just now, like what I said just now, because when you write formal letter, even though you're very angry, because of certain issue, remember this is letter of complaint, you must maintain your courtesy . Do not use any harsh words in your letter, because when you make your reader angry at you for the language you used, your problem might not be solved at all. Alright? Remember, this is formal letter, you have to keep your courtesy. Do not use harsh language, for example /I am very angry because the pipe along the road leading to my housing area is damaged, and here I'm writing to tell you to do something about it, otherwise I will dot dot dot*

Extract 44 – fWPbv329 – 330, 333 (Involves the second best class in the school)

*...you must know how to write a proper letter. Use the right language; don't be so ... just because you are angry about something, then you are going to write a very rude letter.*

*Just because you are angry, it doesn't give you an excuse to be rude when you write your letter. You have to be polite. You have to be polite so that people will look at your letter. If you are rude, the person reading the letter wouldn't want to read the letter, isn't it? You don't say, after so many times I complain, still nobody come. You know, it's like, so rude, the way you do it, so people are not happy as well.*

Finally, students were instructed not to use contractions in their formal letters, as shown in Extracts 45 and 46, but they were told that this was acceptable in the informal letters, as shown in Extracts 47 and 48.

Extract 45 – fWPbv288

*...and then you don't use ... what do you call it, you don't use short forms, alright, in your formal letter writing*

Extract 46 – fWPbv568

*...the language that you use must be formal. No "lah", no "ah", no "hi" <SS> Ah, "hey hey" ... and then short forms and contractions*

Extract 47 – fMTbv316

*Because this is informal, you can use /don't/.*

Extract 48 – fSTbv146

*The language of your letter can be informal. You can use short forms in the letter, for example, I've, I'm, it's.*

This injunction may be linked to Mode, in that contractions are more closely associated with spoken discourse than written text. As such, contractions may be found in informal letters, as discussed in Chapter 5 (pg. 152). However, there was generally no explanation given for these instructions. A related point which was also raised was the use of short forms found in text messages like LOL, representing *laughing out loud* as



well as emoticons like ☺ or ☹. This was explicitly banned by some of the participants (Extract 49 below), particularly for examination purposes (Extract 50 below). There thus appears to be a clear division between the type of writing done in the school context and the types of writing that students may be engaging in outside school, and this division appears to be acknowledged by both teachers and students.

Extract 49 – fSTob318

*I don't want this ... "i", "u"... you are not going to send an SMS to me. Ok? You're writing a letter... Ok, (Student's name)? ... And I don't want the word "don't" spelled like this ... /don/*

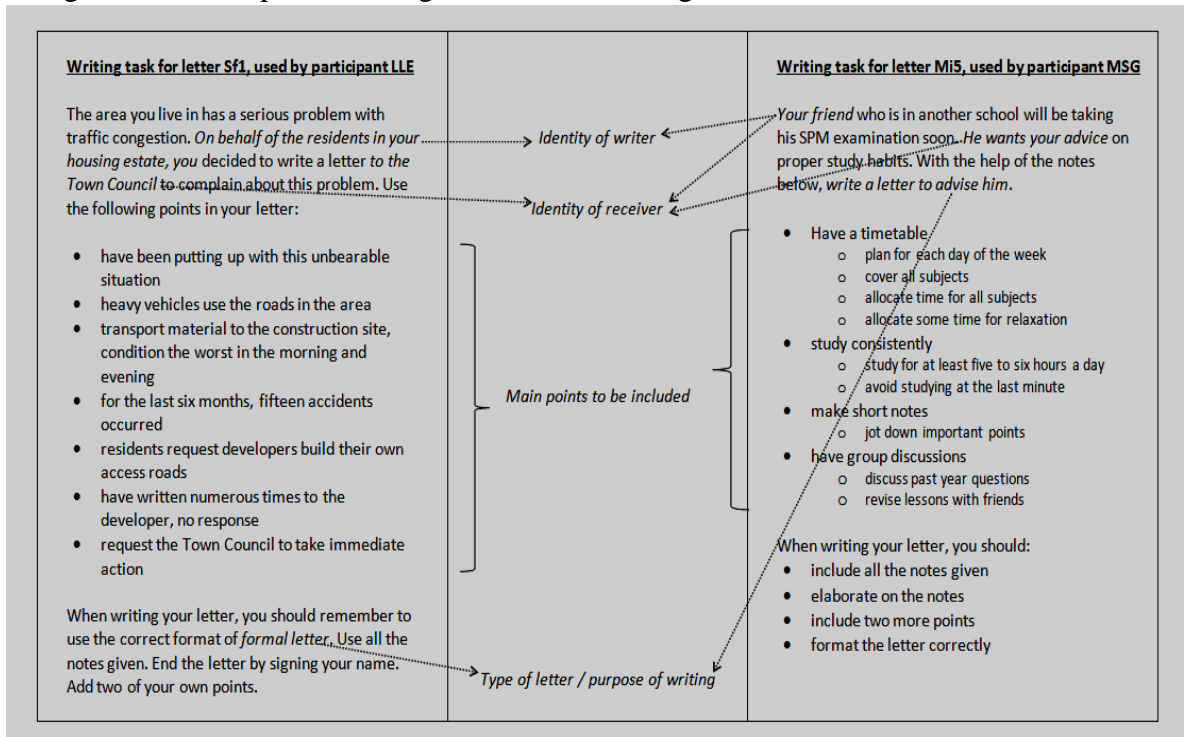
Extract 50 – iWPbv54

*Short forms? Ok, please do not ...how to say, use short forms in your actual... exam questions, yeah, because informal letter, it is still found in your form 4 syllabus, therefore in form 5 they might still test you on informal letters, alright?*

### 7.2.3 *Emphasis on content*

The third primary finding was referred to as 'content' by the participants, and by this term they meant not only the general topic of the letters but also the purpose of writing, the identity of writer and recipient, and the main points to be included in the letters. Based on this understanding, this content is therefore related mainly to the Register components of Field and Tenor. Lesson observations revealed that the bulk of the time spent in the majority of classes was on comprehension-focused discussions, in which the basic meaning of vocabulary found in the model letters or the task itself was either explained by the teacher or looked up by students in dictionaries; in both cases, including a fair amount of translation into Malay or even Mandarin. However, the formality or otherwise of the vocabulary was virtually untouched on, as discussed earlier in section 7.1.1. What was of greater concern to the teachers was guiding the students to fulfil the requirements of the writing task. Figure 7.4 on the next page is a typical example of such a task.

Figure 7.4: Example of writing task used in writing instruction



This task mimics the format used in the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) English Language paper. Some salient points that can be made about the task are:

- The task includes the identity of the writer and receiver, whether directly as in the task for letter Mi5 above, or indirectly as in the task for letter Sf1, to be inferred by the students. This determines the Tenor of the writing.
- The type of letter may be indicated (as in the task for letter Sf1), or at least the purpose of writing, as in the task for letter Mi5. This is related to the Field and Mode of the writing.
- The main points of the letter would be included, which students are expected to elaborate on. This is also related to Field, as well as to the genre of the writing.

The task is therefore related to every aspect of Register and Genre, even though it may not be stated explicitly. However, it was the last aspect of elaborating on the given

points that received the most attention in teaching and learning activities, as illustrated by Extracts 51 to 54 below.

Extract 51 – fSTtv54

*Because in the real SPM, they're going to write down 6 content, these 6 content, together with 6 elaboration. So they have to know how to join these phrases and to make it into a full sentence. And they have to add 1 elaboration for each content.*

Extract 52 – fWPtv927

*...most of them... they managed to maintain one main idea in one paragraph, and they tried to elaborate even though some of them... 1 sentence main idea, and another sentence elaboration*

Extract 53 – iKSbv554

*Ok, now, you're going to elaborate. You have to make it, y'know, you have to tell your friend why is it important to get that 8—7 to 8 glasses of plain water, ok?*

Extract 54 – iKStv328

*...he added... actually one extra point. ... And what stands out is the elaboration he... he gave, y'know, was... was quite detailed la.*

At this point, it should be noted that with regard to this note-expansion, students were in fact allowed to use their own ideas (Extracts 55 and 56), and students with better proficiency were even encouraged to be creative (Extracts 57 and 58).

Extract 55 – iMTob258

*Well, if your language is good enough, use something else. You can be creative, so that your friend enjoy reading your letter.*

Extract 56 – iSTob53

*...or if you don't want to follow the example given by me just now, you can always write your own elaboration... But make sure it is...have the same meaning as what you have discussed for the content*

Extract 57 – fWPob874

*...it doesn't mean that I'm limiting your creativity, but at this point, this is basic ... thing or guideline that you should include in your formal letter*

Extract 58 – bkgd2173

*Vocab, it depends; if the student is good, then I advise them personally to use some nice words or standard words. If the student is weak, I just let them follow their own way*

However, this was rarely seen as students would rather not attempt to write on their own since this carries the risk of making grammatical mistakes which they would have to do corrections for. Hence, students' work was usually just a reproduction of the examples that were given in class, as illustrated by Extracts 59 to 62 below.

Extract 59 – iSTtv944

*This one is just what I have given only, the notes I have given. Nothing come from their own... their own ideas... own points.*

Extract 60 – fWPtv740, 784

*I find that this one is the best la...from the rest... because she did something different, she did add in something different from the others la, they're just ... trying their best to make their letter perfect, but they didn't add in examples or other opinion of their own, points*

Extract 61 – iMTtv33

*Basically the contents are the same because they just copy down everything from the draft*

Extract 62 – allEx844

*I think they can write, but I think they are too lazy to write... They're just copying down and change something here and there just to be able to complete the task and hand in.*

#### 7.2.4 Emphasis on structure

The last primary finding is on the emphasis given to the structure of the letters, that is, how ideas are organised in paragraphs. This is quite directly related to Genre, since it refers to the staged nature of the texts. This has already been discussed in some detail earlier in section 7.1.4.

With regard to the structure of the formal letters, the sequence of *purpose of writing*, followed by *explanation of problem*, then *suggested solution* and finally *hope for action* can be clearly related to how the purpose of ‘seeking corrective action for a problematic situation’ is achieved. There is therefore a very clear connection to the purpose of the letter, which includes the labels given to the various parts. The structure presented by the participants was in fact, an exact match to the schematic structure identified in text analysis. Conversely, the stages for both informal letter genres were stated in general terms, which made it harder to see the connection between the structure and purpose of the letter, be it ‘advising a certain course of action by the receiver to deal with a problematic situation being experienced by the receiver’ or ‘the maintenance or strengthening of social ties by the writer through sharing information with the receiver on a past experience’. The labels given to the various parts—*introduction or purpose*, followed by *content*, *conclusion* and finally *closure*—likewise did not reflect how the text was organised to achieve its purpose.

Another point of interest was that some of the teachers made a distinction between writing letters for assessment in the examination and writing letters in real life. This is illustrated by Extracts 63 to 68 below, which illustrate how teachers frame ‘writing letters in the examination’ as a different activity from ‘writing your own letters’ in discussions with their students.

Extract 63 – iMTbv258 and iMTbv266

*...if your language is good enough, use something else. You can be creative, so that your friend enjoy reading your letter.*

*...ok, /you must write based on the notes given/. This is when you are writing the letter for your exam. Of course, if you’re really writing a letter to your real friend, nobody is going to give you the notes*

Extract 64 – iWPbv354

*Alright, (Student's name)... in classroom context, maintain English language. If you're writing for real to a friend, by all means, hasta la vista, to che, whatever, no problem*

Extract 65 – iWPbv283, 322, and 326

*I'm going to teach you how to write to your friend because in years to come, you might be employed, you have a job, and then you find yourself being posted to a place where there is no telephone coverage, you cannot use internet, ok, and... the only way to communicate with people would be using letter.*

*You don't have to give your real address, by the way. You're not obliged to, alright, for exam purposes, like (Student's name) said, when you write to your examiner. ... You don't have to give your real address, but make sure there is an address there, ok?*

*/Dear Daddy/, /Dear Dad/, ok, but don't go too formal. <SS> Imagine (Student's name) writing to his father, /Dear Encik (Name)/ Don't do that. /Dear Daddy/ Alright? <SS> But if you write /Dear Apai/, the examiner might think that your friend's name is Apai [Note: 'Apai' means 'father' in the Iban language, which is a native tongue of some of the students.]*

Extract 66 – fWPbv35

*Most of the students, if you were to write in the exam, you will only write down your address, but you forgot your name. You must write down your name. You can, if you do not wish to write down your real name, you can always create a name, but please do not put in cartoon names.*

Extract 67 – iSTbv52

*Hi Baby, Hi Honey? <Students laugh> You are writing to your friend, not your boyfriend or your... <CM> You just write down your friend's name, ok, don't write down Dear Honey, Dear Darling and so on. Ok, write down your own friend's name.*

Extract 68 – iWPbv54

*Ok, please do not ...how to say, use short forms in your actual... exam questions*

Such examples as these indicate that teachers as well as students are aware that the letters that they are learning to write in class are not necessarily the same kind of

letters that are written for actual purposes. The implication here is that the context of writing that the students are practicing their writing for is not in fact, Malaysian society at large but an artificial set of circumstances which are much more rigid and limited in scope. This premise is taken up in more detail in the following chapter.

### **7.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter was focused on the findings from the content analysis of the transcript data, which addressed research questions 3 and 4 on how the realisation of Register and Genre respectively are reflected in the use of the model letters for writing instruction. The discussion took two perspectives: theoretical in section 7.1 and practical in section 7.2. The former compared the findings from the text analysis with what actually transpired in the lessons in which the model letters were used, whereas the latter examined the teacher's practices in comparison to the aspects of text analysis which were carried out. Some issues and hypotheses have emerged from this discussion, among them: an emphasis on surface features of the model letters, the relative lack of explanation for lexicogrammatical patterns presented as characterising the various registers or genres, and the prevalence of examination-oriented practices in writing instruction. These issues and hypotheses are further explored in the following chapter, as well as other points which are not directly related to the research questions per se but which are nevertheless pertinent to the focus of this research on Register and Genre.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

### **8.0 OVERVIEW**

This chapter discusses the findings presented thus far in a more holistic and integrated manner that cuts across the four research questions, with reference to similar work done (as cited in Chapter 2) as well as relevant aspects of the theoretical framework (described in Chapter 3). The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section presents a general comparison of the findings from the text and transcript data pertaining to the model formal and informal letters. Subsequently, four issues arising from the data analysis as a whole are discussed in the second section.

### **8.1 Register and Genre traits that were given emphasis in writing instruction**

The findings on Register and Genre traits found in the model formal and informal letters have been discussed separately thus far in terms of the realisation of these traits and how this is reflected in the use of the letters for writing instruction. The discussion below examines some of the similarities and differences that arise when the findings for the two kinds of texts are compared in general, both in terms of the lexicogrammatical features found per se, and in terms of which features are emphasised or overlooked when the model letters are utilised pedagogically. It should be noted, however, that the discussion is specific only to the model letters examined in this investigation and should not therefore be taken as an attempt at generalisation on the genres as a whole.



### 8.1.1 *Emphasised aspects of the realisation of Register in model formal and informal letters*

Overall, the text analysis showed that the model formal letters used exemplified the formal Register well. Many typical features of formal language use were found, most notably:

- formal lexical choices,
- relatively few human Participants corresponding with unspecified agency,
- polite and impersonal tone based on distant writer-receiver relationship,
- indirectness in giving commands,
- the use of nominalization in various functions, and
- a fairly straightforward Thematic structure in terms of types of Themes and Thematic progression

On the other hand, the text analysis of the model informal letters revealed that while the letters generally had characteristics of the informal Register, there were also some letters that had characteristics of the formal Register. The general characteristics of the informal Register found were:

- the frequent use of personal pronouns
- very few instances of unspecified agency
- equality of status in the writer-receiver relationship resulting in the relatively frequent occurrence of direct commands
- an intimate tone, and
- frequency of Interpersonal Themes.

Atypical characteristics found included formal lexical choices, lack of vocatives, unusual politeness, and the frequent occurrence of nominalization. The model informal

letters were therefore not as typical as the model formal letters in terms of their Register traits, and they were also not as homogenous as the model formal letters in comparison to each other.

Interviews with the participants indicated that for them, formal and informal letters are firstly distinguished by format and secondly by language; this opinion was expressed by participants ALK, CAL, JAT, LAH, LSF, MEM, NEP and TAR. Participants MSG, OBL, RJ and SAB also pointed out format and language as distinguishing the two kinds of letters, but placed them in the opposite order, i.e. language first and then format. However, whether language came first or second, these participants appeared to mean different things by 'language', as illustrated below:

- For participant CAL, language was about word choice – *The words used, ok, because we have to consider the feelings of the recipients who are going to receive the letter. Even though we consider giving a letter to a friend, we also have to consider their feeling also. Of course we're not going to write down the sentences that are going to hurt their feelings.* (allEx134).
- For participant LAH, language was related to tone – *it's the tone la, the tone... the tone of the letter. Even though they... I mean... even though they are not required to write using..... big vocab, but—they can write in simple language—but then the tone must be there. The tone for a formal letter must ... it's different from an informal letter* (allEx331).
- For participants MSG and RJ, language could be equated with conventions of writing – *it's definitely the convention in writing ... and certain jargon like /sorry for the inconvenience caused/ y'know, that kind of thing... I would say, definitely that* (allEx607); *for informal letter, it can be very casual but formal letter, there are certain expressions. They*

*have to be aware of certain ... expression, certain ... unseen rules* (allEx897).

- Similarly, participant IBI talked about the restrictions in formal letters – *the content here, for formal letter, it's much more restricted. And the language is much more restricted, you cannot say, like for example, for informal letter, they can just simply write whatever they want to say, and then for formal letter they have to think, whether... is it appropriate to write like this* (allEx208)
- Finally, participant LSF stated that she personally took purpose as the main difference between the two kinds of letters, but presented it differently to her students because of their situation – *Because the student, they need to know the format in order to this one, do it in the exam, but for sure the grammar, all this thing, we have to consider also. But for them... because for me, because I know the format, so I think the purpose of the letter* (allEx421).

It would thus appear that while the participants are not unaware that the formal and informal letters represented different registers, they were mostly unable to articulate this awareness in a systematic manner. This issue will be taken up in more detail in section 8.2.1 below. With regard to how this awareness of register differences was reflected in the use of the model letters, it appears from the transcript data that the Register component of Tenor—relative to Field and Mode—was given the most attention in both kinds of letters. This is reflected in the numerous references to using the correct tone in the letters, for instance in Extracts 69 and 70 on the next page in addition to the Extracts given in section 7.1.2 of the previous chapter.

Extract 69 – iSTob533

*...the same thing as you write a letter of complaint, means that you have to use the appropriate language, even though you are very angry, angry because you are not happy... but you still need to use the correct and appropriate language*

Extract 70 – iWPob166

*So you notice that the language is not...formal, it is more relaxed because you are writing to a friend*

In addition, students were also told to keep the letters brief and precise, as formal letters were written for ‘serious’ matters (illustrated by Extracts 71 and 72 below). The implication here seems to be that supplying personal information was not a serious matter and hence reserved for informal letter-writing. Conversely, informal letters could include personal information like references to feelings, including the use of exclamation marks (illustrated by Extracts 73 and 74).

Extract 71 – iWPob287

*When it is formal, it is something serious. Ok, it is something serious, it is something formal. So the language that you use should be formal. And also, it should be precise.*

Extract 72 – iKSob371

*This is a formal letter, it's unlike your informal letter, where you can, y'know, add more information about yourself....Unlike here, you go straight to the point, ok, /I am writing this letter to complain/, ok, it's very direct and there's no... no other information besides that. Ok, it goes straight to the problem.*

Extract 73 – iWPob336 and 338

*You look at the exclamation mark. What does it indicate to you? ... It indicates...? <SS> Excitement. ...One thing for sure, in a formal letter, especially when you write a letter of complaint, are you allowed to include this?*

*...formal letter, no matter how angry you are, how unhappy you are, when you're writing your formal letter, it should not be expressed explicitly in words and using punctuation marks in your letter.*

Extract 74 – iKSob170

*And then you can talk about... you can even put in some jokes, alright, jokes—you know what is jokes? Alright, you can put in some jokes, you can also ... even talk about your feelings, alright, your emotion, how you feel. So that is for informal letter, ok.*

Apart from that, politeness was also emphasised for the formal letters, as seen in Extracts 75 to 78 below. In contrast, virtually no reference was made to being polite for the informal letters, although it can be argued that it is probably just as important to be polite to one's peers as to those who are at a higher level of social hierarchy. As it is, being precise and polite in the formal letters was often linked to achieving the purpose of the letters as well, as highlighted by the underlined portions in Extracts 76 to 78 below.

Extract 75 – iKSob430

*...writing this kind of letter, you have to have the appropriate, the right ... tone. No strong words, strong words but those words ... gentle, strong but gentle.*

Extract 76 – iWPob329, 330

*Use the right language... just because you are angry about something, then you are going to write a very rude letter? No!*

*You have to be polite so that people will look at your letter. If you are rude, the person reading the letter wouldn't want to read the letter, isn't it?*

Extract 77 – iWPob853

*...if you want to get your problem settled, you need to use the right words. And let me remind you one more time, even though you're writing, you're going to write letter of complaint, you cannot include, you cannot be too emotional even though you're angry about a certain issue, you cannot include harsh words in your letter. You have to be fair to whoever is reading your letter, so that at the end of the day, the problem can be settled, alright? Because that's the whole point, you send a complaint letter, you don't send a complaint letter to make the other party angry and at the end, you start a fight or quarrel, or an argument, or a debate, and not get the matter settled.*

Extract 78 – iKSob400 to 406

*...as you say, it is short, to the point, very simple. Now why... does the letter need to be like that? ...Why do you want—why are you writing this actually? To solve your problem, so you want him to...? <SS> To read it, to understand, correct? And to...? <SS> Solve the problem, to act on it. Can I solve it next year? How soon do you want him to solve this? <SS> As soon as possible, so that is why it is to the point, short, easy to read, ok?*

Tenor was also reflected in certain aspects of the layout, notably the phrases used for salutations and signing off. For the salutation, some participants explained the phrases used with regard to the writer-receiver relationship, which was done for both formal and informal letters, for example:

- participant MAT in fKSob51 – *Usually we write /Dear Sir/, /Dear Madam/, ok, /Dear Sir/ or /Dear Madam/. Do you know why we have to address these people like this? Because we do not know them. Yeah? Generally we do not know these people. So we address them as /Madam/ or as /Sir/, that is the formal way*
- participant RJ in fWPob831 – *if you look at the handout, recipient's address, no name. ... No name; if you know the title, the job title of the person you are writing to, then you write down the job title, ok? Even if you know that person by name, let's say the Director that we are talking about here is Mr. (Student's name), you do not have to write down the name, because this is a formal letter you should use his job title.*
- participant SAB in iKSob409 – *so you're writing to someone that you know, ok? So dear... meaning you know the name of that person, correct? Ok, so the name ... There are some, y'know, who like to be very close to that person you're writing, like my ... my lovely, my dearest*

- participant LLE in iSTob145 - *Don't write /Dear cousin/. If possible, try to write your cousin's name. ... It is totally different format for your BM. ... Saudari, saudara, [Translation: male friend, female friend] no need to write the name, correct or not? But English, we usually write, ok, you usually write your friend's name, for example, /Dear Henry/, /Dear Shelly/, you write their name.*
- participant RJ in iWPob314 – *Ok, say you're writing the letter to your mother, alright, what do you put? Do you put /Dear Puan (Name)/? <SS> Dear mum, or Dear mummy, ok? Right, that makes it very informal. You can be very personal in your informal letter.*

Likewise, the signing off was related to Tenor by some participants, who pointed out that the writer's name does not need to be included in informal letters on the assumption that the receiver is already familiar with the writer, as shown below:

- participant LAH in iMTob191 – *your friend knows you, so you don't have to write your name in big letter there, capital letter there. Your friend already know you or your friend already know your handwriting*
- participant OBL in iWPob216 – *Do you need to write your name after your signature? ... Ok, you don't have to write your name because this is an informal letter; you are writing it to your friend or somebody that knows you, right?*

As for the Register component of Field, this was largely addressed in terms of vocabulary work. More time in general was spent on explaining the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary in classes with lower proficiency, but the practice was prevalent even in classes with supposedly better proficiency. Nevertheless, the vocabulary work

did not extend to the matter of appropriateness for the register, as discussed in section 7.1.1 of Chapter 7. In fact, it could be observed that some participants explained the vocabulary in the model formal letters almost as if they were rewording the contents of the letter in an informal register, for instance in Extracts 1 to 3 in Chapter 7 and also in the further examples below (Extracts 79 to 81). Yet in none of the cases was it mentioned that the ‘explanation’ given was in fact an informal way of stating the same meaning.

Extract 79 – fMTob209, 232

*Stringent check, you have a check, go to the canteen and check every time, every week. Ok, strictly.*

*...one more, /foul language/, what is it, /foul language/? <SS> Bad language, ok...I'm sure you all have heard that, right, bad language*

Extract 80– fSTob553, 565, and 569

*You see //I would like to lodge//...//lodge a complaint// ok, means that you want to say something, ok, //about the school canteen//*

*... /abusive language/ means that some words that's not nice la.  
...you know, bad words that's not nice to be heard*

*/prompt action/ here means that immediate action...You know /immediate/? ... very fast. Do something, take the action, fast.*

Extract 81 – fWPob340

*/your cooperation is greatly appreciated/... Ok, so it means that you are telling them, we know you are busy, but we hope that you can look into the matter and help us to solve this problem quickly*

Finally, for the Register component of Mode, this was reflected most noticeably in the emphasis on using the correct layout in the letters. Two main elements of this layout—the inclusion of addresses, salutations and signing off with the writer’s name—are directly related to the way that the message is sent through the postal service. However, only one participant, JAT, referred to the reason for including the address and salutations, as shown in Extract 82 on the next page.



