Grammatical metaphor: WHAT, WHY and HOW

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Systemic Functional Linguistics Interest Group
2020 Online research Seminars

Thursday, 12 November 2020
4pm - 5pm, Hobart/Melbourne/Sydney time
Questions:

• WHAT is grammatical metaphor?
• WHAT are the types of grammatical metaphor?
• WHY is grammatical metaphor important in student persuasive writing?
• HOW does grammatical metaphor relate to *the