Extract 82 – iWPob292 to 297

*It's very important that you address your letter to the right person, ok? ... So you must, before you write your formal letter, you must find out who is the right person to write to, so that you know how to address them. And you find out the correct address so that...? ...To ensure... what?... So that the letter don't get sent to another place, right?*

In the formal letters, the subject of the letter is also stated to convey the message more efficiently, and this was highlighted by some participants:

- LSF in fKSob551 – *So when people, when the recipient ... look at the subject heading here, he or she will know, oh, someone is not happy with the school canteen. ... So this part is very important*
- participant JAT in fWPob300 – *So you must state what is your letter all about so that people will know immediately, when they open the letter they will know what is the whole letter about. So they can direct the letter to the person in charge*
- participant RJ in fWPob864 – *So it is very important in your subject heading of your letter, you write down short and simple statement so that when the reader reads your letter, he or she knows straight away what is the issue that you're trying to bring out.*

However, this is not done for informal letters, which often do not have one main topic in any case. This difference was pointed out by participant ANC in iKSob132 and 134 but the underlying reason was not explained – *heading, ok, of your letter, that you underline. Different, right, in this one <points to the informal letter> do you have a title? Heading? ... No, right, so there's a difference here.*

Notwithstanding the pre-occupation with layout, there was apparently a lack of consensus among the participants when it came to certain aspects of the format. Rather, participants seemed to subscribe to different conventions, for instance:

- It was unclear whether students were supposed to use the phrase *yours faithfully* or *yours sincerely* to end a formal letter. Most of the participants favoured *yours faithfully* (MAT, SAB, IBI, TAR, ANC), but some participants told their students to use either one (CAL, LSF, ALK and RJ), and yet others explained that *yours faithfully* is used when the receiver's name is unknown, and *yours sincerely* when the name is known (MEM, LLE). There were also some participants who told their students that *yours sincerely* is only used for informal letters (NEP, MAT, MSG and LLE).
- The position of the writer's address for informal letters was also not modelled consistently; whereas the majority of the participants stipulated the top right hand corner (ANC, MAT, SAB, IBI, LAH, MSG, TAR, NEP, RJ and OBL), some participants mentioned that the address could be placed on either the right or the left (MEM, LLE).
- The guidelines given for the punctuation of addresses was also inconsistent, with some participants being very specific about putting commas at the end of every line and a period at the end (LLE), while others opted for open punctuation (RJ) or accepted both styles as long as it was consistent (LSF).

From the discussion above, three salient points can be made about how Register traits are reflected in the use of the model letters: that the participants did not pay equal attention to the three components of Register, that different aspects of

Register were emphasised for the formal and informal letters, and that even in the aspect of layout which was consistently emphasised by all the participants for both kinds of letters, there were inconsistencies in the details presented by individual teachers. Sections 8.2.1 to 8.2.3 explore some possible reasons underlying this pattern of behaviour.

### *8.1.2 Emphasised aspects of the realisation of Genre in model formal and informal letters*

The general conclusion that arises from the findings on the realisation of Genre is that the model formal letters studied exemplified a more clearly identifiable genre than the model informal letters. This was reflected by greater regularity in the lexicogrammatical patterns that marked the boundaries of stages in the genre, as well as the clear-cut basic schematic structure for the genre. These characteristics were also consistently present in virtually all the model letters studied. On the other hand, there was much greater diversity in the Genre characteristics of the model informal letters, including both the identification and relative order of stages in the two genres exemplified by the letters. One point that needs to be taken into consideration in the analysis is the different numbers of letters representing the various genres: thirteen letters for the genre of ‘formal letter of complaint’, nine letters for the genre of ‘informal letter of advice’ and five letters for the genre of ‘informal descriptive letter’. It is emphasised that this difference in the number of genre exemplars does not invalidate the findings in this research since the research does not take a corpus approach to data analysis. However, it is acknowledged that had there been a larger group of exemplars available for the two informal genres, there is a possibility that the relevant findings could possibly be less ambiguous.

When it comes to how Genre traits were reflected in the use of the model letters, it was found that participants did pay attention to the organisation of the letter as a message in general by examining the contents of paragraphs in sequential order, as discussed in the previous chapter. This was most explicitly and systematically done for the genre of formal letter of complaint, but less so for the genres of informal letter of advice and informal descriptive letters. While the relatively clearer schematic structure of the formal letters of complaint would certainly have facilitated the breakdown and description of the contents of sequential paragraphs in the letters, it is nevertheless felt that it is not productive to speculate whether the relative regularity of structure is systematically connected to how explicitly the structure is presented by participants to their students.

What could be observed was that participants used more specific descriptions for the parts of the formal letter of complaint compared to the informal letters, as pointed out in section 7.1.4. However, this could be due to the effect of the source of the model formal letters, in that many of these letters were taken from commercial references which contained notes on the contents of the letters. The notes or guidelines given on content included explicitly descriptive labels for the parts in the letters of complaint, but had non-specific labels for the letters of advice and description, for example:

- In the notes for letter ATf1 (a model formal letter of complaint), which was found in the Form 4 English Language textbook (Tan & Ng, 2002), the stages are labelled as *state the reason* followed by *describe and elaborate on the problem*, followed by *include examples to support your purpose* and finally *express your hope*.
- In the notes for letters Wi1 and Mi5 (a model informal letter of advice), which is taken from a commercial reference book, the stages are labelled

as *opening remarks*, followed by *main points* and then *two new points* and finally *closing remarks*.

- In the notes for letter Si1 (a model informal descriptive letter), which is also from a commercial source, the stages are labelled as *opening (introduction)*, followed by *body (main idea of the letter)* and finally *closing or conclusion*.

A related factor is the participants' stated belief that it is easier for students to come up with the contents of informal letters as they are much more familiar with informal genres in terms of how the ideas are organised, and also because informal genres tend to be organised more loosely or casually. This is exemplified by Extracts 83 to 85 below.

Extract 83 – allEx4

*Probably because students, they have the schemata on the particular topic, and then perhaps they've written letters such as this before, maybe not in writing, but they have advised their friends ... in oral conversation and so on, so they are familiar with what they are supposed to do la. And in terms of... there's not much focus on the technical... formality of the language*

Extract 84 – allEx114

*...when I see the products of the students, I think informal letter is easy for the students to write, because the ideas or the flow of ideas is more general if compared to formal letter.*

Extract 85 – allEx433

*I noticed that students are more familiar with the informal letter writing. My opinion about it is that probably they have more experience in conveying their messages using short notes, which are... which is more towards or more alike to informal letter writing*

On the other hand, the genre of formal letter of complaint was said to be relatively unfamiliar to the students because the organisation of ideas in the formal letters was

said to be quite inflexible. Also, various fixed expressions were used in this genre. All these made formal letters comparatively harder for students to write, according to the participants (Extracts 86 to 88).

Extract 86 – allEx114

*Formal letter they have to be specific, they have to be precise on what they're supposed to write. And they must be careful with the sentence that they're supposed to write*

Extract 87 – allEx445

*In the formal letter... I do find that putting in points ... putting in points, and for example, let's say letter of complaint, so students tend to have a very vague idea in how... how to put all the points in sequence, or put them in paragraph. I think that is among the hard things to teach, because students also are... blur in producing their own ideas*

Extract 88 – allEx865

*Format can be taught, but the expressions? ... Say they're writing complaint letter, they cannot actually say "I'm very angry" and they cannot write that in the letter. But I suppose if they're writing informal letter, that can be done.*

Nevertheless, there were two exceptions to the opinions above: participant LLE felt that the relatively fixed nature of formal letters makes them actually easier for students to write – *informal letter, they have to think what, I mean they have to some sort like ... telling another person what they have been doing. ... Formal letter, they actually can write because ... based on the first letter, they know what to write already* (allEx381), and participant SAB likewise felt that the clear-cut task of formal letters makes them easier to fulfil in writing – *it has clear cut, like ... when you say formal letter, y'know, you have those various letters and y'know, you can just tune them down, ok, today is to write a complaint or maybe to order something* (allEx935).

The findings presented thus far indicate a connection between the students' familiarity with a particular genre and their ability to produce examples of that genre,

which is in turn related to the relevance of the genre to their current and future language use. This issue is taken up in more detail in section 8.2.4 below.

## **8.2 General issues in emphasised aspects of model letters**

The second section of this Chapter contains the discussion for four issues that have arisen mainly from the analysis of transcript data. These issues cut across the realisation of Register and Genre as well as the four primary findings already presented in Chapter 7. The discussion is also related to some factors that go beyond the core focus of this investigation but which are nevertheless very pertinent to the study.

### *8.2.1 Teachers' awareness of basic concepts of Register and Genre*

To begin with, the participants in this study all show an awareness that the language of the formal and informal registers are different, and that the various kinds of letters are differently organised. This indicates that the basic concepts of Register and Genre are not unfamiliar to them. Furthermore, since the participants are themselves members of the social group that create and make use of the three genres of letters being taught, they could also be expected to have some degree of familiarity with the specific register and genre traits of these letters. Many of the participants refer to having personally written informal letters (participants ANC, LSF, CAL, JAT) and some of them have also written formal letters of complaint (participants MAT, RJ, ALK, JAT, SAB) or other kinds of formal letters (participants CAL, IBI, MSG, LAH). Hence, the lack of an awareness of the concepts of Register and Genre does not appear to be a factor in how the participants made use of the model letters.

With regard to the awareness of Register traits, this could be seen in the attempts to highlight certain lexicogrammatical features, as discussed in Chapter 7 and section 8.1.1 above. The participants were particularly aware of the distinctive

lexicogrammar used in the formal register, since this is the more unusual or ‘marked’ register, to use a Systemic-Functional description. Given this linguistic awareness, it was notable that none of the participants cited the presence or otherwise of these features among the criteria used for the selection of model formal letters. Rather, the model letters were selected mainly based on the overall level of difficulty and familiarity or interest to the students, which were also the criteria used for selecting model informal letters (Extracts 89 to 91 below).

Extract 89 – bkgd1914

*...the level of difficulty of the model text should ... match the students’ ability as well.*

Extract 90 – fKStv464

*... because to them, it must be something that’s familiar, y’know, they have some background about it, then they will be able to say something about it*

Extract 91 – fMTtv403

*... because I thought this is something dealing with them, so it is something that they usually complain about it, so I think this will ... interest them la, in writing.*

As for Genre, the participants’ attention to the organisation of ideas in sequential paragraphs actually reflects an awareness of the stages in different genres. Moreover, it required the teachers to engage in rudimentary Genre analysis to identify the stages or parts in the letters so that these could be pointed out to their students. Nevertheless, the organisation of ideas was similarly not cited as a criterion for the selection of suitable model texts.

Based on the findings presented above, it would seem that the model letters used for writing instruction were selected based primarily on the generic criteria of level of difficulty and interest or relevance, and Register and Genre traits were only identified and highlighted later during the course of teaching and learning activities. This



relegation of Register and Genre traits to secondary concerns is indeed noteworthy when it is borne in mind that the model letters are meant to be exemplars of a particular register and genre as an instance of situational language use.

With regard to the role of Register and Genre in the participants' selection and use of model letters, one relevant factor that could be taken into consideration is the implementation of a short-term course on writing instruction called the "State Teacher Enhancement Plan" which ran from 2008 to 2009 (two years prior to data collection for this investigation). The training project was a collaborative effort between the State Education Department and English Language Training Centre, using materials based on Gibbons (2002) and Pincas (1982). The key features of the training are summarised below:

- The training is basically a genre-based approach to writing instruction, consisting of three main stages: familiarisation (text analysis), practice and finally free or controlled writing.
- The approach uses the scaffolding principle which is similar to that applied in the teaching-learning cycle used in Australian schools and ESL programmes (Burns & De Silva, 2007; Dreyfus et al., 2008; Martin, 2009).
- The training module covered the text types of recounts and argumentative texts. For the recounts, the analysis included transition words, sentence connectors, tense, personal comments and paragraph development; for the argumentative texts, it included the pattern of organisation, emotive language and logical connectors showing addition, result/conclusion, and contrast.

The STEP training had supposedly involved all the secondary schools in the district using a cascade model, wherein a representative from each school would attend the state-level training and then conduct the training at their respective schools for the benefit of their other colleagues. Two teachers from SMK W (one of whom was a participant in this study) had actually been state-level trainers for the program. However, in three out of the four schools where the study was conducted, this training had not been put into practice by any teachers after the initial course, according to the Heads of the English Department in those schools. Hence, the only school in which the STEP program was still in effect at the time of the study was SMK W. All the four participants from this school who were involved in this investigation were using the STEP-recommended approach, albeit in a modified form due to the time-consuming nature of the procedures.

This factor is mentioned here because there were small differences in the way that the participants in SMK W carried out their writing instruction compared to the participants in other schools, and the STEP training could be considered as a possible cause for the difference. Some of the differences that could be observed were that the participants in SMK W paid more attention in general to the language of the model letters that they used, particularly the tone of the letters and specific structures used in the letters which were related to the purpose of the letters, for instance, modal auxiliaries in the letters of advice. The participants also guided their students to systematically examine how the letters were organised in terms of the contents of sequential paragraphs. Nevertheless, it is stressed that because of the limited sample size, this connection cannot be taken any further than in a speculative sense that the training received by these participants may well have enhanced their awareness of Register and Genre traits in the instructional materials that they chose to use. In any case, teaching approaches are not the focus of this investigation.

### 8.2.2 *Emphasis of most visible characteristics*

The second issue arising from the findings is the kind of characteristics that are emphasised in the model letters, in that there is a tendency to emphasise the most easily seen characteristic: layout, or what the participants call ‘format’. Layout is in fact related to both Tenor and Mode, as discussed before, but it is not necessarily the key characteristic of a particular register or genre. Yet layout received a disproportionate amount of attention, and it could be observed that the lower the proficiency of the students being taught, the greater the attention that was given to layout. The participants concerned expressed the opinion that for these lower-proficiency students, mastering the format is important for at least scoring a few marks in the examination, as illustrated by Extracts 92 to 94 below.

#### Extract 92 – fKStv299

*Except that we still have to polish their skills by reminding them that a letter writing should be... signed clearly. At the...at the same time, the format should also be... written clearly. Otherwise, they... they may lose mark, y’see?*

#### Extract 93 – fSTtv356

*I must stress that they must understand the format, that is most important thing so that whenever they come out for the exam, when the question ask them to or requires them to write a formal letter, they must know how to write the format, not writing another format of letter, informal letter.*

#### Extract 94 – fMTtv28

*I’ll be focusing on the format, because in the exam, format will be 5*

When it came to language, the outstanding lexicogrammatical features of the formal register were most likely to be highlighted, as discussed in section 8.1.1 above. In many cases, students were encouraged to use the highlighted features in their own writing without explanations of why these features were linked to the formal register. This is illustrated by Extracts 95 to 97 on the following page.

Extract 95 – fWPbv129, 133, and 149

*... this is an example of a letter of complaint. You can use the structures given in this text or you can use your own structure*

*And then introductory paragraph, you can use this ... you just change a little bit here and there...*

*And then can you use this phrase or not? /I would like to draw your attention to the above matter/ Can you use it? ... You can recycle it in this letter.*

Extract 96 – fMTob277

*You can just follow, ok, no need to think much. Just follow whatever is there, start off. When you start off, then it's easy to write ... Just continue, /on behalf of .../ then from here, you follow this...*

Extract 97 – fWPob874

*... a softer way of putting it, you look at your model letter, what I used there is //to draw the authority's attention to...// ... Always refer to your model text. If you really have no idea, always refer to your model text. It's there, given to you to help you to write your letter ... it doesn't mean that I'm limiting your creativity, but at this point, this is basic ... thing or guideline that you should include in your formal letter*

The practice of copying structures from the model letters provided was also seen in the lessons on informal letters. Copying was seen as a form of guidance for lower-proficiency students; in that these students were assumed to be unable to produce original work (Extracts 98 to 100). However, students with better proficiency were discouraged from doing so as they were expected to score better marks in the examination by using their own structures (Extracts 101 and 102).

Extract 98 – iSTtv688 – 690, 746 – 752

*Even though he, like... pick some sentences from the example, but I think he used it correctly so should be... ok... it's ok, he use his own idea.*

*...because it's appropriate here, so I didn't ... I don't mind so much, at least they know how to use it in the appropriate way*

*...because this student, he's quite weak in this. If no sample, it's very hard for him to do it.*

Extract 99 – iSTtv814 – 816

*I don't mind if they copy some, but not all. If they modify a bit, then they copy the correct sentences, and then they use in the appropriate way, I think that should be ok. Because for this class, I think I cannot put—how to say that...too much hope, expectation on them, because I think it's not fair for them. But at least I think if they try to do the essay, and then they modify a little bit or they just copy, maybe one or two sentences in an appropriate way, ok.*

Extract 100 – bkgd1894

*I think it's very important to provide scaffolding as in the model text. I find that, I tried it last year, I gave a model text, I asked them to copy it ... and after that, give similar question, discuss and tell them, just refer to model text when you write. And I find that my class, the one that I was describing about just now, the 4A2, they actually managed. Some even managed one whole page of foolscap paper, which is quite an achievement for that student.*

Extract 101 – iMTtv444

*I don't like (better students copying from the model letter) because I want to see... them display their own, y'know, command of the language. Like that day, I told them not to see the sample. ... because I want them to remember what they have learned ... because if I let them refer to the sample, I can guarantee you more than 90% of them will copy exactly the same things*

Extract 102 – iSTtv235

*good students, they are clever, so when they go back, they will try to look for books to get the ideas from there, so in the end you thought that they write on their own, but when come to exam, it's... they come up with different things*

The implication of this emphasis on the most obvious characteristics of the letters—be it layout or stock phrases—is that there may be a tendency towards prescriptiveness in the way that the model letters are being presented to students. Such prescriptiveness is also a major criticism levelled against the genre-based approach to writing instruction in general (Hyland, 2002; Watkins, 1999). Going beyond the matter of the approach to writing instruction, this emphasis of superficial features is also

related to the nature of genres which are constantly evolving as they are used by the community. Being overly prescriptive or restrictive in presenting genres to students does not concur with the fluid and flexible nature of genres in the world outside the classroom (Hyland, 2003), which may prevent some students from using the language effectively outside school.

### 8.2.3 *The influence of the examination format on the Register and Genre traits emphasised*

With regard to the findings on how the realisation of Register and Genre are reflected in the use of the model letters being studied, these have been presented from two points of view: the direct perspective, which discussed which Register and Genre traits of the letters were highlighted by participants or vice versa; and the indirect perspective, which discussed which aspects of the letters were actually emphasised by the participants and how these aspects relate back to the findings of the text analysis. In the case of the Register and Genre traits which were given attention in writing instruction, one underlying similarity in both these perspectives is the considerable influence of the format of the English Language paper in the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (Malaysian Certificate of Education) or SPM examination that students will sit for when they complete their secondary education.

To begin with, letters are tested under the ‘Directed Writing’ section of Paper 1 in the SPM 1119 English Language paper, a fact that all the participants were aware of, and which some participants pointed out explicitly to their students (participants LLE, CAL, SAB, ALK, RJ, and MAT). The writing task is allocated 35 marks out of a total of 160 from two papers (Paper 1 and 2), which is not an inconsequential proportion. The instructions for the writing task are very similar to the writing tasks shown in Figure 7.4 in the previous chapter. Candidates are advised to spend 45 minutes

on the task, but the number of words to be written is not stipulated. Some of the participants also observed that it has always been the informal letter that was tested in previous years' examinations and never the formal letter, as illustrated by Extracts 103 to 106 below. As a result of this discrepancy, many participants attach much greater importance to informal letters than formal ones. As participant LLE put it, referring to the teaching and learning of formal letters, *we are following the syllabus, so we have to teach them. At least they know what is the format, that's it* (fSTtv450).

Extract 103 – allEx554

*But what we have noticed is, so far in SPM, formal letter never come out in the exam, right? We only teach them but the topic never come out*

Extract 104 – iWPtv697

*From 2006, I think, 2005 to 2010, informal letter was tested twice, within I think two... I can't remember which year, and then the following year something else came out, then informal letter. Last year, informal letter came out, write a letter to your cousin to convince him to go for national service*

Extract 105 – iSTtv70

*Informal letter? ... most of it, it touch about their relationship with the people in the essay, ok for example, inside the letter. And then of course it is more to family members, their friends or relatives. It is always what's being asked in the question so far, in the SPM also they are asking about that. And most of the time, the question asked is, they require the student to write down about giving advice, giving encouragement, give thanks...*

Extract 106 – fSTtv446

*... usually, for exam, they prefer informal letter, not formal letter.*

As it is, examination-orientedness in Malaysian schools is actually a fairly well-documented phenomena in research (for instance in Dahlan et al., 2010; Hwang & Embi, 2007; Jalaluddin et al., 2011; Maros et al., 2007). Accordingly, it should be pointed out that many of the participants were quite candid about their examination-

oriented stand in teaching and learning the English Language as a school subject.

Extracts 107 to 111 below are some examples of what they had to say about this matter.

Extract 107 – bkgd2231

*...but we are so concerned about the exam, so we are more to that exam-oriented, so more on... want to follow the exact format of the writing.*

Extract 108 – bkgd1932

*...to me, especially in Form 4, the students need to be exposed to the format of SPM. ... I am exam-oriented in that way*

Extract 109 – bkgd2050

*Of course there're many times I will say the same thing, like, "Oh, I'm not teaching the language, you know, I'm teaching for exams*

Extract 110 – iWPtv643

*The only convincing reason right now would be, you need to know it because <smiles ruefully> because your teacher is exam oriented.*

Extract 111 – iMTtv176, 178

*I mean, of course I read, I look at other books to get ideas so that I come with my own work, and then... I would say la, I'm more like exam-oriented ... so when I plan my lesson or when I give writing, I try to... gear them towards exam, even though I do not know how well I can guide them*

It turns out that the concern of the participants over their students' performance in the SPM examination and their awareness of the examination format motivates many of the practices in writing instruction that have been discussed thus far. The first of these exam-oriented practices is the emphasis on grammatical accuracy in writing. This was explained by teachers with reference to the marking scheme used in the examination, which appears to put a premium on error-free writing. The exact scheme is confidential and therefore not available for public scrutiny, but many of the participants seemed to be quite knowledgeable about how the marking scheme works. This knowledge is sometimes made explicit to students, to the extent that fulfilling the



details of the marking scheme may even become the de facto aim of the writing done by students. Extracts 112 to 116 below illustrate the importance attached to knowing the marking scheme and attempting to fulfil its demands.

Extract 112 – iWPtv669

*I actually asked... one SPM examiner, how do we treat SMS language in informal letter that our students write? And he said, the examiners would normally treat it as, accept it as informal language, and I'm still struggling with the bit in his SMS that says, they will give a maximum of 3 marks for the language. And I was thinking, ok, where does that 3 marks come from? Because directed writing is 20 marks for language.*

Extract 113 – iST20 – 34

*So today we're supposed to write informal letter, and as usual for directed writing we have... it's going to consist of 35 marks each and we're going to elaborate it more to this formal, content, elaboration and language. Ok, so how many marks is supposed to be for format? ... So these 3 marks, where do we, can we get these 3 marks from? For example, we are talking about informal letter ... And then how about the content? ... 6 marks ... based on the 6 point given in the question, and then elaboration? ... 6 marks, where do we get it from? These 6 marks from elaboration? We have 6 content, right? 6 point, so each of the content, each of the point, you're going to elaborate 1 each, so we have 6 marks. How about the language? ... 20*

Extract 114 – iMT282 – 286

*Now, remember I talked about the marks for directed writing? 35 marks? How many marks for content I always give? ... 15 because 3 marks for format, 12 marks for content, yes or not, for the points. How many marks for language? ... 20 marks for language. You see how important it is to write well, grammatically well? Your structure also must be interesting.*

*Don't try to use very difficult language if you cannot manage it. If your English is not so good, if it's just so-so, I advise you to write simple sentences.*

*... it means that you can use some difficult words if you have language proficiency. This is for students who have potential to score A, ok? If your language is that bad, don't try because it will... what?.....The whole letter will be a gone case. So remember, if your language is just moderate, use simple language. If you are good, use some language that can show that you have the proficiency*

Extract 115 – fWPtv234

*So I can only award her 12... 3 marks I think is... when it comes to the SPM marking scheme, that'd be very poor la, 0 to 3, if I'm not mistaken*

Extract 116 – fST115, 119 – 125

*As you remember, for the format, how many marks we're going to be given? How many marks we're going to be given for directed writing? ... It seems that you couldn't remember. We only have ... 3 marks. So where are we going to get these 3 marks? ... Ok, for the address, the date, and... signature, these 3, ok? ... So for the content, how many marks for content? ... 6 marks, ... ok, when you count the content here there are 6, ok, contents. So 6 contents refer to 6 marks ... and next, elaboration? ... Also 6 ... and then for language? ... So, for language we have 20, ok*

In contrast to the high value that is attached to grammatical accuracy in the marking scheme mentioned above, register-appropriateness seems to be a relatively minor concern, which leads to some of the participants downplaying or even ignoring the appropriateness of the lexicogrammar used in the letters. Furthermore, much of the key vocabulary items for the letters are already provided in the writing task itself, as shown earlier in Figure 7.4 in the previous chapter, and also in Figure 8.1 on the next page which illustrates how the vocabulary items provided in the writing task are used in the model letter based on the task. The instructions are to make use of the points provided and marks are awarded for how well this is done (as shown in Extracts 113 and 116 above). This includes using the actual words given, which means that there is no practical need to consider the appropriateness of the vocabulary items if the only objective of teaching and learning how to write the letter concerned is to score points in the examination.

Figure 8.1: Sample writing task and corresponding model letter

Writing task for letter Si3, used by participant CAL	Model letter based on the writing task
<p>Your health-conscious friend has written a letter asking your advice on how to <i>stay slim and healthy</i>. ❶ Using the notes you have made below, write a reply letter to your friend. Advise him/her on how he/she can stay slim and healthy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Avoid sweet food ❷</li> <li>✓ Prepare and cook only the amount of food you should eat ❸</li> <li>✓ Do some exercise to burn off extra calories ❹</li> <li>✓ Cut down on red meats and eat more fibre ❺</li> <li>✓ Grill, bake, poach and steam food whenever possible ❻</li> <li>✓ Take a glass of water before meals ❼</li> </ul> <p>Do remember to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ use the informal letter format</li> <li>✓ use all the points given</li> <li>✓ elaborate on each of the point given</li> <li>✓ write in paragraphs</li> </ul>	<div style="text-align: right;"> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> </div> <p>_____</p> <p>How are you? I hope you are fine. Thank you for the letter I received two days ago. I am sorry to hear that you have put on weight. I can imagine your horror when you stepped onto the scales and discovered that you had put on two kilogrammes.</p> <p>Two kilogrammes is not a big deal. However, if you feel that certain parts of your body are getting a little too heavy, then you better do something about it.</p> <p>❶ <u>Staying slim and healthy</u> is not as easy as one thinks. It requires discipline and self-control. There are some important pointers to bear in mind. First of all, <u>avoid sweet food</u>, for example sweets, chocolates and honey. You should eat more fruit and <u>vegetables</u>, for example carrots, cucumbers and tomatoes.</p> <p>Secondly, <u>prepare and cook only the amount of food you should eat</u>. By doing this way, you will not be tempted to finish all the leftovers. Next, you can use a smaller-sized plate to eat less food. Alternatively, you can <u>do some exercises</u>, ❹ for example swimming, playing badminton, football and jogging. Exercise <u>burns off those extra calories</u> and helps you to maintain a slim and healthy body. ❺</p> <p><u>Beside that</u>, you must <u>cut down on the red meats</u> and eat more fibre. It is wise to eat more vegetables and fruits. It is advisable to <u>grill, bake, poach and steam food whenever possible</u> instead of frying. Avoid oily food as possible because food that is high in oil content will make us fat and it can cause heart attacks.</p> <p>One last word of advice. <u>Take a glass of water before meals</u>. It will make you feel full and eat less food. <u>Remember</u>, eat only from hunger and never from habit. ❼</p> <p>An effective weight control programme requires discipline, exercise and a balanced diet. With you all the best. Hope to hear from you soon.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Your friend,</p>

Another practice in writing instruction that can be traced back to the examination format is the instruction to students to explicitly state the purpose of writing the letter, which was first pointed out in section 7.1.4 of Chapter 7. This instruction stems from the fact that the writing task almost always contains the purpose of writing—as pointed out earlier in section 7.3.3—and this is duly highlighted by some participants, as shown in Extracts 117 and 118 below.

#### Extract 117 – iKSbv421

*You get this from the question. They will tell you, “Write a letter to” dot dot dot. “Write a letter to your cousin to tell him ... to tell him...” or “Write a letter to state... to explain” dot dot dot. That will be the purpose of the letter, so when you write in the exam such letter, so that whoever reads your letter, they will know that... what you are going to write about.*

*The purpose of your letter, it is always refer to the question given. So when you're going to write down the purpose, you must refer to the instruction given to you.*

The examples given above show the undeniable influence of the examination format on writing instruction, which has the potential to overshadow any other considerations that teachers might actually have when they make decisions in selecting and presenting the model letters that they use. This leads to the final issue to be discussed: the relevance of letters as a form of written communication in the current and future lives of Malaysian students.

#### 8.2.4 *The relevance of letters as a genre to Malaysian students*

The inclusion of letters in the current English Language syllabus for secondary school can be traced back to the syllabus specifications (Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum, 1992, pp. 27 - 30) previously in use in Malaysia, which had a list of genres (called 'topics') that were repeated from Form 1 until Form 5; in addition to letters the list of genres also included instructions, directions, stories, and talks, among others. These genres were applied with different purposes or situations at the various levels, and the list of purposes or situations for the genre of letters included both *letters from friends and relatives, offering help and advice* as well as *letters of enquiry and complaint*. The current syllabus (Curriculum Development Centre, 2000) does not contain a list of genres as such, but most—if not all—of the genres found in the previous syllabus can be found scattered throughout the syllabus specifications, including the genre of letters in the specifications for Form 4 (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003d). This indicates that the range of genres or text types that are considered

essential for Malaysian learners to master has remained largely unchanged since the 1990s until the present.

With regard to this investigation, when the participants asked their students during the course of writing instruction if they wrote letters, the response was largely in the negative for informal letters (Extracts 119 to 121); or in the case of formal letters, students would have written letters in Malay rather than English (Extracts 122 and 123).

Extract 119 – fKSob2, 8

*Do you write letters to friends? How many of you write letters? ... Do you write letters to friends? <SS>... You email your friends and you send SMS... Maybe even just <mimes the action of calling> call, right? So letters is something that ... something that we actually don't write anymore, right ... Do you write letters in English? <SS> Anyway, you have to read this letter, written by somebody.*

Extract 120 – fMTob243 – 245

*Ok, now, tell me this: in your real life, have you ever written a friendly letter to your friend? Students' response: No! ... Why not? <SS> because you are using the SMS, ok, you text message your friend.*

Extract 121 – fSTob330 – 335

*Alright, now how do you get in touch with this friend? ... How do you get in touch with them? <SS> SMS, yes, phone <SS> Facebook, very good. <SS> Twitter, ok... Now, what about letter writing? Students' response: No!*

Extract 122 – fSTob293 – 302

*Did you ever write formal letter to your form teacher? Students' response: Mixed response of Yes and No ... But in English or in BM?... Students' response: BM*

Extract 123 – fWPob279 – 281

*Ok, class, today we are going to learn how to write a formal letter. Ok? Have anyone ever written a formal letter before? <SS> Formal letter. <SS> Yeah? For what purpose? Huh? For school? So when do you write a formal letter?... When you're absent*

Students also showed a resistance to the idea that they would need to write letters, citing various reasons, for instance:

- Students appeared to think that the responsibility for complaining in writing about any problems that they may face did not fall on them but rather on other adults involved. In participant SAB's lesson (fKSob408 – 418), when she brought up the hypothetical situation of facing a water shortage problem, students responded that the letter of complaint should be written by their parents, neighbours or even the landlord of the house, but not themselves.
- In participant NEP's class, a student said *We don't have the power to complain* (fSTob689) when the teacher brought up the matter of complaining about the unsatisfactory school canteen. Other students also pointed out that complaints could be made through text messages, email or social media instead of in letter form (fSTob694).
- For informal letters, the students in participant LLE's class pointed out that sending text messages via mobile phones was a much faster way of communicating than writing letters – *Teacher, teacher, I ask you, if birthday party why write letter, just SMS better* (iSTob150).
- In participant NEP's class, students responded that letter-writing was an outdated practice - *Teacher: what about letter writing? Nobody wants to write a letter? Student: That's a long, long time ago* (iSTob336, 338)

Based on the SF definition of genre as a conventionalised form of language use by a community, the finding that students do not engage in the practice of letter-writing outside the language classroom is significant to the study because it indicates that these students cannot presently be considered members of the community that

produce letters in English. Hence, the need is all the greater for information on the conventions of register and genre to be made explicit to these learners. As it is, in spite of the students' admission to not writing letters of their own accord, there is a tacit understanding that they do need to write letters for examination purposes. This is recognised by both teachers and students, as illustrated by Extracts 124 to 126 below:

Extract 124 – iMTbv245

*...even though you don't have experience in writing a friendly letter to your friend, you have to learn it. Why? Because... what did you say? <SS> Exactly, because it comes out in exam, and it's not that difficult.*

Extract 125 – iWPob54

*...because informal letter, it is still found in your form 4 syllabus, therefore in form 5 they might still test you on informal letters, alright? So it is important for you to know informal letters*

Extract 126 – iWPob279

*(Student's name) is saying that he writes letter, but to the examiner. Can you explain your statement, (Student's name)? He writes letter to examiner.*

Together with the acknowledgement that letter-writing is a necessary skill for doing well in the examination was the recognition that writing letters for examinations is not the same as writing letters in real life, as shown in Extracts 127 to 131 on the next page. This is also related to how the genre and purpose of the letter and a fair proportion of the language in the letter are actually determined by the examination question rather than considerations about an actual real life situation, as previously discussed in section 7.3.3.

Extract 127 – allEx976 – 978

*You are more free, rather than, y'know, like now, this is actually like writing for exam... it has to be like this, like they say in your first paragraph or your second paragraph you must have this, you must have that, y'know, things like that. ... it's not so realistic*

Extract 128 – iWPtv660 – 663

*Researcher: So you would say that it's not acceptable to use those short forms in an informal letter? Teacher: I personally would accept it. ... I personally would accept it because it's an informal letter. That makes it informal. Researcher: But not for them? Teacher: They are still in the context of academic writing*

Extract 129 – iMTob266

*This is when you are writing the letter for your exam. Of course, if you're really writing a letter to your real friend, nobody is going to give you the notes. The notes is in your head, isn't it? I'm talking about question for your exam, ok, so in the subsequent paragraphs, you must write based on the notes given*

Extract 130 – iWPob35

*Most of the students, if you were to write in the exam, you will only write down your address, but you forgot your name. You must write down your name. You can, if you do not wish to write down your real name, you can always create a name, but please do not put in cartoon names, like Naruto*

Extract 131 – iWPob322

*You don't have to give your real address, by the way. You're not obliged to, alright, for exam purposes, like Junior said, when you write to your examiner. ... You don't have to give your real address, but make sure there is an address there, ok?*

The separation of the two practices of writing letters for examinations and writing letters in real life is comparable to the emergence of an 'examination discourse' suggested by Kok Eng and Miller (2007). However, the participants were also confident that the formal letters that they were exposing their students to were the same as letters written in real life, as shown in Extracts 132 to 135 below, in which the participants



quoted are all talking about the model letters they used in comparison to actual letters written for real life purposes.

Extract 132 – fSTtv93, 95

*For me, I think it's going to be similar ... just a matter that...the difference is only the content, I think*

*And the format is of course the same.*

Extract 133 – fWPtv822

*It's more or less the same. This is just a guidance for them, to write the formal letter. ... At least they have this basic idea of writing a complaint letter to attract attention*

Extract 134 – allEx 537 - 538

*Researcher: So there's no difference between what we teach in class and what people actually write? Teacher: Yeah. Formal letter I think it's still the same*

Extract 135 – allEx1046 – 1052, 1054

*Researcher: Ok, so the ones that you have written in English were more for private sector?*

*Teacher: Private sector, yes.*

*Researcher: Were they generally... in terms of format and so on; are they generally the same as what you've been exposing the students to?*

*Teacher: I think it's something that's the same... like we make complaints, complaint letters, we write in English. Yeah, it's quite similar, same la. ...it's the format right?... Maybe the content different la, but the format is the same*

As it is, most of the participants had a similar stand on the topic of the relevance of letters to students' current and future lives apart from its examination-related role. Generally, formal letters were felt to be useful to the students for their future needs (Extracts 136 to 139), whereas informal letters were felt to be not as useful (Extracts 140 to 142). However, the former comes with a caveat, in that the genre of formal letters that was considered useful by most participants was application letters rather than complaint letters.

Extract 136 – allEx333 – 335

*If it is job application, it will come in handy, should they have the knowledge, if they are to apply for jobs in the private sector in future... Or letter of complaint, for example to the tribunal, what is that, Consumer Tribunal, in future, in their adult life, it would be something of an experience that they can use if they are to write in English*

Extract 137 – allEx 877, 887, 891

*Slightly more useful in the future, yes... form 4, complaint letter. 16 year old kids, they don't write complaint letter, so something has to be done with the topic. It's more relevant in form 5, writing job application letter*

*I think they would just walk into a supermarket and they have to fill up a form, that would be the way instead of writing formal letter. So... that's, that would be a challenge, teaching formal letter, making the students see the purpose. Even adults, we don't write a lot of formal letter, I suppose, cause email works nowadays, even for formal matters.*

*It does serve a purpose, but not immediate, as in, 16-year-olds, they don't write complaint letter—in the syllabus, it's a complaint letter.*

Extract 138 – bkgd205

*...you write a letter maybe to apply for a job, things like that, y'know, apply for scholarships. Even now you only have to fill forms, you don't have to write letters anymore*

Extract 139 – fKStv321

*In real life, yeah, because students should have the ability to... to write this kind of letter, because they... they surely face things or problems such as this in their real life. If not now maybe in their future. And as a good citizen, you should always give feedback to the municipal council and also to our government.*

Extract 140 – iWPtv649

*I think at the back of their mind, they'll be saying "I don't think I'll be writing this kind of letter to my brother, I just pick up the phone and talk to him. Or I just SMS and send emails and things like that.*

Extract 141 – iSTtv646

*...because informal letter nowadays I think they can use all this Facebook and those things, they don't need to write letter to their friends and then wait for a few weeks, wait for them, wait for their friend to reply*

*...nowadays, when you ask students to write a letter, informal letter, it will be very outdated. Y'know, they might question, teacher, how come you ask us to write an informal letter, because it's very outdated. Nowadays we have email, we have Facebook, we have all those sorts of media for us to express ourselves*

Nevertheless, even with this ambiguity over the role and relevance of letters as a genre to students in general, the majority of the participants still expressed the opinion that letters should remain in the English Language syllabus. They had various reasons for saying so, for instance:

- Participant MAT considered letters as a vehicle to teach the language, hence any genre would do for this purpose – *actually we are teaching them to use the language... we are teaching them language because we want to show them how to use the correct language and at the same time, use the language to convey messages* (allEx461)
- For participant CAL, teaching students how to write informal letters was just to provide guidelines which students can apply if their situation warrants it – *Let's say later on, when they go out, and they're going to be away from their family, their friends, of course they're going to write down informal letter also, so this is the guideline for them to... as the guideline for them to write down an informal letter to their family members* (iSTtv88)
- Participant MSG likewise felt that what is taught in school is just for exposure, since students will most likely copy formal letters from available sources if they actually need to write such letters – *We expose to them, yes, so that they'll have, but we don't usually emphasise on them to write formal letters. Because I think it's common, when we want to*

*write also, we refer to some other letters. Especially now, everything is in the internet, you want to write a formal letter, you just go to the internet. (iMTtv546)*

- Participant ALK had a slightly different point of view, in that she felt that there is a mismatch between what is taught and what is tested – *We can still teach formal ... writing, but y'know, make sure when we teach them, it is tested in the exam. There is no point of teaching students... if it's not going to come out in the exams (allEx62).* ALK also felt that other text types could be included in the syllabus to supplement the genre of letters, given the proliferation of electronic forms of communication – *The informal one... Instead of teaching, y'know, giving the layout in terms of a letter form, maybe they should make it web-based already. ... Have a, what do you call that, website ... like, make it more interactive (allEx64)*

As a final word, it is noted that the issue of the relevance of text types in the syllabus is also related to the teachers and students' perceptions of their identity and membership in the community of English-users in Malaysia. Taking into consideration that situational language use is partly dependent on the knowledge of social conventions, this membership (or otherwise) is a significant factor in the process of teaching and learning the language, not least in its role as a source of motivation to the learners to master the language. Thus, it may even be supposed that in the lack or absence of the necessity or desire to aspire to membership in this English-using community outside school, students are by default being initiated into an imaginary community of 'examination takers'. It may therefore also be conjectured that the students are receiving instruction for producing texts that have configurations of

Register and Genre that are based on conventions defined by examination formats. In any case, this hypothesis will not be developed any further in this thesis as it does not fall within the scope of the current investigation, though it may perhaps be an avenue for further research, as discussed later in the final chapter of this thesis.

### **8.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter has integrated the findings from the analysis of the text and transcript data used in this investigation and discussed these findings in a holistic manner. Four general issues arising from the discussion were examined in the light of the review of literature as well as theoretical framework presented earlier in the thesis. The discussion leads to some possible implications from this investigation, as well as recommendations that might be made based on the findings, both of which are presented in the final chapter of this thesis.

## **CHAPTER NINE      CONCLUSION**

### **9.0      OVERVIEW**

This investigation began with the objective of examining how Register and Genre are realised in the model texts studied, and how these elements of Register and Genre are reflected in the use of these model texts by teachers for writing instruction. It is believed that this objective has been satisfactorily achieved, based on the findings presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 and the discussion in Chapter 8. This final chapter concludes all the findings of this study in the light of the research questions and examines the implications arising from this investigation. Finally, suggestions for the practical application of the research findings as well as avenues of further research are also presented.

### **9.1      Research questions addressed**

To recapitulate, the four research questions for this investigation are:

1.    What is the realisation of Register in the model texts being studied?
2.    What is the realisation of Genre in the model texts being studied?
3.    How does the use of the model texts for writing instruction reflect the realisation of Register seen in these model texts?
4.    How does the use of the model texts for writing instruction reflect the realisation of Genre seen in the model texts studied?

With regard to the first two questions, the realisation of Register and Genre in the model texts have been fully described in Chapters 5 and 6. Based on these findings, two very tentative hypotheses may be put forward. Firstly, it appears that the formal register that is perpetuated in writing instruction at secondary level is likely to remain

quite stable as a whole, judging from the consistency of the lexicogrammatical patterns found in the model formal letters that were chosen. Conversely, the second tentative hypothesis is that the informal register that is disseminated through writing instruction has a greater possibility of being more changeable, since even the small sample involved in this investigation yielded such a diversity of Register and Genre traits.

As for the third and fourth research questions, these were addressed in detail in Chapter 7. The findings for these two questions also support the two tentative hypotheses presented above. Firstly, that the formal register is likely to remain more stable is supported by the prevalent practice of students copying phrases from model letters rather than attempting to construct their own structures, and further reinforced by the participants' stated confidence that the formal letters used as models are much the same as those used outside the language classroom. This stability likewise appears to hold true for the genre of letters of complaint, wherein a consistent pattern of compulsory stages was observed to have been presented to students across the various participants' lessons. In relation to the second tentative hypothesis, the relatively greater diversity and flexibility in both Register and Genre traits of the model informal letters corresponded with a somewhat less rigid presentation in writing instruction, as reflected by the promotion of creativity and originality in the students' writing and the use of non-specific labels for stages in the letters. This suggests that if and when students do write outside the language classroom in the informal register, they are probably less likely to reproduce the language in the model letters that they were exposed to.

## **9.2 Implications from issues raised**

The issues arising from this investigation included the participants' awareness of the basic concepts of Register and Genre, which could have affected the register and genre traits that they emphasised or downplayed in writing instruction. It appeared that the

participants tended to emphasise the most visible register and genre traits in the model letters, and/or the traits which were related to scoring high marks in the SPM examination. The final issue was the relevance of the genre of letters to students' current and future needs. These issues bring up some implications that accentuate the significance of this study, as presented in the following sub-sections.

### *9.1.1 Situational language use in English language teaching practice*

The centrality of situational language use in the Malaysian secondary-level English Language syllabus is not only contained in the overall aim of the syllabus, as stated in Chapter 1, but is also reflected by the organisation of the syllabus into three areas of language use: *Interpersonal*, *Informational*, and *Aesthetic* (Curriculum Development Centre, 2000, p. 3), which represent three broad situations of language use. This underscores the significance of Register and Genre as the means of conceptualising and hence practically presenting situational language use to learners in teaching and learning activities.

The findings from this investigation indicate that participants are in fact aware of the basic concepts of Register and Genre, as discussed in section 8.2.1. It is likely that this awareness stems from the participants' membership in the community that uses those texts, which may be referred to—albeit in a very generic manner—as 'Malaysian users of English'. Accordingly, participants knew that there were differences between the formal and informal register, and they selected model letters with lexicogrammatical patterns that were fairly typical of the register and genre concerned. Since awareness of Register and Genre does not appear to be a fundamental problem for the participants, it is all the more striking that they do not seem to be presenting these two concepts—as represented in language forms that are emphasised during writing instruction—in an explicit or systematic manner to their students. This state of affairs indicates that the



teaching practices observed may not correspond fully with the centrality of situational language use to the Malaysian secondary-level English language syllabus. In any case, it is emphasised that the issue cannot be simplistically dismissed by the fact that the research takes place in an ESL setting and involves participants who are non-native speakers of English, because making explicit a personal awareness of the form-context relationship is apparently no easy task even for native-speaker teachers in settings where English is the sociolinguistically dominant language (e.g. in Dreyfus et al., 2008; Thwaite, 2006; Watkins, 1999).

From the sociosemiotic perspective of Systemic-Functional theory, using language is a process of creating meanings or “semogenesis” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 17) which takes place within and is affected by a particular social setting. Hence, language teaching may be understood as a process of “mentoring semogenesis” (Martin, 1999, p. 123). In this regard, the teaching and learning of the English Language which forms the setting for this research may also be taken as a process which initiates learners into the aforementioned community of English-users, wherein the students’ mastery or otherwise of the forms of language used in this community would go some way towards determining whether or not they are able to participate in the community’s linguistic practices. Such participation includes the ability to use the appropriate form of language in the appropriate situation, which is most pertinent to this investigation. However, taking into consideration the influence of examination formats on the teaching practices observed, the implication here is that the students were being initiated into a *de facto* community of ‘SPM examination-takers’ rather than the community of English-users mentioned above. Such students are presumably well-trained in using language forms that are suited to the artificial situations set up in examination questions, but they would not necessarily be able to do likewise in spontaneous, authentic settings outside the language classroom. This is all the more

significant in the light of the concerns that are constantly being aired in the Malaysian mass media (some recent examples being Jalleh, 2012; Kutty, 2012; Lim, 2012; Mohsin, 2012) about the supposedly declining standards of English in Malaysia, in that it is possible that at least some of these concerns may in fact be attributed in part to the inappropriate use of informal language forms in formal contexts of language use.

### *9.1.2 Applicability and relevance of the English Language syllabus*

Returning to the Malaysian secondary-level English language syllabus, two features of this syllabus have been found to be of particular relevance to this investigation: the concept of situational language use and the text types stipulated in the syllabus. With regard to the former, the centrality of the concept of situational language use to the syllabus has already been established in the foregoing discussion. However, it is noted that the syllabus does not actually contain a description of the concept, or even the term ‘situational language use’ per se. Hence, it is very much up to individual teachers—and to a lesser extent, writers of textbooks and reference materials—to interpret how language forms are related to situations of use when students are taught to use English “in certain everyday situations and work situations” or “in certain situations in everyday life, for knowledge acquisition, and for future workplace needs” (Curriculum Development Centre, 2000, pp. 1, 3). Language form is suggested in part by the text types and grammatical items that are mentioned in the syllabus specifications for the various levels (Form 1 to Form 5), but these are not associated specifically with any situation except for the statement that “Teachers are encouraged to teach these grammatical items in the context of topics” (Curriculum Development Centre, 2003d, p. 22). While this freedom of interpretation of the concept may afford teachers and writers greater flexibility in tailoring instructional materials to the needs of students in terms of different levels of proficiency and background knowledge, the lack

of a clear definition is significant given the centrality of the concept to the syllabus. This indicates that the syllabus may not be applied consistently in terms of how situational language is reflected in classroom practices.

As for the text types found in the syllabus, the issue of the relevance of these text types has been raised in this investigation. As discussed in section 8.2.4 of the previous chapter, it was pointed out by participants that neither formal nor informal letters were currently written by the majority of students in their personal lives, whereas formal letters were more likely to be written by these students in future rather than at this particular point in their lives. These findings are pertinent to the concept of Genre, in that genres are specific to the community that uses them (Martin, 2001). If it is taken into consideration that even the teachers themselves—as members of the English-using community mentioned earlier—rarely write letters nowadays, the question of whether or not learning to write letters is helping to initiate the students into that community is effectively a moot point. However, to the question of whether the two kinds of letters should be retained in the syllabus, most participants responded in the affirmative, if only as a contingency plan in preparation for their future needs, or for exposure should they ever want or need to write a letter. This suggests that the participants still consider letter-writing to be one of the linguistic practices of the English-using community for now.

A related point is the increasing use of electronic modes of communication like text messages, email and online chatting by students, which was mentioned by many of the participants in this study as the reason that students—as well as they themselves—do not write letters anymore. This mode of communication can be considered distinct from written communication because apart from having their own Register configurations that result in distinctive lexicogrammatical features, the genres in this form of communication may also be multimodal in that they include images and

sounds as well as words. The Malaysian English Language syllabus mentions “electronic sources of information” (Curriculum Development Centre, 2000, pp. 6, 11) but does not include the use of electronic modes of communication. Hence, there is a possibility here that the syllabus may not be completely relevant to students’ current language-use needs. The significance of this conjecture is admittedly constrained by the fact that it applies only to the two kinds of letters studied here, but it would not be unreasonable to extend this question of relevance to the other text types in the syllabus as well. In any case, based on the discussion presented thus far, the general implication is that Register and Genre merit much more attention than it is currently given in the Malaysian English Language syllabus.

### **9.3      Suggestions based on this investigation**

The implications presented in the previous sections leads to various suggestions, which may be organised into two categories: practical suggestions which relate to the research setting, and suggestions for further research on aspects of further interest. These suggestions correspond with the pragmatic and academic significance of this investigation, which was first put forward in Chapter 1. The suggestions are presented in the final two sub-sections below.

#### *9.3.1    Practical suggestions*

In section 9.2.1 above, it was pointed out that there seems to be a discrepancy between participants’ awareness of Register and Genre and their application of these concepts in classroom practices. At this juncture, it is felt that it is pertinent to again bring up the point that the STEP writing instruction training mentioned in section 8.2.1 of Chapter 8 seems to have had some degree of effect on the way the participants concerned dealt with situational language use. Although the focus of this research is not

on teaching approaches per se, the possible significance of training as a factor is considered relevant to the investigation because it suggests that teachers' existing awareness of situational language use could have been enhanced through training, which in turn could have led to them giving more focused attention to elements of Register and Genre in their classroom practice. Hence, it may be suggested that training in basic Register and Genre theory could well benefit teachers by helping them to clarify their own awareness of these aspects and articulate this awareness in order to make explicit to their students the connection between language form and context of use. This does not, however, constitute an endorsement of the genre-based approach, because these practices can be incorporated into an individual teacher's choice of approach to writing instruction, whichever approach that may be.

Along with the training suggested above, the findings of this study also indicate that there may be a need to review the Malaysian English Language syllabus in terms of how situational language use is defined and connected to the text types that are specified. This could include the aspects of a situation to be given attention and the language systems that reflect these aspects; in other words, a breakdown of the Register components of a situation and the lexicogrammar that realises each of these components. Such a move could address the inconsistencies in how the concept is interpreted by individuals, while clarifying which text types are most closely associated with which kinds of situations. Nevertheless, it is noted that this suggestion brings with it myriad implications, in that a certain level of grammatical knowledge would be required on teachers' part in order to adequately understand and implement such a syllabus; hence its implementation may well necessitate large-scale training of teachers as well as the revision of training programmes for pre-service teachers.

Another aspect of the syllabus that could also be reviewed is the range of compulsory text types that students must be exposed to. As pointed out in section 8.2.4,

this list of text types has remained basically unchanged for more than twenty years, a fact that speaks for itself with regard to the relevance of the syllabus to students' current linguistic environment and practices. With regard to the text types that are specific to this investigation, some possible changes would be:

- including electronic forms of personal communication like emails, and comparing these to informal letters in written form,
- including formal emails as well as written formal letters, and possibly related genres like employer-employee memos and announcements, and
- less directly, comparing the language used in written communication with that used in forms of electronic communication like text messages and internet chat language

Similar suggestions could no doubt be made for the other text types found in the syllabus. It is felt that such a review is important to ensure the continued relevance of the syllabus to Malaysian students. Furthermore, these suggestions are made at an opportune time as the Malaysian Ministry of Education is currently in the process of revising the primary and secondary curriculum, replacing the current curriculum with the KSSR (*Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah* or Primary School Standard Curriculum) and KSSM (*Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah* or Secondary School Standard Curriculum) (Curriculum Development Centre, 2011). This revision includes changes in the syllabi of all major subjects taught in government-run schools in Malaysia, including the English Language. The revised curricula are currently in the preparatory phase, and will be fully implemented by 2016 and 2017 respectively (Mustapha, 2012).

### 9.3.2 *Suggestions for further research*

Suggestions for further research that arise from this investigation can be categorised generally as those that replicate the research design in general, and those that apply other research methods to issues raised in this study. The former may include applying the bilateral approach taken in this research to the teaching of other text types found in the syllabus, for example other genres that are used outside school like newspaper articles and speeches, or genres that are restricted to school like argumentative and descriptive essays. Another variation that could be suggested would be to study the register of texts in a more focused and in-depth manner, for instance comparing texts that differ in only one of the Register components. An example would be an anti-smoking speech compared to an anti-smoking pamphlet, of which both would be largely the same in terms of Field and Tenor, but differ from one another in Mode. The present research design may also be repeated with texts of the same register but different genres like formal letters of application or informal letters of appreciation; or replicated in other research settings where the social background of the teachers and students are different from the present study. Such studies would provide more data on whether any aspects of the findings can be found across different research settings rather than being unique to the current investigation.

Even if the bilateral approach of this investigation were not adopted, the various suggestions given above could also be carried out as purely theory-driven text analyses. This kind of text analysis could also be done on model texts in comparison to ‘real-life’ texts, for instance comparing model formal letters of complaint with letters of complaint actually received by service providers, or comparing model informal letters of advice with actual personal letters. The findings from this analysis would be highly relevant to the two hypotheses put forward in section 9.1 on the consistency and changeability of the formal and informal registers and the genres concerned.

Nevertheless, this kind of research would be considerably more difficult to implement in terms of obtaining the samples of actual letters, bearing in mind that letters of this nature would likely touch on sensitive matters that could cause ethical complications.

Apart from the suggested variations on the same basic research design, this investigation can be taken in an exploratory light due to the relatively small number of samples involved. As such, numerous avenues of further study have been suggested by the findings in this investigation, chiefly matters related to the interpretation and application of the English Language syllabus as well as the selection and subsequent use of instructional materials. A suggested approach would be to undertake a quantitative study with a larger and more representative sample in order to establish whether the findings from this research can be statistically generalized to a larger population. Some of the most notable findings that are felt to merit further study in this manner are as listed below:

- teachers' and students' perceptions on the relevance of the text types in the syllabus, and relatedly, perceptions of whether or not model texts used in writing instruction are wholly the same as texts of the same register and genre that are used outside the language classroom
- the specific effects of the examination format on particular stages of writing instruction
- general considerations for the creation and selection of instructional materials, which includes the suitability of textbook content (in terms of model texts for writing instruction)
- the relationship between writing done in school and writing outside school



Lastly, research that is more suited to a qualitative approach may also be suggested. One possibility would be to focus on the students rather than the teachers by examining the students' awareness of register and genre, and whether this is affected by receiving the relevant language instruction. Another suggestion would be to study writing instruction in classes with students of differing levels of proficiency, with the aim of investigating whether situational language use is presented differently by teachers according to the students' proficiency. As for the sociosemiotic facet of the research, further studies may focus on how teachers and students perceive themselves as members of a community that uses English, and how this is related to their teaching and learning of the language. Finally, with regard to the participants' perceived awareness of the basic concepts of Register and Genre, further research could also be conducted on the specific nature and extent of this awareness, probably in tandem with a research design that investigates the effects of training in Register and Genre theory on teachers' practices in writing instruction.

#### **9.4 Significance of this study**

It is believed that this study has some modest contribution to make to the existing body of knowledge on instructional materials for second-language writing instruction, both pragmatically and in terms of theory. As a conclusion to this chapter and to the thesis as a whole, the following are some aspects in which the findings of this research would be of note to various parties.

The aspects of the study that are felt to be of greatest interest to scholars who work with Systemic-Functional linguistic theory are the findings on how situational language use was interpreted by participants without having received training on Register and Genre theory, in particular: the Register components that these participants emphasised most, and the contrast in how the schematic structure of the different genres

were presented to students. The issue of the relevance of the text types concerned to students in the light of the linguistic practices of the community of English Language users in Malaysia is likewise a point of interest from the theoretical perspective.

Pragmatically, the findings on how practices in writing instruction reflect the concept of situational language use that is central to the Malaysian English Language syllabus would be of interest to practitioners, including teachers and writers of instructional materials. It is hoped that these practitioners would benefit from the suggestions made with regard to the issues raised in this research, so that the form-context relationship may be conveyed more effectively in language instruction. Another party that might take note of the findings would be policy-makers, who would likely be interested in the recommendations for the review of the syllabus to ensure the relevance of the syllabus to students' current and future needs.

## **9.5 CONCLUSION**

This investigation originated in the belief that the two domains of linguistic theory and classroom practices for teaching and learning language should not be mutually insulated from one another. Rather, it is believed that classroom practice should be based on sound theory, and conversely, theory can be strengthened and enriched by evidence from classroom practice. It is felt that the study has practically demonstrated the feasibility of such a position and in the process, yielded useful and relevant information that is pertinent to both the theoretical and practical facets of the undertaking. Accordingly, this chapter is closed with the list of the papers that have been generated by this research.

## **LIST OF ACADEMIC PAPERS BASED ON THIS INVESTIGATION**

The following are the papers based on this study and its findings, in chronological order. It should be noted that all these papers are co-authored with my supervisor, Dr. Sridevi Srinivas.

- i. Paper entitled “Investigating Pedagogic Models in Language Teaching with SFL-based Discourse Analysis” presented at University of Malaya Conference on Discourse and Society at Intercontinental Hotel Kuala Lumpur on 27<sup>th</sup>—29<sup>th</sup> June 2012.
- ii. Paper entitled ““Register and Genre in Model Letters for Writing Instruction”” presented at 39th International Systemic Functional Congress at University of Technology, Sydney, Australia on 16<sup>th</sup>—20<sup>th</sup> July 2012. This paper was published online simultaneously with the congress as part of the refereed conference proceedings.
- iii. Paper entitled “An investigation of the form and context of language use in model letters” presented at the International Conference on Linguistics, Literature, and Culture 2012 (ICLLIC 2012) at Parkroyal Resort Hotel, Penang, on 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2012. This paper was also published as part of the conference proceedings.
- iv. Paper entitled “Register: Theory and Practice in Writing Instruction” submitted for publication in the English Language Teaching Journal published by Oxford Journals.
- v. Paper entitled “Investigating Registers in Writing Instruction: A Tale of Two Teachers” submitted for publication in the Language and Education Journal published by Taylor and Francis.

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## **APPENDIX 4A**

### **MODEL LETTERS ANALYSED**

#### ***Set 1: Model formal letters***

ATf1
------

Burst pipe along the road leading to Taman Alam Indah

[On behalf of the residents of Taman Alam Indah, I would like to draw your attention to the above matter which has affected the residents of Taman Alam Indah.

[Two weeks ago a report was lodged with your department about a burst pipe along the road leading to Taman Alam Indah.

However, nothing has been done to rectify the problem.

[The burst pipe has greatly reduced the water pressure in our homes causing a lot of inconvenience and disruption to our daily routine.

For instance, many of us are unable to run our automatic washing machines or use the shower.

[Those living in flats are worse off.

The low water pressure has reduced the water flow to a trickle.

Many of them now have to collect and store water to ensure there is enough for them to use.

[We sincerely hope you will attend to this matter personally and promptly to ease our burden.

Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Discharging untreated waste into the stream

[We would like to bring to your attention the above matter which happened on xxx

We are most unhappy and angry about this.

[Your inconsiderate action has resulted in the xxx of the water in the stream.

Many fish xxx because of your irresponsible action.

We are worried that if your factory continues to xxx into the stream, very soon it will not be able to support any more fish or other aquatic life.

We do not want the stream to turn 'dead'.

[Furthermore, some stretches of this stream are popular picnic spots which attract many xxx.

If the water in the stream is polluted, it will xxx.

Then, we will lose another place for xxx.

[We hope you will xxx.

Otherwise, we have no choice but to xxx.

[I am writing to complain about xxx inxxx

[For your information the rubbish has not been xxx

As a result, xxx and xxx have made our rubbish dumping ground as their xxx

In addition, xxx are pestering our daily life.

The rotting rubbish has also produces unpleasant smell, especially during hot weather.

[Therefore, I am pleased to suggest that the responsible xxx to carry out a schedule  
rubbish collection as many as xxx

By doing so, those unwelcomed xxx will not breed and nesting in our residential area.

[Your immediate xxx is very much appreciated in order to create clean and healthy  
residential in our neighbourhood.

[I am looking forward to seeing a great changes and action done about our rubbish and  
your sensibility in solving this problem is much thanked.

Unsatisfactory school canteen

[On behalf of the students of Form 4C, I would like to lodge a complaint about the school canteen.

[First and foremost, the food served is not covered and flies can be seen hovering over the food.

This may lead to food poisoning.

Moreover, the food served is also not fresh.

The nasi lemak turns bad by the time the afternoon session's students have their recess.

In fact, a few of us were down with diarrhea after consuming food from the canteen.

[Apart from that, the food is also too expensive.

A small plate of curry mee costs RM2.00 and many poor students cannot afford it.

[Besides, the canteen workers do not wear aprons and caps as required.

They are also rude to students.

One can even hear them using abusive language.

[Another complaint is that the same menu is served day in and day out.

The students are bored with fried mee and nasi lemak.

[Thus, we would like to suggest that the canteen serve a variety of food at a cheaper price.

This is to enable the poor students to have a decent meal.

Canteen workers should wear proper uniforms and observe cleanliness.

The food should be properly covered to keep away the flies and dust.

[We sincerely hope that the school would take prompt action regarding the unsatisfactory condition of the canteen.

Thank you

Burst pipe in Taman Indana

[I am a resident of Taman Indana and I am writing this letter to complain about the matter above which has badly affected the residents of Taman Indana.

[Two weeks ago, the main pipe leading to Taman Indana burst.

The matter was reported to your department but till today no action has been taken.

[The situation has become worse with reduced water pressure in our homes/

Our showers and washing machines cannot be used.

As for the people living in the flats, they face a great problem as there is hardly any water flowing from their taps.

So they have to collect water from the pipes at the lower ground level and store them.

This is very inconvenient especially for those living on the higher floors.

[Besides the problems in the houses, the road leading to the housing estate is flooded and muddy.

Children are using it as place to play and this can be dangerous.

We do not have enough water to wash our dirty and muddy vehicles.

[The situation has become worse and we hope for immediate action to solve our problems.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Noisy tenants

[I regret to inform you that the tenants living in your house at No. 38, Jln. Tebrau, Tmn. Pelangi are very noisy.

The four young men staying in the house often turn on the volume of the radio and television to the maximum every evening.

They often continue to play loud music from the hi-fi set until late at night, sometimes up to 1.00 a.m.

[As sounds travel easily through thin walls and in a quiet neighbourhood, the neighbours living along Jln. Tebrau can no longer put up with these loud noises.

Parents have difficulties putting their young children to bed, the older children cannot concentrate on their schoolwork while working adults cannot find relaxation in their own homes after a hard day's work.

[A few elderly neighbours have approached the young men to advise them on this matter.

But the advice has fallen on deaf ears.

They ignored the advice and continue to behave as before.

[The neighbours would be very grateful if you could speak to your tenants personally.

We hope you will remind them to turn down the volume of the radio, television and the hi-fi set.

We would also appreciate if you could warn them that the police will be informed if they continue to disturb the neighbourhood.

[We thank you for your cooperation and look forward to your quick action.



Poor condition and services of the town library

[I am writing this letter to draw your attention to the poor condition and services of the town library.

[First, the collections of library books and magazines need to be expanded and improved upon.

The books are outdated and the library is not stocked with the latest titles.

There aren't any reference books, only reference books aimed at passing examinations for secondary school students.

[Second, the librarians are unhelpful.

To quote just one example, when asked for help to find a title, one librarian was quite indifferent.

She just pointed to the computer.

Surely, librarians should be more willing to assist users.

Another librarian was not even sure of the location of the books herself.

[Third, the activities organized by the library are boring.

There is only one activity—storytelling for children.

It follows the same format that has been going on since I was in primary one.

Someone reads a story.

Children sit around on the floor and try to crane their necks to look at the illustrations the reader points from the book.

For children, many activities can be organized.

'School's out' activities related to creating interest in various kinds of hobbies can be organized.

It can be linked to important happenings around.

To make children aware of Earth Day, crafts can be carried out for them.

Hold talks and exhibitions based on themes.

For example, during this period of economic crisis, prominent speakers should be invited to speak on it.

[Finally, the layout of the library is equally boring/

It is like a classroom.

One section has all the shelves for the books.

The other section, there are the same tables and uncomfortable chairs for reading.

The world over, public libraries have a section of easy chairs where the public can use headphones to listen to music.

Some libraries even have a coffee corner where you can read and buy a cup of coffee and slice of cake.

Public libraries are not just for books.

People can go there to work and get some form of entertainment.

Be more innovative.

[The one objective of a public library is to encourage the public to use it as frequently as possible; not to put them off.

I hope that the relevant authorities will look into this matter.

Unsatisfactory school canteen

[On behalf of the students of Form 5 Murni, I would like to lodge a complaint about the school canteen.

[First and foremost, the food served is not covered and many flies can be seen hovering over the food.

This may lead to food poisoning.

Moreover, the canteen also serves stale food.

The 'nasi lemak' turns bad by the time the upper forms have their recess.

Last week, a few of us had diarrhea after consuming food from the canteen.

[Apart from that, the food is also too expensive.

A small plate of fried mee costs RM1.50 and many poor students cannot afford it.

Besides that, the canteen serves the same menu daily.

The students are bored with fried rice and fried mee every day.

[Another complaint is that the cups and plates are oily and not washed properly.

The workers are also not appropriately attired although they have been told to wear aprons and caps.

Moreover, these workers are rude to students.

They shout at us and use foul language when they get angry.

They also do not clear the dustbins and rubbish daily.

This is very unhygienic.

As a result, there is a foul stench whenever we eat in the canteen.

[Thus, we would like to suggest that the school make stringent checks on the canteen daily or weekly.

They should also ensure that the canteen serves a variety of food at a reasonable price.

Canteen workers should wear proper uniforms and observe cleanliness.

The canteen should also have proper food covers to protect the food from flies and dust.

[We would like to appeal to your sense of fairness and hope that prompt action will be taken regarding these matters.

Classroom in a bad shape

[I am writing to complain about the poor condition in our classroom.

My classmates refuse to co-operate to keep the cleanliness of the classroom/

In addition some of the electrical appliances are not working.

In this letter, I wish to bring to your attention, the problems that my classmates and I are facing every school day.

[Firstly, I would like to bring your attention to our classroom condition.

The floor is dirty because it is not swept daily.

There is rubbish everywhere in the class.

The class notice-board is empty.

Essays, notes and newspapers cuttings put up on the notice-board are always being vandalized by irresponsible students.

The window panes are dirty.

Students on duty are reluctant to wipe out the dirt and dust.

The blackboard in the class is dusty as chalk marks are not completely erased.

[Secondly, the electrical appliances in the classroom are faulty.

It is dark in the early morning or when the weather is bad because the lights are not working.

In the afternoon, students and teachers feel hot and uncomfortable due to the fans not functioning well.

[Thirdly, our class lacks the cleaning equipment.

The brooms are always missing and we keep borrowing them from the other classes.

The two dustpans that we have are broken so it is difficult to scoop up the rubbish and the dirt on the floor.

The blackboard dusters are spoilt.

The blackboard is still dirty even after we have rubbed off the writings.

[Lastly, I would like to suggest solutions to overcome those problems.

We would like you to inform the Principal to get the school's technician to repair the electrical appliances such as the lights and the fans.

We really hope that you can get the new cleaning equipment from the store to replace the damaged ones and label them to prevent removal from the class.

As there is a lack of co-operation in keeping the cleanliness of the class, I humbly suggest you take action against students who do not do their duties.

[I hope you will take immediate action to improve the classroom as we need a conducive environment to study well.

Poor condition of facilities in the school

[As the Head Prefect, I represent all the students to voice out our unhappiness with the condition of the facilities that we use daily in the school.

We feel that the poor condition of the facilities affect our studies in the school.

We would like to make a complaint on the following facilities.

[Firstly, the classrooms are overcrowded.

There are more than forty students in a small classroom.

We find it difficult to move around in the class.

The classrooms lack tables and chairs.

It is common to see two students sharing one chair.

Students cannot study well because they feel uncomfortable.

The fans are not working.

The classroom is hot and stuffy.

Students are restless as they are sweating.

[Secondly, many students complain of stomach-ache because they avoid going to the toilet.

The taps are leaking and the floor is always wet and slippery.

Students are not happy to have their shoes wet once they step into the toilet.

The toilet bowls are always blocked and smelly.

The broken doors cause students to fear their privacy in using the toilet.

[Next, students find out that poor quality of food are on sale in the canteen.

The canteen operators often sell left-over food in the morning.

The foods on sale are expensive but not nutritious.

Many poor students cannot afford to buy the food.

Besides, the dirty floors attract many flies.

Students are worried that they may fall sick if flies sit on the food for sale.

The drains around the canteen are always blocked, emitting a strong foul stench.

Students lose their appetite to eat their food due to the bad smell.

[Lastly, the library lacks good story books as well as reference books.

Students are not motivated to borrow books to read because the story books are too old and boring.

Senior students find it difficult to look for information to complete their research due to the absence of good reference books.

The library is too small for a school population of two thousand students.

There is limited sitting space so not many students can visit the library to do their readings or research.

[I hope you will take immediate action so that students can study comfortably and produce good results.

### Traffic congestion

[There is a serious problem of traffic congestion in my housing estate, Taman Mandu.

On behalf of the residents, I am bringing your attention to this problem of traffic congestion with the hope for immediate action.

[We as residents have been putting up with this unbearable situation for the past ten months.

This is especially during the peak hours in the morning and evening.

The number of cars using the roads have increased ten-fold but the roads remain narrow with only two lanes.

[The traffic situation is aggravated by a new housing project near by.

The vehicles used to transport building materials to the construction site have been going in and out the area for the past six months.

[Due to the traffic congestion, fifteen accidents have occurred at the dangerous bottleneck on one of the roads during the last six months.

This is an alarming figure.

[The residents have requested the developers build their own access roads for their heavy vehicles.

We have written numerous times to the developers.

However, our petitions have fallen on deaf ears.

Their heavy vehicles are still using the public roads.

[In view of this, we now request the Town Council to take immediate action.

We hope that with the council's help the developers will finally take the problem seriously and solve it.

Unsatisfactory school canteen

[On behalf of the students of Form 4A, I would like to lodge a complaint about the school canteen.

[First and foremost, the food served is not covered and flies can be seen hovering over the food.

This may lead to food poisoning.

Moreover, the food served is also not fresh.

The nasi lemak turns bad by the time the afternoon session's students have their recess.

In fact, a few of us were down with diarrhea after consuming food from the canteen.

[Apart from that, the food is also too expensive.

A small plate of curry mee costs RM2.00 and many poor students cannot afford it.

[Besides, the canteen workers do not wear aprons and caps as required.

They are also rude to students.

One can even hear them using abusive language.

[Another complaint is the plates are oily and not washed properly.

Some of the cutlery is also dirty and oily.

[Lastly, the same menu is served day in and day out.

The students are bored with fried mee and nasi lemak.

[Thus, we would like to suggest that the canteen serve a variety of food at a cheaper price.

This is to enable the poor students to have a decent meal.

Canteen workers should wear proper uniforms and observe cleanliness.

The canteen should also have proper food covers to protect the food from flies and dust.

[We sincerely hope that you will take prompt action regarding the canteen.

Inconvenience caused by construction activities

[I am writing on behalf of the residents of Taman Angsana.

We are writing this letter to voice our dissatisfaction with the construction activities which have caused considerable anxiety to the residents.

[The construction activities which begin in the morning and continue until dusk is a constant source of annoyance to the residents.

The deafening noise of these activities is further compounded by the noise made by the speeding lorries which move in and out of the construction every now and then.

Many residents are now complaining about headaches, migraines and nausea.

Another health hazard is the dust which has caused asthma and other respiratory problems to be on the rise.

[It has also come to our attention that some of the workers employed by your company are illegal workers who do not have proper work permits.

The recent break-ins reported in our housing estate have become a nagging worry.

The presence of these workers all over the housing estate has caused the residents to have sleepless nights.

It is also an intrusion into our privacy.

[We hope that by bringing these complaints to your attention, you will take quick action to solve our problems.

*Set 2: Model informal letters*

Ki2
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[Here are the pictures of my trip to Pulau Langkawi.

My uncle is a policeman.

My aunt is a nurse.

They have two children, Aliah, 16 and Afiq, 14.

[They have nice neighbours.

Encik Amri and his wife are teachers in Pulau Langkawi.

They have three sons.

Their eldest son is Hazim.

He is 17 years old and very handsome!

The second son is Hazmie.

He is 16 years old.

The youngest is Haziq who is 14 like me.

They took my family to a beach.

Hazim taught me and Aliah how to swim.

[We also went shopping in Kuah town.

My family bought a lot of chocolates.

We came back to Kuala Lumpur after three days in Pulau Langkawi.

Bye.

Write to me soon.



[How are you?

How's everyone at home?

I hope everyone is healthy and happy over there.

I am writing to let you know we arrived safely in Kuching last night.

Dad was waiting for us at the airport and we managed to be at grandma's house for dinner.

[We want to thank you and your family for making our trip to Ipoh a memorable one.

Thanks also for the many gifts and souvenirs you bought us.

Aunty's cooking was indeed sumptuous and was one of the highlights of the trip.

Of course we will also remember the wonderful trip to Penang and Langkawi.

We regret that we were not able to stay longer.

In fact, dad has promised to come along the next holiday after watching the video tape of our trip.

[School will be starting in a few days' time and we so have to start revising for our coming exams.

Jason will be sitting for his SPM and so, he won't be going anywhere for a while, but you can be sure that I will be coming over during the long December break.

While we were away, my dog, Lucky, gave birth to eight puppies.

[Once again, we want to thank you for your hospitality and we also want to invite you all over to Kuching this holiday.

Do call or write to us soon.

[I am glad to be able to write to you after quite a long break.

How are you anyway?

My parents and I just came back from a holiday in Singapore.

That is why I was unable to drop you some words for a while.

[Rosmah, I am very sorry to hear that your grandfather has gone forever.

I understand that you all have lost someone who has been very dear and loving.

Please accept our condolence.

My family and I are offering our prayers for his soul so that he will be forgiven and be placed among the souls of the faithful.

[I heard that you need some advice on how to overcome your depression on losing your late grandfather.

I believe that you have good and loving parents or other family members, with whom you may want to share your sadness.

I think they are among the best people to talk to as they are able to feel the loss of your grandfather.

[You said that your mid-year examination results were affected by a scenario happening in your family.

Rosmah, you have to be strong in facing this kind of situation.

Please put your trust in God and make a lot of prayer.

We all have to accept that lives would never last forever and it is God's will that all the living have to leave this earthly world some day, somehow.

[I would like to advise you to join other sports or co-curriculum activities in school so cheer-up yourself.

They could help you forget about your depression.

They are also good for building your self-confidence.

[Rosmah, to pen-off, I would like to hear that you are able to cope with the present situation.

I wish you a happier future and be strong always.

Please convey our deepest condolence one more time to the rest of your family members.

[How are you?

I hope you are fine.

How is school life?

It has been quite a while since I last heard from you.

As students we are always busy with our studies and school activities.

Most students feel that studies and school activities cause them to be stressed.

In this letter, I would like to share with you ways to overcome stress.

[Firstly, you must take a balanced meal.

You will be healthy and present in school at all times.

You will never miss lessons.

Secondly, you should have enough rest and sleep.

You will not get tired in class.

Thirdly, you ought to go for exercise at least three times a week.

Exercise keeps you fit and alert in class.

You will then be able to study well.

Fourthly, you should hang out with friends.

You need to have good friends to have fun and someone to share problems with.

[Next, I would like to encourage you to take up a hobby.

Having a hobby will help you to destress.

Beside you must pay attention in class when the teacher is teaching.

Once you understand the lesson you will be able to do your homework.

Then you can finish your homework on time.

You need to hand in your work to be marked by teachers and you will learn from mistakes by doing corrections.

On top of that, you must do constant revision to be able to answer questions in exams.

So you would not have to worry about failing your tests.

[It is also important that you have a study timetable.

The study timetable helps you to manage your time well and be more organized.

I suggest you learn to work in groups.

Being in a group helps you to find support when facing difficulty in understanding a lesson.

Working in groups also helps you get new ideas from friends through discussion.

All students must know that they ought to respect parents and teachers at all times.

The good rapport will make you happy.

Finally, you need to go for counseling to clear your doubts, pour out your feelings and to find ways to solve problems.

Keeping problems bottled up is not healthy.

[Students need a little stress to study and work hard to obtain success.

However, too much stress is not good.

You must be able to learn to stay calm and to think well in order to go through stages in growing up.

I greatly hope that my sharing will help lessen your stress.

Do take care.

I hope to hear from you soon.

xxx

As a xxx I understand you are very concerned about how you look.

I notice that you xxx a lot of xxx

I learn that you are trying hard to lose some weight by going on xxx which in the end may affect your xxx

In this letter, I would like to share with you how to xxx

[Firstly, I advise you to xxx

The vitamins and fibres in fruits and vegetables is good for our body.

Secondly, you should xxx

I suggest you to xxx

By removing the skin and the fat, it helps reduces the amount of fat absorbed by our body.

Thirdly, I recommend you to xxx

Eating steam food is better than fried food as it helps to reduce the amount of oil we consume.

Fourthly, I would like to say that you must xxx

Too much oil in our food is bad for our health.

[Next, I stress that you xxx

You must eat regularly but moderately.

Besides, you must xxx

A lack of water in your body will cause dehydration.

Then you must xxx

When you are hungry I suggest that you munch on a fruit or a stick of carrot.

You will satisfy your hunger and stay healthy at the same time.

On top of that, you ought to xxx

Food must be well digested in your stomach before you go to sleep.

[It is also important that you xxx

Carbonated drinks contain a lot of sugar.

Too much sugar in our diet can cause obesity and diabetes.

Everybody including teenagers should xxx

Slimming pills may contain harmful drugs which are dangerous to our health.

We, teenagers need to xxx our xxx

Too much sitting down will cause us to be fat and inactive.

Finally, I strongly advise that you must xxx

Going for walks is a great form of exercise.

[I share your dream to have a lean body but staying fit and active.

However, you must not go starving to lose weight.

Instead I want to remind you to practice a healthy diet, eat regularly in moderate amount and exercise daily.

I greatly hope that my tips on losing weight in a healthy way will benefit you.

Try and you will see results soon.

xxx

[Your last letter took me by surprise.

You have always been a smart student who obtained high marks in your exams.

So, when I heard that you did badly in your exam, I was shocked.

I am very concerned and that is why I decided to write immediately.

[Perhaps you are not using the correct study skills.

So, let me share with you some important study skills that every successful student must practice.

First, choose a quiet and conducive place to study.

If you feel that your own room is not conducive, find another better place.

Perhaps you can use the study room.

You may even go to the library.

Just make sure that the place you choose has proper ventilation and lighting.

Make it a point to study at the same place each time.

Remember, that effective learning can only take place when you feel comfortable and motivated.

[On top of that, get rid of distractions and get organized.

I know that you spend a great deal of your time surfing the internet and sending text messages to your friends.

It is also important for you to monitor the noise levels when you study.

Therefore, it is advisable to switch off your hand-phone, television and radio when you want to study, so that, you can concentrate better.

A desk with papers, books and files strewn about can also distract you.

Therefore, reduce clutter.

In addition, you should tidy up your study table and bookshelves when they are messy.

Keep your files and notes within easy reach so that you need not waste valuable time looking for them.

When you are studying, tell your family and friends politely not to disturb you.

By doing so, they will understand you and will not distract you from your studies.

[You also mentioned in your letter that there is just too much to study and that you do not have the time.

Studying the 10 subjects may seem to be a difficult task.

However, do remember that you too have 24 hours in a day, just like other students.

Perhaps you do not know how to manage your time.

For a start, plan a timetable.

A good rule of thumb is to set aside at least 4 hours to study every day and make sure that you take study breaks occasionally.

[If you stick to your study schedule and follow all the advice given, learning can be fun and passing exams will be a breeze.

Remember, a stitch in time saves nine.

So pull up your socks now.

Don't wait until the last minute to study.

[Right, I have to finish my own assignment now.

Do write and tell me how you are coping.

Hope everyone at home is doing well and give my love to them.

Bye.

[I received your letter two weeks ago.

I wanted to write an immediate reply but my assignments have kept me busy.

Time really flies!

[As the exam is still a few months away, you will have ample time to make the necessary preparations.

You don't have to wait until the eleventh hour to start your revision.

[In order to fare well in the SPM examinations, you must have good study techniques.

Firstly, you should have a timetable.

A timetable will help you plan your activities for study and for relaxation.

I always believe that "a person who fails to plan, plans to fail."

Include all your subjects.

Give emphasis on subjects you are weak in.

[Next, you should study consistently.

Make it a habit to study at least five to six hours a day.

Burning the midnight oil at the last minute will not enable you to get good results.

[There are many ways of doing revision.

You can make short notes to help you jot down important points and to remember them.

You can also have group discussions.

It will be fun to discuss past year questions and do revision with your friends.

[Of course, you don't have to study all the time.

Have enough fun and relaxation.

Take up a hobby or a game, go for walks, watch a few of your favourite programmes on television.

[These are only some of the study tips.

I wish you all the best and don't forget to keep in touch.

[How are you, John?

Dad, Mum and I are fine.

I hope you are well, too.

Are you busy studying for your final exam?

[We had the most fantastic time last weekend.

Do you remember my Korean friend, Eun-mi?

She came to visit us last weekend.

Before her visit, we carefully planned a list of places to bring her for the two days.

Our itinerary included Prince Shopping Complex, the National Zoo and the Butterfly Farm.

[On Saturday morning, we woke up early.

After breakfast, Dad drove us to the National Zoo.

Well, that was a good choice for Eun-mi loves animals.

She had a wonderful time looking at them.

I lost count of the number of pictures she took of the animals.

She told me that she has several albums, all with pictures of animals!

[Next, we went to the Butterfly Farm which is in another part of the city.

There, we saw many butterfly species.

I was told there are about two hundred species.

Wow, that's really a lot!

On Sunday, we went to Prince Shopping Complex.

Eun-mi wanted to buy souvenirs and T-shirts for her family and friends.

We spent the whole afternoon shopping!

We browsed through practically all the shops and boutiques.

By evening, she must have bought a whole cartload of gifts.

That night, we had a seafood dinner at a nearby restaurant.

The prawn and lobster dishes were really delicious.

[I wish you had joined us last weekend.

By the way, Eun-mi sends you her regards.

I have to stop here.

Do write often and tell me how you spend your weekends over there.

[I hope this letter finds you healthy and in good spirits.

My mum and dad are doing well, though my dad is still on medication for his blood pressure and diabetes.

{I must admit I was rather distressed when I received your letter.

You sounded very dejected and unhappy over your inability to perform well in your studies.

I sympathise with your situation and I am sorry that you failed in the SPM examination last year.

However, you should not let your past failure hinder your determination to do well this year.

[I would like to emphasise a few things since you have asked my advice on this issue.

First of all, do not underestimate your abilities and intelligence.

All of us have the willpower to achieve our goals and ambitions.

You ought not to let your bad grades prevent you from striving harder.

Please maintain regular revision of your subjects and spend some money on revision books.

I would also encourage you to seek advice and help from friends who are good at certain subjects.

Personal tutoring will help you tremendously and you can form discussion groups with some of your friends.

[Secondly, if you feel you need some guidance in your studies, do not hesitate to enrol yourself in a good tuition centre.

Scout around for a good one as there are many tuition centres sprouting around like mushrooms.

You do not need tutorial guidance for all the subjects, only for the subjects you are weak at.

[Be more confident and have faith in yourself while you set aside time to revise your studies.

Engage in sports activities so that you are physically active which enables you to be mentally active.

You know the saying very well that says “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.”

Thus, juggle your time well between studies and sports activities.

[I would also suggest that you read widely and extensively in Malay and English.

In this way, you will not only enhance your vocabulary but also your knowledge on many issues.

Reading also improves your writing skills and hence, your grades would improve as a result.

[I am sure you would see marked improvement in your grades if you follow all the suggestions I have outlined.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further assistance or in doubt over certain matters.

I wish you good luck and best wishes in the coming examination.



[xxx

xxx

Thank you for the letter I received two days ago.

I am sorry to hear that you have put on weight.

I can imagine your horror when you stepped onto the scales and discovered that you had put two kilogrammes.

[Two kilogrammes is not a big deal.

However, if you feel that certain parts of your body are getting a little too heavy, then you better do something about it.

[Staying slim and healthy is not as easy as one thinks.

It requires self-discipline and self-control.

There are some important pointers to bear in mind.

First of all, xxx

[Secondly, xxx

By doing this way, you will not be tempted to finish all the leftovers.

Next, xxx

Alternatively, you can do some exercises, for example, xxx

Exercise burns off those extra calories and help you too maintain a slim and healthy body.

[Beside that, you must xxx

It is wise to eat more xxx

It is advisable to xxx instead of frying.

Avoid oily food as possible because food that is high in oil content will make us xxx and it can cause xxx

[One last word of advice.

Xxx

It will make you feel xxx

Remember, eat only from hunger and never from habit.

[An effective weight control programme requires discipline, exercise and a balance diet.

Wish you xxx

[Hope to hear from you soon.

[I received your letter two weeks ago.

I wanted to write an immediate reply but my assignments have kept me busy,  
Time really flies!

[As the exam is still a few months away, you will have ample time to make the  
necessary preparations.

You don't have to wait until the eleventh hour to start your revision.

[In order to fare well in the SPM examinations, you must have good study techniques.

Firstly, you should have a timetable.

A timetable will help you plan your activities for study and for relaxation.

I always believe that "a person who fails to plan, plans to fail."

Include all your subjects.

Give emphasis on subjects you are weak in.

[Next, you should study consistently.

Make it a habit to study at least five to six hours a day.

Burning the midnight oil at the last minute will not enable you to get good results.

[There are many ways of doing revision.

You can make short notes to help you jot down important points and to remember them.

You can also have group discussions.

It will be fun to discuss past year questions and do revision with your friends.

[Of course, you don't have to study all the time.

Have enough fun and relaxation.

Take up a hobby or a game, go for walks, watch a few of your favourite programmes on  
television.

[These are only some of the study tips.

The most important thing is to manage your time well.

All the best and don't forget to keep in touch.

[How are you?

I'm fine.

Here's a letter in English.

It's good practice for you and me!

I'm writing to tell you about my school, the girls I live with and New York.

[I have classes in English at La Guardia Community College.

I'm in a class with eight students.

They're all from different countries: Japan, Brazil, Switzerland, Poland and Italy.

Our teacher's name is Isabel.

She's very nice and a very good teacher.

[I live in an apartment with two American girls, Annie and Marnie Kass.

They are sisters.

Annie's twenty years old and a dancer.

Marnie's eighteen years old and a student.

They're very friendly, but it isn't easy to understand them.

They speak very fast!

[New York is very big, very exciting but very expensive!

The subway isn't difficult to use and it's cheap.

It's very cold now but Central Park is lovely in the snow.

I'm very happy here.

[That's all my news.

Write to me soon.

[How are you, my friend?

Congratulations on achieving such good results in your PMR exam!

Yes, I do think that your results were very good, even though I know that you feel disappointed about not achieving your target of straight A's.

I also realize how disappointed you are in not getting an 'A' for your pet subject, mathematics.

However, you should remember that you had high fever on the day of your Mathematics examination which probably contributed to your poorer results in this subject.

[That brings me to the problem that you asked my advice on: which stream to opt for.

Frankly, you always struck me as a bright student.

Furthermore, you have always done well in school exams.

Though Additional Mathematics is a difficult subject, I believe that you will be able to cope with it if you are prepared to work at it seriously.

Knowing you, this should not be a problem.

[Well, that is all for this letter.

I have to get back to my revision as I am actually in the midst of my exams.

I hope my advice has been of some help.

I wish you all the best for your studies.

Good luck!

[I am writing to let you know we arrived safely in Kuching last night.

Dad was waiting for us at the airport and we managed to be at grandma's house for dinner.

[We want to thank you and your family for making our trip to Ipoh a memorable one.

Thanks also for the many gifts and souvenirs you bought us.

Aunty's cooking was indeed sumptuous and was one of the highlights of the trip.

Of course we will also remember the wonderful trip to Penang and Langkawi.

We regret that we were not able to stay longer.

In fact, Dad has promised to come along the next holiday after watching the video tape of our trip.

[School will be starting in a few days' time and so we have to start revising for our coming exams.

Jason will be sitting for his SPM exam and so, he won't be going anywhere for a while, but you can be sure that I will be coming over during the long December break.

While we were away, my dog, Lucky, gave birth to eight puppies.

[Once again, we want to thank you for your hospitality and we also want to invite you and your family over to Kuching this holiday.

## **APPENDIX 4B**

### **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

#### **Notes**

- i. The original format of the protocol is shown on this first sheet below, with spaces for recording responses and comments in handwritten form. This format was found to be too cumbersome for actual fieldwork; hence the protocol was modified into the form on the second sheet onwards.
- ii. The original questions in the protocol were also modified slightly after the first few interviews were conducted. The modified questions enabled the researcher to be more focused in interviewing according to the objective of the study.
- iii. Any discrepancies between the original and modified questions were compensated for in subsequent interviews.

School		Date	
Teacher		Time	
Pre / Post Class details		Tag	
		Venue	

#### ***Original format:***

<b>Background (First interview only)</b>		
<b>Question Guide</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1. PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF 1.1. Name 1.2. Age <del>1.3. Social background</del> Personal use of English 1.4. Any other information the participant wishes to share		

***Revised format:***

**PART 1: BACKGROUND (FIRST INTERVIEW ONLY)**

<b>Original questions (Changes are italicised)</b>	<b>Finalised questions</b>
1. PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name</li><li>• Age</li><li>• <i>Social background</i></li><li>• Any other information the participant wishes to share</li></ul>	1. PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name</li><li>• Age</li><li>• Personal use of English</li><li>• Any other information the participant wishes to share</li></ul>
2. PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT YOUR TEACHING CAREER <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Training</li><li>• Teaching experience</li><li>• Experience in teaching English</li><li>• Reasons for choosing the career</li><li>• Reasons for choosing to teach English</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b><i>NO CHANGE</i></b></li></ul>
3. <i>WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE WRITING SKILL IN GENERAL?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Definition of writing</li><li>• Perception of its importance</li><li>• What is “covered” in teaching writing</li><li>• Most important elements</li><li>• How it is best taught / learnt</li><li>• Feelings about teaching the skill</li></ul>	3a. WHAT IS YOUR GENERAL OPINION ON THE WRITING SKILL IN LANGUAGE LEARNING? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Definition of writing</li><li>• Perception of its importance</li><li>• Most important elements</li></ul> 3b. WHAT IS YOUR GENERAL OPINION ABOUT THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF THE WRITING SKILL? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is “covered” in teaching writing</li><li>• How it is best taught / learnt</li><li>• Feelings about teaching the skill</li></ul>
4. <i>WHAT IS COVERED IN TEACHING AND LEARNING THE WRITING SKILL FOR UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General elements/content</li><li>• Most important elements</li><li>• How/when/by whom content is decided</li></ul>	4. WHAT DO YOU COVER WHEN YOU TEACH WRITING AT FORM 4 LEVEL? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General elements/content</li><li>• Most important elements</li><li>• How/when/by whom content is decided</li></ul>

<p>5. <i>HOW IS THE WRITING SKILL TAUGHT AND LEARNT AT UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of activities</li> <li>• How/when/by whom activities are chosen</li> <li>• Reasons behind choice of activities</li> <li>• Basic principles underlying activities</li> <li>• Elements emphasised</li> </ul>	<p>5. WHAT KIND OF CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES DO YOU USE WHEN TEACHING THE WRITING SKILL AT THIS LEVEL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of activities</li> <li>• How/when/by whom activities are chosen</li> <li>• Reasons behind choice of activities</li> <li>• Basic principles underlying activities</li> <li>• Elements emphasised</li> </ul>
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## PART 2: OPINION OF WRITING INSTRUCTION (FIRST INTERVIEW ONLY)

Original questions (Changes are italicised)	Finalised questions
<p>6. WHAT KIND OF MATERIALS IS SUITABLE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING THE WRITING SKILL AT UPPER SECONDARY (FORM 4) LEVEL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of materials</li> <li>• Source of materials</li> <li>• Characteristics of materials</li> <li>• Most important characteristic(s)</li> <li>• Reasons behind choice of materials</li> <li>• How/when/by whom materials are chosen/created</li> <li>• <i>How materials are used in classroom activities</i></li> </ul>	<p>6. WHAT KIND OF MATERIALS IS SUITABLE FOR TEACHING THE WRITING SKILL AT FORM 4 LEVEL?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of materials</li> <li>• Source of materials</li> <li>• Characteristics of materials</li> <li>• Most important characteristic(s)</li> <li>• Reasons behind choice of materials</li> <li>• How/when/by whom materials are chosen/created</li> </ul>



## PART 3A: PRE-LESSON INTERVIEW – PREPARATION AND CHOICE OF MATERIALS

### Original questions (Changes are italicised)

### Finalised questions

7a. PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT THE COMING LESSON

- *NO CHANGE*

7b. PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT THE CLASS YOU WILL BE TEACHING

- General content
- Lesson objectives
- Unusual circumstances or relevant background information
- Affective factors (e.g. teacher's relationship with the students, students' general attitude towards English, etc)

8. PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT THE MATERIALS YOU WILL USE IN THE LESSON

- *NO CHANGE*

- Types of materials
- Source of materials
- Reasons behind choice of materials
- Typicality of materials
- Characteristics of materials
- Most important characteristic(s)

## PART 3B: PRE-LESSON INTERVIEW – PLANNED USE OF MATERIALS

### Original questions (Changes are italicised)

### Finalised questions

9. HOW WILL YOU USE THESE MATERIALS IN THE LESSON?

- Description of activities involving materials
- Reasons behind choice of activities
- Reason behind the sequence of activities
- *Typicality of activities*
- Basic principles used to explain choices
- Elements emphasised

9. HOW WILL YOU USE THESE MATERIALS IN THE LESSON?

- Description of activities involving materials
- Reasons behind choice of activities
- Reason behind the sequence of activities
- Basic principles used to explain choices
- Elements emphasised

## PART 4A: POST-LESSON INTERVIEW – USE OF MATERIALS

Original questions (Changes are italicised)	Finalised questions
<p>10. <i>HOW WAS THE LESSON IN GENERAL?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General perception</li> <li>• Achievement of lesson objectives</li> <li>• Outstanding events</li> </ul>	<p>10. HOW WAS THE LESSON IN GENERAL FOR YOU?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General perception</li> <li>• Achievement of lesson objectives</li> <li>• Outstanding events</li> </ul>
<p>11. DID YOU USE THE MATERIALS AS YOU PLANNED?</p> <p><u>IF NO</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative action taken</li> <li>• Reasons for alternative action</li> </ul> <p><u>IF YES</u></p> <p>(AND IN ADDITION TO “IF NO”),</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Effect of action taken</i></li> <li>• <i>Possible explanation for the effect</i></li> <li>• <i>Satisfaction or otherwise with effect</i></li> <li>• <i>Follow-up action planned (if any)</i></li> </ul>	<p>11. DID YOU USE THE MATERIALS AS YOU PLANNED?</p> <p><u>IF NO</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alternative action taken</li> <li>• Reasons for alternative action</li> </ul> <p><u>IF YES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite any additional comments from the teacher</li> </ul>
<p>12. <i>IN OUR EARLIER INTERVIEW, YOU MENTIONED THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC OF THE MATERIALS IS (...). IS IT NECESSARY TO HIGHLIGHT THIS CHARACTERISTIC TO THE STUDENTS?</i></p> <p><u>IF NO,</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Reasons why not</i></li> </ul> <p><u>IF YES,</u></p> <p><i>HOW DID YOU DO SO IN THE LESSON JUST NOW?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Description of action taken</i></li> </ul> <p><i>WHAT EFFECT DID IT HAVE ON THE STUDENTS?</i></p> <p><i>WHY DO YOU THINK THIS HAPPENED?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Description of effect</i></li> <li>• <i>Possible explanation for the effect</i></li> <li>• <i>Satisfaction or otherwise with effect</i></li> <li>• <i>Follow-up action planned (if any)</i></li> </ul>	<p>12. EARLIER, WE TALKED ABOUT ... (THE IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MATERIALS). PLEASE TELL ME HOW THESE CHARACTERISTICS WERE DEALT WITH DURING THE LESSON.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of actions taken</li> <li>• Effect of actions</li> <li>• Satisfaction or otherwise with the effects</li> </ul>

PART 4B: POST-LESSON INTERVIEW – CLARIFYING ACTIONS / LANGUAGE USED DURING THE LESSON

**Original questions (Changes are italicised)**

**Finalised questions**

13. I WOULD LIKE TO CHECK WITH YOU ON SOMETHING ...

- *NO CHANGE*

Unexpected events

That happened during the lesson.

- Was it planned?
- Why did it happen?
- What effects do you think it had on the students?

Teacher's actions

That you did during the lesson.

- Why did you ...?

Teacher's actions

That you said during the lesson.

- What did you mean by...?
- Why did you ...?

Student's reactions

That the students did/said during the lesson.

- Was it expected?
- Why do you think they did/said that?
- How does that affect you?

PART 5A: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW – STUDENTS' WORK

**Original questions (Changes are italicised)**

**Finalised questions**

14. WHY DO YOU CONSIDER THIS A SATISFACTORY PIECE OF WORK?

- *NO CHANGE*

- Valued characteristics
- Reasons why they are valued

15. WHY DO YOU CONSIDER THIS AN UNSATISFACTORY PIECE OF WORK?

- *NO CHANGE*

- Missing or undesirable characteristics
- Reasons why they are undesirable

PART 5B: FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW – OVERALL VIEW OF TEXT TYPES

**Original questions**

**Finalised questions**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>NO QUESTIONS ORIGINALLY PLANNED</i></b></li> </ul>	<p>16. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FORMAL AND INFORMAL LETTERS?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Main difference</li> <li>Other differences, if any</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>NO QUESTIONS ORIGINALLY PLANNED</i></b></li> </ul>	<p>17. WHICH TYPE OF LETTER DO YOU WRITE PERSONALLY?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the past</li> <li>Recently</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>NO QUESTIONS ORIGINALLY PLANNED</i></b></li> </ul>	<p>18. WHICH TYPE OF LETTER DO YOU THINK IS MORE USEFUL OR RELEVANT, AND WHY?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To people in general nowadays</li> <li>To the students</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>NO QUESTIONS ORIGINALLY PLANNED</i></b></li> </ul>	<p>19. WHICH TYPE OF LETTER DO YOU FIND EASIER ... WHY?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To teach</li> <li>For students to write</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>NO QUESTIONS ORIGINALLY PLANNED</i></b></li> </ul>	<p>20. DO YOU THINK THAT THE LETTERS THAT PEOPLE WRITE IN REAL LIFE WOULD BE THE SAME AS THE LETTERS THEY LEARNED TO WRITE IN SCHOOL?</p> <p><u>IF NO</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Differences expected</li> </ul> <p><u>IF YES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In which aspects</li> </ul>

## **APPENDIX 4C**

### **GUIDELINES FOR NOTE-TAKING DURING LESSON OBSERVATIONS**

#### **Notes**

- iv. The original format of the guideline (called the ‘Observation framework’) is shown on the second sheet below, with spaces for recording responses and comments in handwritten form. This format was found to be too cumbersome for actual fieldwork; hence the protocol was modified into a bullet-point form in a larger font, which provided a quick reference, as shown on the third sheet.
- v. The content in the guideline was also modified slightly after the initial text analysis was carried out, so that the note-taking was more streamlined and coordinated with the analysis.

School		Date	
Teacher		Time	
Class		Tag	
Enrolment		Attendance	

#### **(A) PHYSICAL SETUP**

*(Diagram of the classroom on separate sheet – first observation only unless changes occur)*

*Original format:*

**(B) OBSERVATION FRAMEWORK**

*(The following elements are to be focused on during observation)*

<b>(1) Content Elements</b>		
<b>Element</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1a) Topic		
1b) Goal /purpose		
1c) Technicality		
1d) Participant roles		
1e) Relationship between participants		
1f) Nature of interaction		
1g) Stages/parts in the text		

Note: 1a) to 1c) are related to Field, 1d) and 1e) to Tenor, 1f) to Mode and 1g) to Genre

<b>(2) Lexicogrammatical Elements</b>		
<b>Element</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2a) Transitivity system		
2b) Time (tense)		
2c) Modality		
2d) Mood		
2e) Person		
2f) Expressions of attitude and affect		
2g) Thematic choice		
2h) Cohesion devices		
2i) Tracking of participants		
2j) Nominalization		
2k) Marking of stages/ parts in the text		

Note: 2a) to 2c) are related to Field, 2e) and 2f) to Tenor, 2g) to 2j) to Mode and 2k) to Genre

<b>(3) General Observations</b>	
<b>Observation Notes</b>	<b>Comments</b>

*Modified format:*

- *printed in a large font size, Arial 20pt, for better visibility*
- *added / modified content is shown in italics*

**(B) GUIDELINES FOR NOTE-TAKING**

**Field**

1a) Topic

1b) Goal /purpose (long/short term;  
practical/rhetorical)

1c) Technicality

1d) Lexicogrammar – Process, Participant,  
Circumstances, tense, modals

**Tenor**

2a) Participant roles

2b) Relationship between participants  
(status/power/distance)

2c) Lexicogrammar – Mood, person, voice,  
modals

**Mode**

3a) Nature of interaction

3b) Feedback

3c) Lexicogrammar – Theme, cohesion,  
nominalisation

**Genre**

4a) Stages/parts in the text

4b) Lexicogrammar – markers of stages eg  
connectors, transition words

## **APPENDIX 4D**

### **LIST OF DOCUMENTS COLLECTED AND EXAMINED DURING FIELDWORK**

Document types	Source	Notes
1. English Language syllabus	Downloaded from the Ministry of Education website	It is compulsory for all government secondary schools to use this syllabus
2. English Language syllabus specifications for Form 4		
3. Yearly scheme of work (includes the order of topics/text types to be covered and the time frame for implementation)	Head of the English Department in the school concerned	All the teachers teaching the same level will use the same scheme of work to ensure uniformity
4. Lesson plans for sessions observed	Teachers who are teaching the lessons concerned	Different teachers use slightly different formats for their lesson plans
5. Model texts as provided to the students (including those found in the textbook)	Teachers who are teaching the lessons concerned	The model letters are reproduced in a standardized form, as stated in Chapter 4
6. Additional materials (notes, handouts, etc) used during writing lessons observed	Teachers who are teaching the lessons concerned	
7. Board work (things written or displayed on the board by the teachers during writing instruction)	Based on images from the video footage taken during the observation	A broad description of this board work is included in the transcription
8. Samples of students' written work based on the writing instruction received	Teachers who are teaching the lessons concerned	The written work is photocopied in its original form
9. Training materials used for the STEP programme (only in SMK WP)	Participant RJ, who was a principal trainer in the programme	The materials include the trainers' notes and the participants' module



## APPENDIX 4E

### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

ABBREVIATIONS	DENOTES
<b><i>Aspect of analysis: Basic Transitivity</i></b>	
10. Circ	Circumstance – further categorised a Manner, Matter, Extent, etc.
11. Proc	Process
12. att	Attributive Relational Process
13. idnt	Identifying Relational Process
<b><i>Aspect of analysis: Clause structure</i></b>	
14. IF	Independent finite clause
15. DF	Dependent finite clause
16. EF	Embedded finite clause
17. EI	Embedded non-finite clause
18. DI	Dependent non-finite clause
19. O (Vbl)	Verbless clause (minor clause)
20. O (Abb)	Verbless clause (from abbreviation)
21. GER	Gerund (verb in –ing form) as subject
<b><i>Aspect of analysis: Structural relationship to other clauses</i></b>	
22. i,ii,iii	Part of parataxis complex
23. $\alpha \beta \gamma \delta$	Part of hypotaxis complex
24. s	Simplex
25. p	Parataxis
26. h	Hypotaxis
27. c	Combination of relationships
28. i	Interrupting
29. a	Additional (outside the complex)
30. e	Embedded
31. r	Rankshifted
<b><i>Aspect of analysis: Process types</i></b>	
32. Mat	Material
33. Ent	Mental
34. Rel	Relational
35. Vrb	Verbal
36. Bhv	Behavioural
37. Xst	Existential
38. *	The first process in an arrangement of phased verbs
<b><i>Aspect of analysis: voice (only for finite clauses with processes used transitively)</i></b>	
39. Act	Active
40. Psv	Passive
41. Int	Intransitive
42. NA	Not Applicable - imperative
<b><i>Aspect of analysis: Mood types (for independent clauses only)</i></b>	
43. DEC	Declarative
44. PRV	Imperative

<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>DENOTES</b>
45. INT	Interrogative
46. EXC	Exclamative
<i>Aspect of analysis: speech acts (for independent clauses only)</i>	
47. Off	Offer
48. Stmt	Statement
49. Comd	Command
50. Qstn	Question
<i>Aspect of analysis: person (for Subjects of finite clauses only)</i>	
51. Fs	First person
52. Sc	Second person
53. Td	Third person
54. x	Not applicable (dependent / embedded clause)
<i>Aspect of analysis: congruence between Mood type and speech acts</i>	
55. Yes	Congruence (Incongruence is shown by the abbreviation for the actual speech act)
56. Yes (direct)	Congruence with emphasis
57. Politeness	Incongruence for politeness
58. Distancing	Distancing structure used
59. Yes (convention)	Conventional phrase that is congruent
<i>Aspect of analysis: Theme types</i>	
60. pos	Position of Textual Theme, whether usual or optional
61. comp	The Textual Theme is compulsory (relative clauses)

## **APPENDIX 4F**

### **LIST OF CODES USED IN ANALYSIS OF TRANSCRIPTS**

#### ***Level 1 Codes***

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Accepted teaching  | 38. Benefits of providing a model                |
| 2. Activities for background information                                    | 39. Biggest problem: expression                  |
| 3. Actual reason for formal letter  | 40. BM for explanation                           |
| 4. Adapted materials  | 41. Both content and language                    |
| 5. Adapted textbook materials   | 42. Both letters taught in a similar way         |
| 6. Adapted to ability   | 43. Both types useful                            |
| 7. Adapted to students' ability   | 44. Brief and precise                            |
| 8. Adapted to suit usual format   | 45. Cannot write formal letters without guidance |
| 9. Adapting materials according to students' ability and activities planned | 46. Careless mistakes                            |
| 10. Added questions   | 47. Casual language                              |
| 11. Administrative support  | 48. Casual tone                                  |
| 12. Against exam-oriented teaching  | 49. Certain topics are harder than others        |
| 13. Allowing short forms  | 50. Characteristic of formal letter              |
| 14. Answer given  | 51. Check format                                 |
| 15. Answer provided   | 52. Check format features                        |
| 16. Applied training  | 53. Checking previous knowledge                  |
| 17. Applying training   | 54. Classroom management                         |
| 18. Approach for formal letters   | 55. Clear content                                |
| 19. Approach to teach letters   | 56. Comment on format                            |
| 20. Aspects of language highlighted   | 57. Comment on format feature                    |
| 21. Assumed past knowledge of format  | 58. Comment on grammar                           |
| 22. Assumed past knowledge of text type                                     | 59. Comment on points                            |
| 23. Attempt to use own language   | 60. Comments on content                          |
| 24. Authentic materials   | 61. Comments on format                           |
| 25. Authentic materials sometimes   | 62. Comments on language                         |
| 26. Authentic materials for exposure  | 63. Comments on vocabulary                       |
| 27. Authentic materials for information                                     | 64. Commercial materials                         |
| 28. Authentic materials for information                                     | 65. Commercial materials for better class        |
| 29. Background discussion   | 66. Commercial materials used more than textbook |
| 30. Background information  | 67. Compare formal and informal                  |
| 31. Background knowledge  | 68. Comparing letters                            |
| 32. Basic proficiency very low  | 69. Complaint letter introduced with situation   |
| 33. Basics of writing   | 70. Comprehension                                |
| 34. Basics of writing: grammar  | 71. Comprehension of task requirements           |
| 35. Basics of writing: vocabulary and spelling                              | 72. Concern over line formatting                 |
| 36. Below standard  | 73. Confusion over format features               |
| 37. Benefit from previous instruction                                       | 74. Confusion with BM                            |
|   | 75. Confusion with BM format                     |

76. Consideration: familiarity of topic
77. Consideration: not too difficult
78. Consideration: relevance
79. Considered language factor
80. Considered serious errors
81. Content aspects
82. Content comments
83. Content elicited from students
84. Content error
85. Content from students
86. Content guidance
87. Content is quite open ended
88. Content not necessarily adapted
89. Content of formal and informal
90. Content over language
91. Content problems
92. Contents of informal letter
93. Contents of paragraphs
94. Contrast with formal letter
95. Contrast with informal
96. Contrast with informal letter
97. Contrast with informal letter by recipient
98. Conversational tone
99. Copied work
100. Copying answers
101. Copying done appropriately
102. Copying for weaker students
103. Copying from model
104. Copying from sample
105. Copying from sample letter
106. Copying is not good preparation for exams
107. Copying is ok for getting ideas
108. Copying the model essay
109. Copying wrongly
110. Correct tone
111. Corrections to sentence structure
112. Criteria: correct format
113. Criterion: activities that can be done
114. Criterion: background information of students
115. Criterion: content
116. Criterion: difficulty of language
117. Criterion: ease of use (exploitation)
118. Criterion: examination format used
119. Criterion: familiar to students
120. Criterion: familiarity to students
121. Criterion: fits syllabus
122. Criterion: fits the topic
123. Criterion: fits theme
124. Criterion: interesting to students
125. Criterion: local context
126. Criterion: match lesson objective
127. Criterion: real life application
128. Criterion: relevance
129. Criterion: relevance to students
130. Criterion: relevant to the topic
131. Criterion: relevant to topic
132. Criterion: students' background knowledge
133. Criterion: students' needs
134. Criterion: vocabulary
135. Current usefulness
136. Dictation
137. Difference between letters
138. Difference with informal
139. Differences between formal and informal
140. Different approach for better classes
141. Different first degree
142. Different language
143. Different purpose for task
144. Differentiating characteristic
145. Differentiating letters
146. Does not like copying by better classes
147. Effectiveness of STEP
148. Effects of STEP
149. Elicit background information
150. Elicit content
151. Elicit content from students
152. Emphasis on format
153. Emphasis: comprehensibility
154. Emphasis: content
155. Emphasis: content (comprehension)
156. Emphasis: effective communication
157. Emphasis: format
158. Emphasis: language (politeness)
159. Emphasis: language over content
160. Emphasis: purpose
161. Emphasis: teach to the actual level
162. Encourage students to write more
163. Encouraged to emulate model
164. Encouraging own words
165. Ending phrases

166. English for administration
167. English is not first choice
168. English is offered
169. English offered, not chosen
170. English support activities
171. English use by students
172. Error in basic grammar
173. Evidence of direct translation
174. Exam format practice
175. Exam marking scheme
176. Exam-focused training
177. Exam-format writing tasks
178. Examination marking scheme
179. Examination performance
180. Exam-oriented teaching
181. Exam-oriented training
182. Exam-orientedness
183. Exercise modified
184. Expertise
185. Explicit grammar teaching
186. Expressions for various parts
187. Extra elaboration
188. Extra non-teaching duties
189. Extra points
190. Familiar content
191. Familiarise with letter
192. Favourite: literature
193. Favourite because more activities can be done
194. Favourite part: literature
195. Favourite part: literature and grammar
196. Favourite part: reading
197. Favourite: grammar
198. Favourite: literature
199. Favourite: reading and speaking
200. Favourite: writing
201. Few reasons to write in real life
202. Financial support
203. Focus more on content
204. Focus on content
205. Focus on courteous language
206. Focus on flow of ideas
207. Focus on format
208. Focus on formatting details
209. Focus on guided writing
210. Focus on language
211. Focus on parts
212. Focus on present tense
213. Focus on purpose
214. Focus on simple sentences
215. Focus on situation
216. Focus on style
217. Focus on tenses
218. Focus on vocabulary
219. Focus: language
220. Focus: task requirements
221. For future needs
222. For students
223. Formal and informal format differences
224. Formal letter for work
225. Formal letter format
226. Formal letter introduced directly
227. Formal letter introduced directly and in terms of recipients
228. Formal letter introduced with purpose
229. Formal letter more difficult
230. Formal letter only for certain recipient
231. Formal letter useful in real life
232. Formal letter: same emphasis
233. Formal letters more useful
234. Formal letters not stressed
235. Formal more useful for work
236. Formal not often written
237. Formal taught because it is in the syllabus
238. Format aspects
239. Format can be used in real life but not necessarily content
240. Format cannot be wrong
241. Format comments
242. Format complete
243. Format considered
244. Format correct in general
245. Format error
246. Format features
247. Format from students
248. Format generally correct
249. Format guidance
250. Format in general
251. Format in original not correct
252. Format is first thing
253. Format may be confused with BM
254. Format mostly correct
255. Format not a problem
256. Format not as important
257. Format not highlighted
258. Format reiterated
259. Format very important

260. Formatting discrepancy
261. Friendly language
262. Full answer not provided
263. Future use of letters
264. Gap filling, not writing
265. General approach to writing  
instruction : structured and guided
266. General focus
267. General problems
268. General student queries
269. Generally satisfied with results
270. Give more topics for practice
271. Good class
272. Good classes do not need so much  
input on content – focus on format
273. Good discipline enables good  
teaching
274. Good organisation in general
275. Grammar and vocabulary for  
writing
276. Grammar is a basic for writing
277. Grammar is a major weakness of  
students
278. Grammar is challenging to teach
279. Grammar is important
280. Grammatical errors
281. Group writing
282. Guidance on content
283. Guidance on format
284. Guidance on grammar and  
vocabulary
285. Guidance on language
286. Guidance on sentence  
construction
287. Guidelines on format
288. Hard to explain mistakes
289. Hardest to teach: grammar
290. Have to teach formal letter for  
exam
291. Highlight first paragraph
292. Highlight format
293. Highlight format features
294. Highlight formatting
295. Highlight language
296. Highlight letter characteristics
297. Highlight purpose
298. Highlight recipients
299. How to elaborate
300. Identify text type from extract
301. Identity of recipient
302. Importance of format
303. Importance of model text
304. Importance of writing
305. Important to be courteous
306. Improve on format
307. Improve on punctuation
308. Inappropriate copying
309. Include all points given
310. Independent work aimed for
311. Individual guidance on format
312. Individual guidance on language
313. Individual joint construction
314. individual work highlighted as  
good examples
315. Informal easier for students
316. Informal easier and more familiar
317. Informal easier to teach
318. Informal emphasised more
319. Informal letter format
320. Informal letter introduced
321. Informal letter introduced by  
recipients
322. Informal letter introduced directly
323. Informal letter introduced with  
purpose
324. Informal letter introduced with  
recipients
325. Informal letter relatively easier
326. Informal letters for examination
327. Informal letters in examination
328. Informal letters may be used one  
day
329. Informal letters not important
330. Informal letters not written  
nowadays
331. Informal letters preferred
332. Informal more familiar
333. Informal more for examination
334. Informal not so useful
335. In-house training
336. Input important in writing  
instruction
337. Instructions to emulate model
338. Integrated approach
339. Internet materials
340. Introduce formal letter by purpose
341. Introduce formal letter directly
342. Introduce vocabulary
343. Introductory lesson
344. Joint construction
345. Joint construction only with  
weaker students

346. KISS
347. Knowing grammar to write well
348. Labelling format features
349. Language aspects
350. Language comments
351. Language difference
352. Language error
353. Language focus
354. Language guidance
355. Language highlighted
356. Language is the main focus
357. Language not focused on
358. Language over content
359. Language previously taught
360. Language problems anticipated
361. Language taught used
362. Language to give advice
363. Learn letters for exam
364. Letter can be used in real life
365. Letter of complaint introduced
366. Letter writing not done anymore
367. Letter: to demonstrate task
368. Letters for examination
369. Letters for examination only
370. Letters for future needs
371. Letters in examination
372. Letters introduced
373. Letters may not be relevant to students
374. Letters of complaint seldom written
375. Letters still in the syllabus
376. Level cannot be brought too low
377. Level considered easy
378. Level not the main consideration
379. Linking letters to students' experience
380. Literacy problem
381. Literature favourite because it is enjoyable
382. Little or no training for writing
383. Logic error in address
384. Look at language to determine sequence
385. Looking at format
386. Looking at main point
387. Low proficiency
388. Lower level materials used
389. Main characteristic
390. Main difference between formal and informal
391. Main problem: vocabulary
392. Materials are satisfactory
393. Materials could be improved
394. Materials generally satisfactory
395. Maybe copying
396. Meaning of vocabulary
397. Mention examination marking scheme
398. Mimic examination format
399. Mindless copying
400. Minimum text types and literature
401. Minor format error
402. Model analysed
403. Model essay for exposure
404. Model essay for illustration
405. Model essay may be given
406. Model essay not always given
407. Model essay provided
408. Model essay source of discrepancies
409. Model essays analysed
410. Model essays explained in BM
411. Model essays for multiple activities
412. Model essays provided
413. Model essays referred to
414. Model formal letters can be found easily
415. Model letter influenced language use
416. Model letters
417. Model needs to be modified
418. Model provided
419. Model texts for weaker classes
420. Model to illustrate
421. Model to provide examples
422. Models for emulation
423. Models only for weaker students
424. Models provided
425. Models to illustrate
426. Modified materials
427. Modify the model
428. Modules on writing instruction
429. More practice needed
430. More samples preferable
431. More varied methods of writing instruction
432. Most challenging skill: speaking
433. Most challenging skill: writing
434. Most challenging: grammar
435. Most challenging: literature

436. Motivation problem
437. Need more points
438. No copying possible
439. No English speaking culture
440. No error-free work
441. No extra points
442. No independent writing
443. No model given
444. No model provided
445. No organisation of points
446. No particular favourite to teach
447. No particularly challenging aspect
448. No restrictions on materials used
449. No restrictions on teaching practices
450. No training this year for writing
451. Non-teaching duties
452. Non-teaching work experience
453. Not completely satisfied but acceptable work done
454. Not fully independent writing
455. Not independent writing
456. Not satisfied with format
457. Not using textbook
458. Not very much support for English
459. Note expansion
460. Objective is language based
461. Only copied phrases are correct
462. Open punctuation
463. Order of teaching
464. Original content
465. Original language
466. Originality
467. Other aspect not so well used
468. Others not well elaborated
469. Out of point
470. Outside competitions
471. Overall comment
472. Own letter similar to taught letter
473. Own materials
474. Paragraph contents
475. Parallel writing
476. Parts of the letter
477. Participation in activities
478. People do not like to write
479. Perception of STEP
480. Perception of training
481. Performance not up to expectations
482. Personal comment
483. Personal liking for English
484. Personal use of letter
485. Personal use of letters
486. Personal use of STEP methodology
487. Phrases for ending
488. Phrasing of parts
489. Picture composition
490. Points given, students taught how to elaborate before attempting to write
491. Politeness and directness
492. Politeness in language
493. Poor discipline
494. Poor proficiency
495. Postgraduate studies - not TESL
496. Postgraduate studies in TESL
497. Precision of language
498. Prefer commercial materials for writing
499. Prefer students try and make mistakes
500. Preparatory work
501. Preparatory work done
502. Previous instruction
503. Previous instruction beneficial
504. Previous instruction on text types
505. Previous instructions
506. Previous knowledge of format assumed
507. Primary and secondary experience
508. Problem in writing: grammar
509. Problem is with expressing ideas
510. Problem is writing sentences
511. Problem with formal letter
512. Problem: grammar and vocabulary
513. Problem: lack of vocabulary
514. Problem: lack of vocabulary and ideas
515. Problem: spelling
516. Problems with spelling
517. Problems with writing
518. Procedure: focus on format
519. Procedure: focus on parts
520. Procedure: focus on vocabulary
521. Proficiency too low for formal letters
522. Provide background information
523. Punctuation
524. Purpose of complaint letter
525. Purpose of formal writing



526. Quality of content
527. Quality of elaboration
528. Reading and writing are related
529. Reading for writing
530. Real letter like taught letter
531. Reasons formal harder
532. Reasons informal easier
533. Refer to model as a guide
534. Refer to previous instruction
535. Reference to examination
536. Reference to examination format
537. Reference to examination results
538. Reference to model essay
539. Reference to past instruction
540. Relevance of letters
541. Resistance to change
542. Result of efforts
543. Revise format features
544. Rhetorical structure
545. Role of materials: introduce new vocab
546. Role: as a model
547. Role: as guides
548. Role: as model to be emulated
549. Role: as models of sentence construction
550. Role: as source of background information
551. Role: exposure to different genres
552. Role: focus on language
553. Role: for comprehension and information
554. Role: for copying by weak students
555. Role: for dictation
556. Role: for exposure
557. Role: for reading aloud (pronunciation practice)
558. Role: for students to copy
559. Role: for students to imitate
560. Role: for students to memorise
561. Role: for students to recycle structures (less effort)
562. Role: help students understand how it is written
563. Role: illustrate difference
564. Role: to emulate phrases
565. Role: to generate ideas
566. Role: to illustrate format and parts
567. Role: to illustrate parts
568. Role: to illustrate parts of the essay
569. Role: to provide background information
570. Role: to review format
571. Role: to show format
572. Same format as BM
573. Same level
574. Same task different context
575. Same task, different situation
576. Sample copied
577. Sample for illustrating format
578. Sample given
579. Satisfactory work
580. Secondary experience only
581. Sentence structure
582. Sequence of ideas
583. Should have mentioned contractions
584. Should have model with better elaboration
585. Should have more joint constructions
586. Should learn letter writing for documentation
587. Similar content
588. Similarity to real life letters
589. Simple language
590. Simplified syllabus
591. Simplified writing syllabus – minimum requirements
592. Situation given
593. Situation relevant to students
594. Slipshod work from students
595. SMS language in schoolwork
596. Some disappointing work
597. Some problems may be from the model
598. Something that looiKStv like a letter
599. Source of problem: basic proficiency lacking
600. Source of problem: lack of exposure to different writing styles and genre
601. Source of problem: lack of reading
602. Source of problem: lacking vocabulary
603. Source of problem: students lack ideas

604. Source of problem: students make too many mistakes
605. Source of spelling problem
606. Speaking is more important than writing
607. Specific errors
608. Specific part of the letter
609. Specific phrasing
610. Specific phrasing
611. Spelling and pronunciation
612. Spelling and tenses also basic
613. Spelling error
614. Stand on copying
615. Standard answer given
616. STEP facilitator
617. STEP information
618. STEP methodology
619. STEP methodology details
620. STEP modified according to class proficiency
621. STEP not active
622. STEP programme
623. STEP training
624. STEP unknown
625. Strict with spelling
626. Student difficulty: expression
627. Student error: format feature
628. Student generated content
629. Student queries
630. Student queries expected
631. Student query
632. Student-generated content
633. Students are afraid to make mistakes
634. Students are just learning to pass exams
635. Students asked to copy model
636. Students asked to look for materials
637. Students asked to revise format
638. Students' attitude is a challenge
639. Students' attitude is a challenge
640. Students' background hinders writing
641. Students can probably complain about similar things
642. Students cannot construct sentences
643. Students cannot elaborate
644. Students cannot express themselves
645. Students concerned about length of writing
646. Students concerned about length of writing required
647. Students copying
648. Students did not improve on jointly constructed draft
649. Students do not know how to start writing
650. Students do not lack ideas, just expression
651. Students do not like English
652. Students do not like to speak English
653. Students do not understand the language
654. Students do not use English outside school
655. Students do not write
656. Students do not write informal letters
657. Students do use English outside school
658. Students don't think they need to write such letters
659. Students don't write letters
660. Students' exposure to English
661. Students feel powerless
662. Students know concepts in BM
663. Students lack ideas
664. Students may need to write formal letters
665. Students may not be familiar with letters
666. Students may not find letters relevant
667. Students need to differentiate letters
668. Students not familiar with informal letter
669. Students not interested in formal letter
670. Students only fill in format
671. Students only write letters in school
672. Students' own problems
673. Students' POV
674. Students prefer ICT to letters
675. Students prefer to copy rather than write

676. Students probably do not write letters
677. Students' problems
678. Students reluctant to take part
679. Students say they have written formal letters
680. Students send in plagiarised essays
681. Students told to emulate model
682. Students' use of English
683. Students' use of letters
684. Students wait for teacher to supply content
685. Students would not elaborate on their own
686. Students write as little as possible
687. Students' writing is poor because they do not read
688. Support activities
689. Support from principal
690. Suspected copying
691. Textbook comments
692. Targeted results
693. Task requirements
694. Task requirements important
695. Task requirements met
696. Task vocabulary
697. Task vocabulary explained
698. Task vocabulary explained
699. Taught letter like real letter
700. Taught letters and real letters
701. Teach depending on the level of the class
702. Teach informal letters as a way of learning the language
703. Teach skills in context
704. Teacher needs to give ideas
705. Teacher prepared materials
706. Teacher produced materials
707. Teacher provides answers
708. Teacher's POV
709. Teachers' use of English
710. Teaching adapted to students' preferences
711. Teaching English is challenging – mixed abilities, not using English outside school
712. Teaching English is challenging – students' poor grammar, especially in writing
713. Teaching grammar covertly
714. Teaching grammar openly – for understanding
715. Teaching is initially not her choice - pragmatism
716. Teaching is not her first choice
717. Teaching is own choice
718. Teaching is personal choice
719. Teaching writing is challenging
720. Tense errors
721. Tense to use
722. TESL option
723. Text type introduced with purpose
724. Text type previously taught
725. Text type taught previously
726. Text types introduced
727. Textbook adapted
728. Textbook exercise used
729. Textbook exercises used
730. Textbook format incorrect
731. Textbook is alright for some aspects
732. Textbook is communicative
733. Textbook is not exam-oriented
734. Textbook is sometimes rather dry
735. Textbook mainly used for reading comprehension
736. Textbook needs supplementing
737. Textbook needs to be adapted for them
738. Textbook needs to be supplemented
739. Textbook not always suitable
740. Textbook not complete
741. Textbook only when relevant
742. Textbook provides standard format
743. Textbook seldom used
744. Textbook sometimes needs modifying
745. Textbook too difficult
746. Textbook too simple
747. Textbook used but not for writing
748. Textbook used for convenience
749. Textbook used selectively
750. Textbook used when suitable
751. To students
752. Tone of letter
753. Too much copying
754. Training on writing instruction
755. Translating from BM
756. Translating instructions

757. Translation from BM
758. Two versions accepted
759. Type of input : language, vocabulary, structures
760. Typical content
761. Typical expressions
762. Unsure what to teach for writing
763. Unusually poor standard of work
764. Upper secondary experience only
765. Use BM to explain
766. Use exam format
767. Use of authentic materials
768. Use of BM
769. Use of BM by teacher
770. Use of BM for explanation
771. Use of BM for explanations
772. Use of BM unavoidable
773. Use of commercial materials
774. Use of contractions
775. Use of English
776. Use of modals
777. Use of online sample letters
778. Use of own materials
779. Use of phrases taught
780. Use of textbook
781. Use of textbook because of practicality and cost
782. Use previous instruction
783. Useful expressions given
784. Usefulness
785. Using authentic address/names
786. Using commercial materials
787. Vague content
788. Very low level materials
789. Very low proficiency
790. Vocabulary
791. Vocabulary focus
792. Vocabulary is basic of writing
793. Vocabulary problems anticipated
794. Weak classes can copy
795. Weaker classes – both content and format
796. Weaknesses not because of model
797. Wh- questions as guidelines
798. What is learnt in school not necessarily applied later in life
799. why easier
800. Why formal letter is hard
801. Why grammar – structured
802. Why reading
803. Why students do not write
804. Will give easier points
805. Will provide model in future
806. Work is generally satisfactory
807. Work is satisfactory
808. World knowledge needed to write
809. Writing is important because it is in the syllabus
810. Write letters for exams
811. Writes letters as models for students
812. Writing important for examinations
813. Writing instruction training
814. Writing is a process
815. Writing is for the future
816. Writing is harder than other skills
817. Writing is important
818. Writing is important for examinations
819. Writing is not used as much as speaking
820. Writing is something students do not usually do
821. Writing letters is a dying art
822. Writing shows mastery of the language
823. Wrong tense in spite of instruction

## ***Level 2 Codes***

1. Actual names/addresses
2. Adapting instructional materials
3. Administrative stand
4. Answer provided
5. Authentic materials
6. Basics of writing
7. Both format and content
8. Both language and content
9. Commercial materials
10. Common problem with letter writing
11. Compare formal/informal
12. Comprehension-oriented discussion
13. Confused with BM format
14. Content comment
15. Content guidance
16. Content over format
17. Content over language
18. Copying from model
19. Criteria for materials selection
20. Different first degree
21. Discipline
22. Distinguish formal and informal
23. Effects of writing instruction training
24. Emphasis in writing instruction
25. Emulate the model
26. English offered, not chosen
27. Exam marking scheme
28. Exam-focused training
29. Examination marking scheme
30. Exam-oriented teaching
31. Expression (language) problem in letter writing
32. Factors distracting from core business
33. Factors why challenging to teach English
34. Favourite aspect of teaching English
35. Focus on content
36. Focus on format
37. Focus on language
38. Focus on parts (genre)
39. Focus on purpose
40. Focus on situation (context)
41. Focus on style
42. Focus on task requirements
43. Formal letter difficulties
44. Format comment
45. Format feature problem in letter writing
46. Format generally correct
47. Format guidance
48. Format knowledge assumed
49. Format over content
50. General stand on writing
51. Importance of writing
52. Informal letter difficulties
53. Informal letters not so important
54. "Informal letters are just a way of learning language"
55. In-house training
56. Joint construction
57. Language accuracy comment
58. Language guidance
59. Language guidance
60. Language guidance
61. Language guidance
62. Language guidance
63. Language guidance
64. Language guidance
65. Language over content
66. Language over content
67. Language over content
68. Letters for future needs
69. Likes to teach writing
70. Literature most challenging to teach
71. Model essay
72. Model essays
73. No restrictions on materials used
74. Non-teaching work experience
75. Not yet independent writing
76. Option (TESL) teachers
77. Pedagogical aspects
78. Personal comment
79. Personal liking for English
80. Personal use of letter
81. Personal use of letters
82. Point of improvement
83. Positive about teaching
84. Postgraduate studies
85. Previous instruction
86. Pre-writing input (field knowledge)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 87. Problems faced in writing instruction       | 102. Student queries                            |
| 88. Proficiency level                           | 103. Student query                              |
| 89. Public examinations                         | 104. Students' use of English in/outside school |
| 90. Relative difficulty                         | 105. Student-sourced materials                  |
| 91. Relevance of letters                        | 106. Support activities/programmes              |
| 92. Results of support activities/programmes    | 107. Syllabus still contains letters            |
| 93. Role of instructional materials             | 108. Task requirements                          |
| 94. Satisfaction in general                     | 109. Taught letter vs real letters              |
| 95. School experience                           | 110. Teacher-produced materials                 |
| 96. Simplified syllabus                         | 111. Teaching is personal choice                |
| 97. Speaking most challenging to teach          | 112. Teaching not first choice                  |
| 98. Specific format feature                     | 113. Teaching of grammar                        |
| 99. Spelling comment                            | 114. Text type introduced                       |
| 100. Standard procedure for writing instruction | 115. Training on writing instruction            |
| 101. STEP                                       | 116. Use of BM                                  |
|   | 117. Use of English                             |
|   | 118. Vocabulary guidance                        |
|   | 119. Writing most challenging to teach          |

### ***Level 3 Codes***

1. Background
2. Climate
3. Combination
4. Content/context
5. Distinguish formality
6. Format
7. Genre
8. Language
9. Letter relevance
10. Relative difficulty
11. Selection
12. Students
13. Syllabus and examination
14. Training
15. Use (activities)
16. Use (copying)
17. Use (role)

## **APPENDIX 4G**

### **RESEARCHER'S BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

I completed a twinning programme between the Malaysian Ministry of Education and Chichester Institute of Higher Education, graduating with a B.Ed. TESOL (First Class Honours) awarded by the University of Southampton – a Bachelor's Degree in Education, specialising in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). I then served as an English Language teacher in a Malaysian government secondary school for five years, including holding the post of Head of the English Language Department for two years. Subsequently, I furthered my studies at Universiti Malaya and obtained a Masters in English as a Second Language (M. ESL). Following this, I took up the post of Curriculum Supervisor (Penyelia Kurikulum) and English Language Officer at a District Education Office, in which capacity I was in charge of the implementation of various English Language programmes at secondary and primary level in the schools under the administrative district concerned. I remained in this post for five years before taking on the duties of a teacher trainer at a Teacher Training Institute, where I instructed pre-service and in-service teachers in English Language Teaching methodology as well as teaching the language at tertiary level to participants of other courses at the institute. After two years, I began on my doctorate, also at Universiti Malaya.

Based on my academic qualifications and work history, it can be said that I am fairly well-versed in the field of Malaysian English Language Teaching, having had professional experience as a practitioner, administrator as well as trainer in this area. This gives me an insider's perspective of many of the conventions and practices in language teaching, which inevitably coloured my observations of classroom practices in this investigation. Nevertheless, throughout the fieldwork and analysis of transcript data, I have kept in mind that the focus of this study is not on teaching approaches and the research objective is therefore not to evaluate the effectiveness of any of the practices observed. From the participants' perspective, some of them have perhaps had previous encounters with me in my supervisory role during my tenure as an administrator. This may have affected their conduct in the initial stages of the fieldwork, as they may have had some lingering perceptions that I was there to evaluate their teaching in some way. Understandably, they were rather guarded in their responses to begin with. However, with repeated reassurance from me to the contrary, these participants were eventually convinced of my non-evaluative stand and opened up to me to share their actual practices and candid opinions.

To some extent, my current research was made possible by my stint as a Curriculum Supervisor, because it was during this tenure that I made contact with some of the participants in this study and established a cordial professional relationship with them. Likewise, I also made myself known to the administrators of the schools concerned, who later functioned as the gatekeepers to allow me access to the research site and participants. It is undeniable that some of the connections that developed from this working relationship crossed over into the personal realm of friendship. However, with regard to the participants who fall into this category, I have strived to maintain an intellectual and professional distance during the implementation of the research. I likewise endeavoured to maintain a pleasant relationship with the school administrators and participants by causing as little trouble to them as I possibly could while carrying out fieldwork.

In terms of the area of investigation, I have an abiding interest in the role and use of instructional materials in written form, which is manifest in the research projects

that I have undertaken thus far. I first studied the content of English Language textbooks used in Malaysian schools during the course of completing my Bachelor's degree, based on which I completed my dissertation on the language found in the textbooks which I studied from a sociolinguistic perspective. Later, I also developed an interest in Systemic-Functional linguistic theory, particularly the application of Systemic-Functional grammar in text analysis. Hence, the dissertation for my Master's degree was also based on the study of instructional materials, this time using a Systemic-Functional theoretical framework. The texts concerned were Mathematics textbooks used in Malaysian secondary schools, and the study focused on the Interpersonal dimension of the language used in these texts. Lastly, the current investigation continues this trend of examining instructional materials within frameworks of linguistic theory. The research thus represents the consolidation of my twin interests: materials for English Language Teaching and the application of Systemic-Functional linguistic theory in language instruction.



(The concluding paragraph is reproduced from section 1.4 of Chapter 1)

The inspiration for this research came from my cumulative professional experiences, encompassing my initial attempts at teaching as a novice teacher, my later observations—in a supervisory and evaluative role—of instructional practices by other teachers, and my subsequent efforts as a teacher trainer to equip pre-service teachers for the same task. Out of the multitude of experiences I encountered, the teaching and learning of the writing skill stood out as an area of much polarised dispute. Over time, I accumulated a wealth of anecdotal information on the difficulties faced by teachers in their attempts to teach the writing skill, which was generally perceived to be the most difficult skill to teach. Added to this was confusion over the suitability of instructional materials and frustration over apparently ineffective approaches, leading to anxiety that their classroom practices pertaining to writing instruction were incorrect or defective in some way. Without systematic documentation, these experiences remain anecdotes that cannot be analysed in a focused way. This research thus assembles a documented collection of actual pedagogical models and classroom practices which can then be coherently and systematically examined within a theoretical framework. The development of this interest in the theoretical aspect of teaching took place in tandem with my personal experiences as described above. Thus, taking the stand that classroom practice should not be divorced from linguistic theory, I undertook to investigate how the Systemic-Functional concepts of Register and Genre relate to writing instruction against a particular socio-cultural background. In addition, the relationship between theory and practice is particularly relevant to me in my present capacity as a trainer of pre-service teachers whom I need to equip with both theory and practical skills.

## **APPENDIX 4H**

### **DOCUMENTS FOR CODE-CHECKING PROCEDURE**

#### ***Document 1: Background information provided to code-checkers***

##### **TITLE OF RESEARCH**

### **A SYSTEMIC-FUNCTIONAL INVESTIGATION OF REGISTER AND GENRE IN MODEL TEXTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE WRITING INSTRUCTION**

This investigation seeks a better understanding of how the form of language is shaped by the social circumstances of its usage through the sociosemiotic view of language characterising the theoretical framework used for this research—Systemic-Functional (SF) linguistics (Bloor & Bloor, 2004; Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This framework provides a systematic and comprehensive approach towards relating specific aspects of grammar and lexis to the context of use (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yallop, 2000; Coffin, 2003; Hasan, 2009). It is thus eminently suitable for the aim of the study, which is to investigate the situational language use highlighted in the Malaysian syllabus in terms of writing instruction. A key element in such writing instruction is the model texts provided by teachers, which exemplify the type of writing that students are expected to master. The objective of this study is thus to investigate how model texts used in writing instruction reflect the attention to the use of English in different situations found in the Malaysian syllabus, in terms of both the immediate situation and the wider socio-cultural context. These are understood respectively in terms of Register and Genre in SF linguistic theory, enabling a finer examination of how a text is shaped the way it is: because of its Register—the what, who and how of the text, or Field, Tenor and Mode in SF terms (Thornbury, 2005)—and because it belongs to a Genre with predictable parts or stages that enable it to fulfil a certain social function (Christie, 1999; Martin & Rose, 2003; Painter, 2001).

The objective is achieved by investigating model texts provided by teachers for the two text types mentioned above—formal and informal letters—which employ different forms of language because they are used in situations that differ in terms of formality, subject matter, purpose and audience. This includes examining how Register and Genre are realised in these model texts, and how the elements of Register and Genre are presented by the teachers when they use these model texts in writing instruction. Here, the term ‘realised’

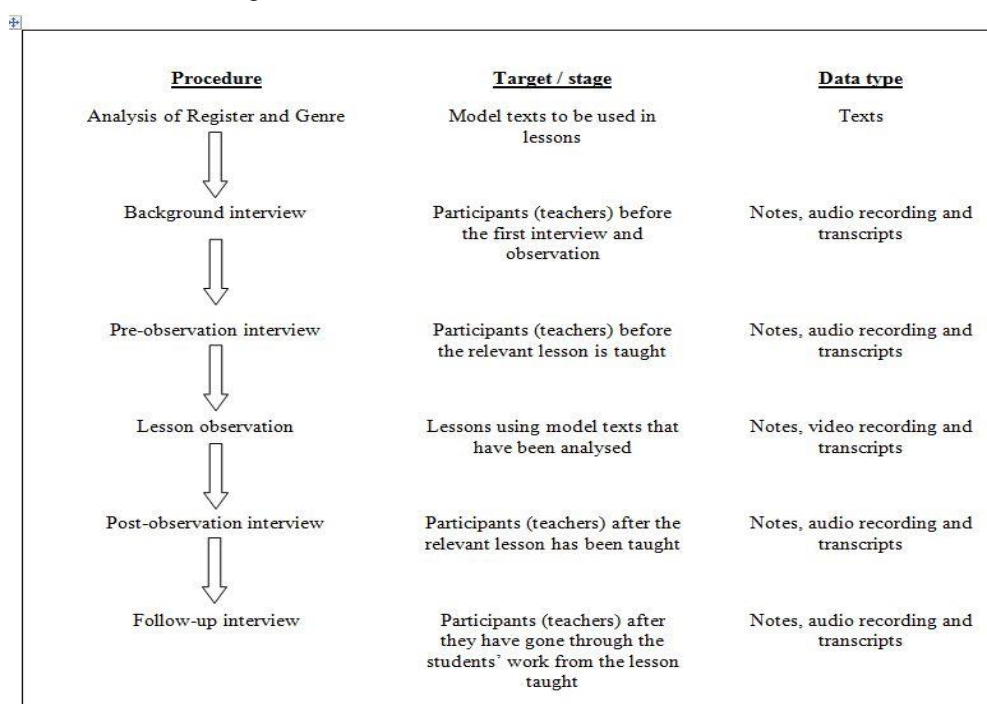
is used in a particular sense, i.e. ‘as seen in the grammar and vocabulary of the text’. There is thus a dual perspective in this study, which translates into four research questions:

1. How is Register realised in the model texts being studied?
2. How is Genre realised in the model texts being studied?
3. How is Register presented in the use of these model texts?
4. How is Genre presented in the use of these model texts?

It should be noted here that the teachers are not teaching about the concepts of Register and Genre per se, hence this investigation is not about how these two concepts

are taught. Rather, the research focuses on what elements of Register and Genre are apparent in the texts, and which of their elements are presented by teachers in writing instruction. The research questions are thus inter-connected. The section below describes how the questions are addressed by convergently applying text analysis and qualitative research methodology to enable the triangulation of different sources of data for a clearer understanding of this phenomenon.

This investigation makes use of authentic data in the form of actual model texts used for writing instruction by teachers in secondary schools. Data collection for this investigation was carried out in four schools in the same administrative district. The figure below provides an overall view of the data collection process and the data collected is described in the following sections.



The model texts studied are formal and informal letters taught at the Form 4 level. A total of 22 model letters were examined, as used by 16 teachers in the schools concerned, including cases of the same model letter being used by different teachers in different schools. These model letters were collected directly from the teachers concerned with the original layout preserved. Most of the models were collected during the pre-observation interviews, but some teachers were not able to provide the models until the actual observation. Later, for analysis, all the models were re-typed with a standardised font and inserted line numbers. Qualitative data came from interviews of the teachers using the model texts for writing instruction and non-participant observations of the actual lessons in which the model letters were used. The fieldwork was carried out over a period of eight months (February to September 2011). The interviews were semi-structured, based on an interview guide and audio-recorded. Teachers also wore a microphone during observations, which were also video-recorded. In addition, field notes were taken based on an observation guide.

## ***Document 2: Instructions to code-checkers***

### **Coding check sample**

Each checker is provided with 4 transcripts. These transcripts are from interviews and observations of 4 different teachers in 4 different schools, teaching the same text type (formal or informal letter).

- Transcript 1 is from an interview conducted at the beginning of the data collection.
- Transcript 2 is from an interview conducted before the lesson observation.
- Transcript 3 is from the observation of the lesson.
- Transcript 4 is from an interview conducted after the lesson, when the teacher has collected and gone through the students' work.

### **Focus in coding**

The following are the respective focus areas for the transcripts, as a guide for coding.

Background (Transcript 1)	Pre Obs interview (Transcript 2)	Observation (Transcript 3)	Post Obs interview (Transcript 4)
Point of view on models in writing instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Type of models</li><li>• Role of models</li></ul>	Selection and planned use of models <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Criteria for selection</li><li>• Planned use of models</li><li>• Aspects to be highlighted</li></ul>	Actual use of models – aspects emphasised in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the model itself</li><li>• students' writing</li><li>• guidance given by the teacher while students are writing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aspects emphasised in evaluating students' work</li><li>• Satisfaction (or otherwise) with choice and use of models</li></ul>

### **General guidelines for coding**

1. The transcripts are provided in the form of a single column with line numbers. Please write the coding in the blank space next to the column.
2. Please refer to the focus areas above as a guide when coding the transcript concerned. Please take note that there is a slightly different focus for each type of transcript.

3. A code can be assigned to a word, phrase, sentence, or even sentences in the transcript. Please indicate the stretch of text that is associated with the code by underlining or highlighting the text and drawing a line to link the text with its code. An illustration is given below:

157 T: Start the lesson...normally I will give them the sample of ... the — Model letter provided

158 sample, and then the questions ... I mean of the answers or

159 something like that ... the format

4. There is no minimum or maximum number of codes.
5. The wording of codes is at the coder's discretion, but the researcher may seek clarification later from the coder on how codes were named and assigned.

### *Samples checked by code-checkers*

	Background interview	Pre Observation interview	Observation	Post Observation interview
Checker 1	LSF (STi) 16 pages	MSG (MTi) 6 pages	OBL (WPi) 18 pages	MAT (KSi) 12 pages
Checker 2	RJ (WPf) 15 pages	SAB (KSf) 10 pages	LAH (MTf) 18 pages	CAL (STf) 8 pages

**NOTE:** The actual samples provided to the code-checkers cannot be included here as they are too long and the large size of the scanned documents in soft copy would render the file too large for ease of handling.

## **APPENDIX 4I**

### **DOCUMENTS FOR WRITTEN AGREEMENT OF PARTICIPATION**

#### ***Document 1: Background information provided to participants***

##### **Agreement to participate in a study**

Respected participant,

I am presently pursuing my studies at doctorate level in Universiti Malaya, which includes carrying out a research project. You are thus invited to participate in my study of how the writing skill is taught at secondary level, through which I hope to a better understanding of the role of instructional materials used for the teaching and learning of writing in terms of the selection, type and use of these materials.

You were selected as a participant in this study because of your present role as an English Language teacher for Form Four classes in your school. Your participation will involve being interviewed by me and allowing me to observe lessons taught by you in relation to three texts types (informal letters, letters of complaint and letters of application). The interviews will be conducted before and after each lesson, focusing on your selection and use of instructional materials for teaching the text types concerned. Subsequently, a third interview will be conducted once you have assessed the students' written work for the lesson concerned. Each interview session is expected to last about half an hour and each observation will be for the entire duration of the lesson, according to your normal schedule. All interviews and observations will be recorded, and a copy of the recording can be made available to you upon request. In addition to the actual instructional materials used, I will also have to ask you to grant me permission to examine all the documents related to the lesson, including lesson plans, schemes of work, syllabi, reference books and so on.

I will conduct my research only when the three text types mentioned above are supposed to be taught, based on the school's scheme of work, in the belief that this will minimise any disruptions caused. In fact, I will try my utmost best not to cause you any inconvenience as a result of this study. However, I admit that some adjustments may have to be made in terms of timetabling and your other duties and responsibilities as well as other school activities. Although it is unlikely that you will receive any tangible material benefits from participating in this study, I sincerely believe that your cooperation is a reflection of your professionalism and generosity of spirit, towards the greater good of our teaching profession in general and English Language teaching in particular. Nevertheless, you are free to withdraw from the study at any point if you experience any difficulties as a result of your participation.

Any information which can be identified with you that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. The raw data collected will be kept in a secure location and will only be accessible to myself, my supervisor and the examiners for my PhD thesis. In addition, I will inform you in writing if the findings from my study are included in academic publications in future, but I can assure you of complete anonymity in any such published work. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me at this email address: [hotheentheenthe@siswa.um.edu.my](mailto:hotheentheenthe@siswa.um.edu.my) or my supervisor, Dr. Sridevi Srinivass, at this address: [sridevi@um.edu.my](mailto:sridevi@um.edu.my). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

## ***Document 2: Consent form signed by participants***

### **Participant Consent Form**

I agree to participate in a research study on the teaching of the writing skill for Form Four level English Language entitled CONTEXT AND GENRE IN MATERIALS FOR WRITING INSTRUCTION IN SELECTED MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A SYSTEMIC-FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE.

1. I understand that the study will involve audio-recorded interviews, video-recorded observations and document analysis over a period of at least six months.
2. I consent to be observed during my normal English Language classes, to be interviewed before and after observation, and provide the relevant documents upon request.
3. I grant permission for the data related to me to be used in the process of completing a Ph.D. degree, and understand that this will include a thesis and future publications.
4. I understand that my name, and any other information, which I may give, will not be used in any way which might identify me, nor those whom I discuss.
5. I give permission for direct quotations from the interview and/or documents produced by me to be utilized within the thesis and future publications.
6. I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research if I experience any difficulties as a result of my continued participation.

#### **Research participant**

Name ..... Signature .....

Mykad number ..... Date .....

#### **Researcher**

Name ..... Signature .....

Mykad number ..... Date .....

**Note:** The background information provided (document 1) was also made available in the Malay version (document 3 below). However, since all the participants chose to sign the agreement in English, it was not necessary to provide a Malay version of the document.

***Document 3: Malay version of background information provided to participants***

**Persetujuan Penglibatan Dalam Projek Kajian**

Peserta yang dihormati,

Saya sedang mengikuti pengajian pada peringkat kedoktoran di Universiti Malaya, yang termasuk projek penyelidikan. Dengan itu, anda dijemput menyertai penyelidikan tersebut berkenaan pengajaran kemahiran menulis pada peringkat sekolah menengah. Melalui penyelidikan ini, harapan saya adalah untuk memahami peranan bahan dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran penulisan, iaitu dari segi jenis, pemilihan dan penggunaan bahan tersebut.

Anda dirasakan sesuai menjadi peserta dalam kajian ini berasaskan peranan anda sebagai guru Bahasa Inggeris bagi Tingkatan Empat di sekolah anda. Jika anda bersetuju menyertai kajian ini, anda akan ditemubual dan diperhatikan semasa sesi pengajaran dan pembelajaran berkenaan tiga jenis teks (surat tidak rasmi, surat aduan dan surat permohonan). Temubual berkenaan akan dilaksanakan sebelum dan selepas setiap kelas dan berfokuskan bagaimana anda memilih dan menggunakan bahan untuk jenis teks berkenaan. Setiap sesi temubual dijangka mengambil masa selama setengah jam dan setiap pemerhatian adalah sepanjang tempoh kelas berkenaan. Temubual dan pemerhatian ini akan dirakam; salinan rakaman tersebut boleh didapati oleh anda atas permintaan. Di samping bahan yang digunakan semasa kelas yang diperhatikan itu, saya juga perlu meminta kebenaran untuk meneliti semua dokumen berkaitan kelas tersebut, termasuk rancangan mengajar, perancangan tahunan, sukatan pelajaran, buku rujukan dan sebagainya.

Saya akan berusaha dengan sedaya upaya tidak menyebabkan sebarang kesulitan kepada anda dalam kajian ini. Namun demikian, saya menyedari kemungkinan perlunya penyelarasan dalam jadual waktu disebabkan tugas dan tanggungjawab anda serta aktiviti lain in sekolah. Walaupun anda mungkin tidak mendapat sebarang keuntungan secara nyata hasil daripada penyertaan anda dalam kajian ini, saya percaya seikhlas-ikhlasnya bahawa kerjasama anda adalah hasil daripada sikap profesionalisme dan kebesaran hati anda, ke arah memanfaatkan profesion keguruan secara amnya dan pengajaran dan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris secara khususnya. Walau bagaimana pun, anda boleh memilih untuk mengundur diri daripada kajian ini pada bila-bila masa sekiranya anda mengalami sebarang kesulitan disebabkan penyertaan anda.

Sebarang maklumat yang dapat dikaitkan dengan anda yang diperolehi daripada kajian ini akan dirahsiakan dan hanya akan dimaklumkan dengan kebenaran anda. Kutipan data daripada kajian tersebut akan disimpan di tempat yang selamat dan hanya dapat diakses oleh saya sendiri, penyelia saya dan para pemeriksa tesis kedoktoran saya. Di samping itu, saya akan memberitahu anda secara bertulis sekiranya dapatan daripada kajian saya menjadi sebahagian daripada mana-mana penerbitan ilmiah; identiti anda tetap akan dirahsiakan dalam penulisan tersebut. Sebarang pertanyaan tentang kajian ini boleh ditujukan kepada saya di alamat emel berikut: [hotheentheem@siswa.um.edu.my](mailto:hotheentheem@siswa.um.edu.my) atau kepada penyelia saya, Dr. Sridevi Srinivass, di alamat berikut: [sridevi@um.edu.my](mailto:sridevi@um.edu.my). Anda akan mendapat satu salinan borang perjanjian ini.



## APPENDIX 7A

### SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW

*Interview Tag: 0222WFibALK*

1 {BACKGROUND CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THIS INTERVIEW: THE  
2 TEACHER'S BABY SON WAS FEVERISH AND SHE HAD A SLEEPLESS  
3 NIGHT THE NIGHT BEFORE. SHE HAS NOT PREPARED FOR THE  
4 LESSON AND IS PUTTING TOGETHER HER TEACHING MATERIALS  
5 AT THE SAME TIME AS THE INTERVIEW. THE LESSON IS ALSO  
6 BEING OBSERVED BY A SENIOR TEACHER FOR OFFICIAL  
7 PURPOSES}

8 R: Moving[T1] on to the lesson that we're actually going to have later on, ...  
9 can you tell me a little bit in general what's going to happen? <Teacher  
10 laughs> Or what you plan will happen?

11 T: What will happen, huh? I hope everything will go according to plan! ... First  
12 of all, when we enter the class, basically I'm just going to elicit... I'm going  
13 to elicit them about how we complain, how do we actually complain. So  
14 they can give me all sorts of answers la, but I will give them 3 examples la.  
15 First will be fist fighting, it's also a way of we're complaining, but in terms of  
16 physical form. Second would be using our mouth, if we quarrel with one  
17 another means we complain, we're not happy about something, and then

18 third would be in written form la. So it can be in a message, a short  
19 message, saying that you're not happy, or it can be in a formal letter  
20 writing as it is.

21 R: So[T2] that would be your lead in.

22 T: Yeah, my lead in. And after that I will ask them to rearrange the strips of  
23 this letter that I've cut out, sort of like sequence them, just for them to  
24 familiarize with the letter. If they know, they will sequence it the right way.  
25 If they don't, then they would learn la, as we go along. So after this  
26 exercise, I will go on to this particular exercise here, which is a ... format of  
27 a formal letter, the features, in-depth, like for example <The researcher  
28 doesn't have the handout and asks for a copy>

29 R: Ok, so they're gonna label the parts of it.

30 T: That's right. After they do the labeling and so on, we will do ... I will sort of  
31 like give them some tips on how to start their essay. Maybe touch on  
32 certain structures like No. 5 and no. 7 and in between no. 6, whether it  
33 should be numbered or not. We have to tell them all those features la.

34 R: So the formatting la.

35 T: Yes, know the format. ... So[T3] after I've already explained to them about  
36 that, then we'll go on into practice stage of ... of filling in letters la. The  
37 exercise would be ... where is it? ... it's in the textbook actually, I did not  
38 print it out.

39 R: Oh, no problem. So you're using the textbook.

40 T: Yes, I'll be using the textbook, page 31. So the students will just have to fill  
41 in the blanks, it's about this food company that discharged all this waste  
42 into the river.

43 R: Yeah, I think I know that one.

44 T: The students will have to read the text next to it, just for ideas on how to fill  
45 in the blanks. If not, they can always refer to the notes that I have given  
46 them, or they can come up with their own ideas la, and then we will check  
47 the answers. Basically that would be the end of the lesson. For[T4] my  
48 final recap ... there won't be any writing, because I find it will not be  
49 enough time for them.

50 R: Would you be giving them something to [... homework] or something?

51 T: [Ah, yes, homework] Ask them to find info about things or services, or  
52 places along the school that they can complain, ask them to gather as  
53 much information that they can get, and then my next lesson, my next  
54 writing lesson would be based on that. They will write individually the  
55 letter, to... addressed to our principal.

56 R: Oh, I see.

57 T: Yes[T5]. But let's say if today's lesson miraculously finish within 1 period,  
58 then the 2<sup>nd</sup> period I'll go on to writing out, the activity of writing it out but I'll  
59 just give them a topic la, maybe toilets. ... Broken toilets or dirty canteens  
60 but so far our canteen is pretty clean. So they've not much to complain,  
61 actually, but probably that la, or maybe the classroom's condition.  
62 Something that they can write themselves, yeah.

63 R: So you're not actually going to do writing in class this lesson?

64 T: No, it's more of the familiarization and the practice stage la.

65 R: The model letter that you've provided for them to rearrange, the cut-up

66 one, what are the things about it that ... oh, this is from the textbook, right?

67 T: Yes!

68 R: So what are the features of this letter, or model letter, which make it a

69 suitable model for this lesson[T6]?

70 T: Features, huh? I think all of it. <Both teacher and researcher laugh>. I like

71 the introduction part...

72 R: You like it in what sense?

73 T: That students can recycle the words, the phrases /on behalf of the

74 residents of Taman Alam Indah/. They can always change it with /on

75 behalf of the 4 Science 2 students of SMK Wxxxxxxxxx/ and then /I

76 would like to draw your attention the the above matter/ and so on la

77 R: So it's the phrasing that you're... the phrasing that makes it stand it out to

78 you?

79 T: Yes, that's right/

80 R: So[T7] you'd be expecting them to use more or less the same phrases?

81 T: More or less la, same phrases. But for no. 2, no.3 and no. 4, of course the

82 points would be a little bit different, because the writing, the practice part,

83 is about environment, so when it comes to the actual writing in the school,

84 about... I mean, things or services in the school, it would be of a different

85 topic as well, but at least they know how to write the intro, they know how

86 to end, and then 2, 3, and 4 is basically, I'll just tell them to describe the  
 87 problem. And then no. 3, elaborate the problem, and then no. 4, give  
 88 suggestions, or ... if possible. (xxx)

89 R: Are there any ... I mean, just now you said, in the first paragraph...

90 T: Oh, oh, also the sequence connectors <Laughs>.

91 R: Ok....

92 T: Like... words like 2 weeks ago, or however, and then words like rectify...  
 93 they learn new words la... to solve the problem to rectify the problem.  
 94 They can use those words. And then they have to learn how to write in the  
 95 passive form, has greatly reduced. ... And for instance... they can recycle  
 96 those words la actually.

97 R: Would[T8] you think that these words are not familiar to them, or have they  
 98 seen them before elsewhere?

99 T: They have seen them, I think, but they don't actually use them, so it would  
 100 be something new for them as well la, when they look through it.

101 R: As far as the activity of writing a letter of complaint goes, how important do  
 102 you think it is for them to learn how to do that?

103 T: Oh, it's very important, so that when they finish school next time, they can  
 104 write complaint letter <laughs> without much mistake. ... And then they  
 105 are able to ... actually these things are all real-life... real life—what do you  
 106 call that—real life exercises, which they can ... use it after Form 5 la. But  
 107 most of them I think will be writing in Bahasa Melayu. ... Because, I mean,  
 108 the general language will be in BM

109 R: So[T9] they **may** write a complaint letter in English...?

110 T: Yes...

111 R: ... but not very likely, is it?

112 T: Yes, I'm afraid so <laughing>

113 R: Well, it's still taught...

114 T: Yes!

115 R: So you would say... the lesson that's coming is quite a typical example of

116 a writing lesson for your ... for your general approach?

117 T: That's right.

118 R: If it were... not a formal letter, is there any difference, what would be the

119 main differences?

120 T: The format.

121 R: Ok, so if it's not a formal letter, you would not need to emphasise the

122 format so much la, is that is?

123 T: Format still need to emphasize, but not as much as a formal letter. It's

124 more of the content when it comes to informal letter, and the tenses used.

125 R: For this particular text type, your emphasis is very much on the

126 format[T10]?

127 T: Yes.

128 R: At the top of the list... and then...?

129 T: Content.

130 R: Content, in terms of... content as in the meaning or content as in the

131 structures?

132 T: Structures. <Frowns> Structures and meaning, how different are they?  
133 <Laughs>  
134 R: I mean, you were talking about sequence connectors and passive form  
135 and ... just now, so...  
136 T: That would be structures, right?  
137 R: Uh huh... So it's more important that they understand the meaning of what  
138 they're writing, or is it more important that they write it in the right  
139 structures?  
140 T: Actually, both [a[T11]].  
141 {THE REMAINDER OF THE INTERVIEW IS NOT TRANSCRIBED;  
142 IRRELEVANT TO RESEARCH}

## APPENDIX 7B

### SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT OF OBSERVATION

*Observation Tag: 0222WFibALK*

**Note: Student's names are replaced with ( NAME ) throughout the transcript to preserve their anonymity.**

1 {TEACHER BEGINS BY CHECKING IF STUDENTS HAVE BROUGHT  
2 THEIR DICTIONARIES, ESSAY BOOK AND NOTES GIVEN  
3 YESTERDAY, AS INSTRUCTED}

4 T: Ok<sub>[T12]</sub>, so today we're going to do the other exercise and it will be a letter.  
5 <Comments on an electronic dictionary brought by a student> Ok, I'm  
6 going to distribute this worksheet to you, so each one of you are going to  
7 have 2 copies. So once you receive it, you take a look and you read it first,  
8 understand it. <Teacher distributes the worksheets and asks students to  
9 read silently. While waiting, she writes the date, the heading /Directed  
10 writing/ and /informal letter asking for advice/ on the board. She also deals  
11 with some latecomers>

12 T: Ok<sub>[T13]</sub>, when you look at your... the exercise given to you, this morning  
13 we're going to write down an informal letter asking for advice <points to  
14 the words on the board>. Ok, before we start, I would like to ask you... are  
15 you concerned about your health lately? Do you know about your weight?  
16 About your height? ... Do you know about your weight? How about you,



17 (NAME )? We start with you. <Teacher interacts with the student on his  
18 weight> Have<sub>[T14]</sub> you monitor your weight lately? You think that you are in  
19 ... a good shape? Is it the ideal weight that you have nowadays? If no,  
20 then what are you going to do? For those of you who are fat, or have  
21 excess of fat, so what is it that you're going to do?

22 S: Jogging

23 T: Ok, you're going to go for jogging. Ok, that is a very good advice from (  
24 NAME ), that is to exercise. What else, beside than that?

25 S: Diet

26 T: Ok, you're going to have a balanced diet. <SS> *Poco-poco* is a type of  
27 dance, ok, it can also considered as exercise, you're going to dance. Ok,  
28 so this is what we're going to talk about this morning. Ok, when you look at  
29 the questions, //Your health-conscious friend has written a letter asking  
30 your advice on how to stay slim and healthy// So make sure your friend,  
31 ok, your health-conscious friend, has written a letter to you and asked for  
32 advice on how to stay slim and healthy. So //using the notes that you have  
33 made below, write a reply letter to your friend. Advise him or her on how  
34 she or he can stay slim and healthy// So this what you're going to write<sub>[T15]</sub>  
35 today, so we're going to look at the notes that you have prepared. Ok, the  
36 example given, we have 6 points, ok? It is the same ... criteria that we  
37 have in the exams. Ok, it is always with the 6 points. After that, you're  
38 going to elaborate each of the points. Ok, we look at the first point, that is

39        /avoid sweet foods/ What do you know about sweet food? Do you like to  
 40        eat sweet food?

41    S: Yes

42    T: Yes, that is for sure. Can you give me example?

43    S: <among other indistinct responses> Sugar

44    T: Sugar? You eat sugar, is it? <Some students laugh>

45    S: No

46    T: What type of sweet food that you eat? <SS> Chocolates, what else? <SS>  
 47        Cake, candy, ice cream, what else? ( NAME )? <SS> Hotdog is not a  
 48        sweet food, ok? Yes, ( NAME )? <SS> Oh, ok. Jeli said some of the  
 49        hotdog has sugar inside, for example like honey dog, she said. Ok, that  
 50        makes sense also. Ok, so we are talking about sweet food, so we must  
 51        avoid sweet food, ok? Second one, we are talking about /prepare only the  
 52        amount of food you should eat. Ok, do you cook at home? Or you ask your  
 53        mother to do all the cooking? Did you help your mother to cook? <SS>  
 54        Some of you say yes, some of you say no. So the food that you're going to  
 55        cook<sub>[T16]</sub>, make sure you're going to cook it ... the food enough for your  
 56        family. Ok, let's say you're going to cook for yourself, so how much food,  
 57        how much food that you're going to cook for yourself? Are you going to  
 58        cook for 5 people? Or you want to cook only for yourself? I mean the  
 59        amount of food you're going to cook must be enough for yourself, ok? So  
 60        no. 3, /do some exercise to burn off extra calories/ So we are talking about

61 exercise. ( NAME ) just now mentioned about jogging. Besides than  
62 jogging, what else you can do? <SS> You're going to do some aerobics  
63 dance? Beside than that? Yes? <SS> We're talking about exercise here.  
64 What type of exercise that you do? Maybe... <SS> Play badminton, yes.  
65 <SS> Yes? Swimming <SS> Ok, that is the example of exercise that you  
66 can do. Ok, now we look at no. 4 /cut down on red meats and eat more  
67 fibre/ What do you know about red meats here? What is considered as red  
68 meats, class? <SS> ( NAME ), make sure you're not going to eat our  
69 meat, you said "our meat" <smiles> We are talking about, we are  
70 talking<sub>[T17]</sub> about meat that we eat. For example, like cow meat, chicken  
71 meat... so chicken, we consider as chicken, white meat. The food that we  
72 consider as red meat is those... come from cow, buffalo, deer, ok, so it  
73 contains lots of fat, ok, and we should avoid it. So what do we consider as  
74 fibre here? The food that contains fibre? What do you—what does it mean  
75 by fibre?

76 S: <Most of the students have no idea but one answers correctly>  
77 Vegetable?

78 T: Yes, vegetables, what else?

79 S: Fruits

80 T: Fruits... Ok, vegetables and fruits contain lots of fibre, so it's good for our  
81 health because it can help our body to function well, ok? So we move to  
82 no. 5, /grill, bake, poach and steam food whenever possible/ Ok, when

83       you look at the method of cooking, ok, some of us here, not to say some,  
84       maybe many of us here consider fried food, for example Kentucky Fried  
85       Chicken. All of you **here**<sub>[T18]</sub>, you like it, right? Kentucky Fried Chicken? So  
86       of course the word /fried/ is there. But when you look at the words given  
87       here, there is no /fried/. We consider grill, bake, poach and steam. Ok,  
88       steam food whenever possible. So fried is not good, why? Fried food is not  
89       good, why? It contains a lot of...? Oil, ok, oil. And the last one, /take a  
90       glass of water before meals. Why we should take a glass of water before  
91       meal? Not after meal? Why? What is the reason? We must take a glass of  
92       water before meal, before we take our food? <SS> What? ( NAME )? It  
93       helps you to...?

94    S: wash the lung

95    T: Wash your lung... ok, does it make sense? Wash our lung first before we  
96       eat? Ok, the main reason why we take a glass of water before meals is...  
97       when you're going to eat, you're going to feel full, so you're not going to  
98       consume more food than necessary, so that's why it's advisable for you to  
99       take a glass of water before meals. Ok, so... we're going to do it like this.  
100    The purpose I asked you to bring your dictionary this morning is, you're  
101    going to jot down or underline words that you didn't understand, ok, the  
102    difficult words that you considered... you hardly understand **it**<sub>[T19]</sub>. {THE  
103    TEACHER ORGANISES THE ACTIVITY, IN WHICH STUDENTS WRITE  
104    THE WORDS THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND ON THE BOARD AND

105 OTHERS GIVE THE DEFINITIONS. THE TEACHER ALSO  
106 CONTRIBUTES SOME WORDS. THIS PART IS NOT TRANSCRIBED.  
107 THE WORDS AND DEFINITIONS ARE RECORDED IN THE FIELD  
108 NOTES}

109 T: <Cleans off all the vocabulary work earlier and writes the following on the  
110 board: /Directed writing; informal letter (35 marks); format -; content- ;  
111 elaboration - ; language - ; total: marks/> So<sub>[T20]</sub> today we're supposed  
112 to write informal letter, and as usual for directed writing we have... it's  
113 going to consist of 35 marks each and we're going to elaborate it more to  
114 this formal, content, elaboration and language. Ok, so how many marks is  
115 supposed to be for format?

116 S: 6

117 T: 6... is it 6 for format? Can you please refer to your notes?

118 S: 3

119 T: 3, <writes /3 marks/ with 3 short connectors next to /format/> Ok, thank  
120 you, ( NAME ). So these 3 marks, where do we, can we get these 3 marks  
121 from? For example, we are talking about informal letter?

122 S: Address

123 T: From the address, ok <writes the word next to the first connector> And?

124 S: Dear

125 T: So meaning that you give your salutation Dear someone, your friend  
126 <writes /salutation Dear/ next to the second connector> And the last one is

127 for? Signature <writes the word next to the last connector> And then how  
128 about the content?

129 S: 6

130 T: 6 marks <writes /6 marks/ next to /content/> based on the 6 point given in  
131 the question, and then elaboration?

132 S: 6

133 T: 6 marks also <writes /6 marks/ next to /elaboration> Where do we get  
134 these 6 marks from? Where do you get these 6 marks from? <CM> 6  
135 marks, where do we get it from? ( NAME )? These 6 marks from  
136 elaboration<sub>[T21]</sub>? We have 6 content, right? 6 point, so each of the content,  
137 each of the point, you're going to elaborate 1 each, so we have 6 marks.  
138 How about the language?

139 S: 20

140 T: 20. <writes /20 marks/ next to /language/> So all in all, how many marks  
141 do we have for directed writing?

142 S: 35

143 T: 35, ok, 35 marks altogether <writes /35/ next to /total/> So can I clean  
144 this? <cleans the rest of the vocabulary work off the board> Now we're  
145 going to look at the content and the elaboration. Ok, C1 <writes /C1-/ on  
146 the cleaned area of the board> C1 is considered as content no. 1. I'm not  
147 going to write down C1 because it is already inside the question given. So  
148 /avoid sweet food/ So how are we going to elaborate /avoid sweet food/?

149 What kind of sentence that you can write for /avoid sweet food/? ... You  
 150 can give example of sweet food or you can give the disadvantages of  
 151 sweet food. Ok, so you give example of sweet food just now? For  
 152 example, like? <SS> Cakes, candy <Teacher removes /C1/ and replaces it  
 153 with /E1/> So you give example<sub>[T22]</sub>, sweets, chocolates <writes /example  
 154 – sweets, chocolates/ on the board>  
 155 S: honey  
 156 T: Are you going to eat honey just like that? Ok, you can write honey, candy  
 157 <writes the words down> Ok, beside...ok let's say you are still want to  
 158 munch sweet food, what is the best food that we can replace sweet food?  
 159 S: fruit  
 160 T: Ok, fruits <writes /eat fruits/ below the previous item> Ok, eat fruits.  
 161 Besides than fruit? Other vegetables that we can eat raw? For example?  
 162 S: carrot  
 163 T: Carrots, ok, that is very good <writes it down> Beside than carrots? <SS>  
 164 Cabbage? You're going to munch cabbage, is it? <SS> Ok, cucumber is  
 165 the best vegetable, and also tomato <writes down the words> Ok,  
 166 tomatoes. Instead of eating sweet foods, you're going to munch fruit,  
 167 carrots, cucumber and tomatoes, so that is for E2, er, E1. How about E2?  
 168 <writes /E2 - / on the board> /Prepare and cook only the amount of food  
 169 you should eat/ Why? You must answer the question why. Why you should  
 170 prepare and cook only<sub>[T23]</sub> the amount of food you should eat? .....Class?

171 ... Ok, by doing that, you will not be attempt to finish all the leftovers. Let's  
 172 say you're going to cook a lot of food. So after that you're going to finish all  
 173 the food. So don't you think that is a waste, or... it's going to harm your  
 174 body? So you're not going to eat that kind of food. So the advisable thing  
 175 that you're going to do is, you're going to use a smaller size of plate  
 176 <writes /use a smaller-sized plate/ next to /E2/> Why? Answer why you  
 177 use a smaller-sized plate. Meaning that you're going to eat less, right? Ok,  
 178 you're going to eat less <writes /eat less food/ under the previous item>  
 179 E3? <writes /E3 - / below the previous item> /Do some exercise to burn off  
 180 some extra calories/ Example you have give just now <writes /example/  
 181 next to /E3/> So I'm going to leave it to you, what type of exercise you're  
 182 going to do, ok?

183 S: Poco poco

184 T: Poco poco is a type of dance, so make sure you write down /dancing/ Ok,  
 185 aerobics, and so on. If you write down /poco poco/ people<sup>[T24]</sup> will not  
 186 going to understand, what does it mean by /poco poco/ <writes /E4 -/  
 187 below the previous item> Ok, E4? /cut down on red meats and eat more  
 188 fibre/ The food that contains a lot of fibre, for example, vegetables and ...

189 S: Fruits

190 T: Fruits, ok <writes /vegetables and fruits/ next to /E4/ and /E5/ below that>  
 191 E5? /Grill, bake, poach and steam food whenever possible/ Why do we  
 192 have to grill, bake, poach and steam food? Why? Because it is more



193 healthy than using—what we call it—fried food. Ok, it is more healthy  
 194 <writes /more healthy/ next to /E5/, then /E6/> And then the last one, E6?  
 195 /take a glass of water before meal/ Why? I already explained it to you just  
 196 now. Why we have to take a glass of water before meal? What is the  
 197 reason? So that you're going to feel full. Ok, you're going to feel full so  
 198 you're going to take less food, ok? <writes /make you feel full, eat less  
 199 food/ next to E6> so you're going to eat less food. Then<sub>[T25]</sub> you're going to  
 200 stay slim and healthy. Now look at the next page. Ok turn to the next page.  
 201 Now this is the exercise that you're going to do today, ok, you're going to  
 202 write down a letter to your friend. I have prepared the example but what  
 203 you're going to do is, you're going to fill in the blanks with the elaborations  
 204 that we have discussed just now, ideas on how to stay slim and healthy.  
 205 The address, you're going to create your own address, or you can use  
 206 your **own** address as well. And then the date, you use the date today ...  
 207 and then after that, the next...deadline, you must write down /Dear.../  
 208 What's your friend's name? <SS> James... who else? It is up to you. Who  
 209 is your friend's name, you create your own. Or your own real friends. And  
 210 then how are you going to begin your letter? <CM> Ok<sub>[T26]</sub>, how are you  
 211 going to start your letter?  
 212 S: Hi!  
 213 T: Hi, how are you?  
 214 S: Hi, my friend! I hope you are fine

215 T: I hope you are fine

216 S: happy

217 T: And happy <SS> Hi Baby, Hi Honey? <Students laugh> You are writing to

218 your friend, not your boyfriend or your... <CM> You just write down your

219 friend's name, ok, don't write down Dear Honey, Dear Darling and so on.

220 Ok, write down your own friend's name. So... the other blank, you have to

221 fill in, ok, based on the points and the elaboration that we have discussed.

222 Ok, after this I'm going to leave it to you to do it<sub>[T27]</sub>. {TEACHER STARTS

223 OFF THE WRITING TASK, ASKING STUDENTS TO REFER TO THE

224 NOTES GIVEN YESTERDAY}

225 T: <Helping a student individually> This<sub>[T28]</sub> one is based on the content here,

226 we have 6 content, so you try to fill in the blank. So because this one is

227 start with /first of all/ meaning that... what is the first content? And

228 /secondly/, /next/, /beside that/, then you continue with the rest. The other

229 blank is considered as the elaboration, that we have discussed just now.

230 or if you don't want to follow the example given by me just now, you can

231 always write your own elaboration. But make sure it is...have the same

232 meaning as what you have discussed for the content.

233 T: <Addressing the class> Ok<sub>[T29]</sub>, class, you see the way that I write down

234 the content. Do you notice the word /first of all/? What does /first of all/

235 mean? We're going to start with the first... the first content. So I'm using

236 the sequence connector, /first of all/ <writes /sequence connectors/ on a

237 separate section of the board and underlines it> Ok, the first sequence  
 238 connector that I used is...? Jee Li, what is the first sequence connector  
 239 that I used? <SS> The word /first of all/ <writes it down as (1)> After that?  
 240 <SS> Secondly <writes down the word as (2)> Next? <SS> Did I used the  
 241 word /thirdly/? <SS> /beside that/ <writes it down as (3)> After that? <SS>  
 242 /next/ <writes it down as (4), then a series of dots as (5)> and so on. And  
 243 the last one is /last/ word, ok? So meaning that you have to write down the  
 244 content based on the sequence of the content given in the question. Don't  
 245 jump the content here and there, meaning that you have to follow the  
 246 sequence of the content<sub>[T30]</sub>. Ok, continue.

247 T: <addressing a student who says he doesn't know what to do> Why<sub>[T31]</sub> do  
 248 you say you don't know what to do? ... The first content is this one, /avoid  
 249 sweet food/

250 S: Yes

251 T: <pointing to the worksheet> //First of all, avoid sweet food//

252 S: Oh...

253 T: And then elaboration... try to look at the elaboration given just now. For  
 254 example, sweets, chocolates, honey, candy...and you can replace the  
 255 sweet food by eating fruits, carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, ok? You try it  
 256 first, try one first. Don't use capital letter A because this one is comma, so  
 257 A small letter.

258 T: <to another student> If<sub>[T32]</sub> I ask you, this one, what are you going to fill in  
259 here? /first of all/... what are you going to write down? <student shakes  
260 her head> You don't know? You always refer to the content given. This is  
261 content no. 1, content no. 2, content no. 3, no. 4, no.5, no. 6. And then the  
262 elaboration, E1 until E6, is over there. Ok? If you don't want to follow my,  
263 the elaboration that I have suggested, you can always use your own  
264 elaboration, *huraian sendiri*, ok, but the content, you must follow this  
265 content. Follow the sequence of the content, ok, so /first of all, avoid sweet  
266 food/ Why we have to avoid sweet food? Ok, for example, sweets,  
267 chocolates, honey, candy. And besides eating sweet food, we can always  
268 eat fruits, carrots, cucumber and tomatoes. That is the example given. Ok?  
269 ... So here you write down /Example of sweet foods are candy,  
270 chocolates.../ Honey, and sweets... /Beside eating sweet food, we can  
271 always replace it with... fruits, carrots, cucumbers and tomatoes./ Ok, you  
272 try to write down the elaboration first. You give the example.

273 T: <to another student> You<sub>[T33]</sub> see this one is comma, right, it's not capital  
274 letter anymore. So use small letter. And then you must put /**and** candy/  
275 then you put full stop here. Then you write down /we can always eat fruits,  
276 carrots, cucumbers and tomatoes instead/ ... Because the example that  
277 you give is for sweet food, right? To replace this sweet food, you can  
278 always eat fruits, carrots, cucumbers, to replace the sweet food.

279 T: <moving on> This<sub>[T34]</sub> one, the second line is for elaboration. You avoid  
 280 sweet food, what type of sweet food that you eat? For example? You write  
 281 down that one, and then you—full stop after you write down the /sweet  
 282 food/. Then you start with /we can always healthy food, for example <SS>  
 283 Yeah, fruits...<SS> /secondly/ is the second content. <Small commotion  
 284 among students jostling around the teacher> Secondly is this one /prepare  
 285 and cook only the amount of food that you should eat/ But this one, you  
 286 must give the elaboration for /avoid sweet food/

287 T: <After mildly reprimanding a student for not getting started> /First<sub>[T35]</sub> of  
 288 all, avoid sweet food/ That's all. And then the second line is for the  
 289 elaboration.

290 T: <To a student using pencil because she is “not sure”> Why<sub>[T36]</sub> you're not  
 291 sure? This is correct. Because if you base on the content here, no. 1 is  
 292 /avoid sweet food/, that is correct. And then here, you write down the  
 293 example. This one is also correct. <CM> For example, chocolates, sweets,  
 294 honey, candy, and... so instead of eating sweets, chocolates, honey and  
 295 candy, what are you supposed to eat to replace those sweet food? <SS>  
 296 Fruits, what else? <SS> Carrots, cucumbers and tomatoes. If you don't  
 297 have space to write, you can always write here, ok? After /honey/, /and  
 298 candy/ Ok? So full stop here.

299 T: <Reprimanding a procrastinating student, asks him to fill in the address  
 300 and so on> This<sub>[T37]</sub> one, /how are you/, it must be a question mark.

301 S: Question mark... *macam ini kah?*

302 T: Question mark! You don't know what... <in disbelief> You don't know how  
 303 to write down question mark? Question mark... <writes it for the student>  
 304 Write down the address first. Create your own address, or your address at  
 305 home. You don't have to think, use your own address... Ok, you start with  
 306 /first of all/ so what is the first content? ... The first content, you always  
 307 refer to this... give me your pen. So, first of all is C1, content no. 1 /avoid  
 308 sweet food/. <marks out the relevant text on the student's worksheet> No.  
 309 2, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6. Elaboration 1 until elaboration 6, you refer to the ...  
 310 notes that I jot down on the board. E1, E2, E3 until finished. If you don't  
 311 have time to refer to that one, you please write inside here.

312 T: <moving on to another student> //Prepare<sub>[T38]</sub> and cook only the amount of  
 313 food you should eat. By doing this way, you will not be tempted to finish all  
 314 the leftovers.// *Maksudnya ...*

315 S: *Tidak makan begitu banyak lah?*

316 T: Yeah, cannot eat too much. So if you want to eat the amount of food that  
 317 you need, you just cook enough for yourself. *Itu maksudnya*. Ok, so the  
 318 next elaboration is ... you use a smaller-sized plate ... you use a smaller-  
 319 sized plate because you're going to eat less food. ... Yes, Ching Ling?

320 S: Is this correct, teacher?

321 T: /We must avoid.../ yeah.

322 S: What mean this?

323 T: /tempted/? Ok, //it is suggested that you prepare and cook only the  
 324 amount of food that you should eat// right? So by doing this, when you  
 325 cook enough food for yourself, you will not be tempted, /tempted/ meaning  
 326 that you will not eat all the leftover food.

327 S: Oh...

328 T: Ok, the food that is left on the table, you don't have to finish it. ok? So you  
 329 can use a smaller-sized—sized, V not L<sub>[T39]</sub>. Then the benefit is, you're  
 330 going to eat less food. <CM>

331 T: <to another student> What<sub>[T40]</sub> is this? Fruit? ... F-O-O-D. Why this one is  
 332 like this?... Ju...? ...July, L-Y, 2011..... Ok, continue. And then here, later  
 333 on, /by doing this way, you will not be tempted to finish all the leftovers/ so  
 334 the suggestion given, you use, /you can use a smaller-sized plate because  
 335 you're going to eat less food/ So that is how you join the sentence. Ok?  
 336 Don't simply copy that phrase, because it is not a complete sentence. Ok,  
 337 you must join it. ... You use a smaller-sized, S-I-V-E, V-E-D not L-E-D.  
 338 Maybe my handwriting is like L there. Plate... no... you write down /you  
 339 use a smaller-sized plate/ comma... because<sub>[T41]</sub> ...you can sat /eat/...  
 340 cancel /it/ ...Because you're going to eat less food/... For example, no /is/  
 341 because there are many here, so this is considered as plural, no /is/. For  
 342 example comma /jogging, playing badminton and dancing/

343 T: <To another student> So this one you move to E2, right, /you can use  
 344 smaller-sized plate, S-I-V-E-D ok, not L-E-D. You join that phrase /use a

345 smaller-sized plate/ You can write down /you can use a smaller-sized  
 346 plate/... /you/ <repeats the sentence slowly for the student to write down>

347 T: <responding to a student's query> You<sub>[T42]</sub> join that phrase. Why you must  
 348 use smaller-sized plate? So that you can eat less food. <A student asks  
 349 for attention but she tells him to wait> This one is not L ok, it's Z <re-writes  
 350 the word on the board>

351 T: <To the student who asked> It is advised meaning that ... you are advised  
 352 to ... so it move to C no. ... C5, yes. .... <moving on to another student>

353 /Avoid oily food/ because oily food is considered high in oil content. High in  
 354 oil content will make us what? What will happen if we eat ... so many fried  
 355 chicken, so many fried food... what happens to you? Will make you fat,  
 356 ok<sub>[T43]</sub>?

357 T: <After helping some other students identify the relevant points and  
 358 elaboration> You<sub>[T44]</sub> must understand the sentence. /Avoid oily food as  
 359 much as possible because food that is high in oil content will make us.../  
 360 What happens to you?

361 S: fat

362 T: /fat, and it can cause .../ what type of... what type of disease that you can  
 363 have? What kind of illness that you can have? If you eat a lot of oily food?

364 S: <says "heart attack" in Mandarin>



365 T: Heart attack, ok, heart attack. <Helps with the spelling> Ok, what happens  
 366 to you if you eat so many oily food? What happens to you? You're going  
 367 to...?

368 S: high cholesterol

369 T: Ok, high cholesterol, it contributes to...

370 S: high blood

371 T: High blood, beside than that? Heart attack, ok, that is a very good  
 372 example of the symptoms if you eat more oily food. ... And of course, it's  
 373 going to make you fat. <CM>

374 T: <to a student who has made a query> To wish you... what are you going  
 375 to wish your friend? So you give the advice to your friend. <Some students  
 376 are still unsure about the phrase /heart attack/ so the teacher settles it for  
 377 them first before returning to the original query> So<sub>[T45]</sub> what are you going  
 378 to wish your friend? After you give all the advice to your friend? Wish you  
 379 what? To your friend? So you wish him... Ok, best wishes, all the best, ok  
 380 example given for the closing <referring to the notes given yesterday> So  
 381 what are you going to wish him or her? Wish you best of luck, I hope  
 382 you're going to stay slim and healthy. Ok, that is suggestion from me. It is  
 383 up to you how you are going to write it. And then here, you have to sign  
 384 your letter.

385 T: <CM> It<sub>[T46]</sub> is advisable, meaning that you are advised to ...? The last  
 386 content, I mean the second last content /grill, bake, poach and steam food/

387        You must read the sentence after that, you see, /instead of frying/. Frying  
 388        *maksudnya* ... you use oil to cook, so advisable to...

389    S: Wish you what?

390    T: <to the whole class> So at last, the closing remark... the closing remark,  
 391        how are you going to wish your friend? After you have give all the advice  
 392        to your friend? I wish you...? ... Good health, I hope you're going to stay  
 393        slim and healthy... Ok, so that is your wish for your friend. <Some  
 394        students still insist on getting help> /Wish<sub>[T47]</sub> you good health/ or you can  
 395        say /wish you all the best/ Ok /I hope you can stay slim and healthy/...  
 396        /wish you/ means... what is your feeling towards your friend?

397    S: all the best

398    T: Mmm hmm ....<has to correct the word /health/ which the students have  
 399        written as /help/> {THE BELL RINGS AND THE LESSON ENDS. THE  
 400        WRITING HAS TO BE COMPLETED AS HOMEWORK}

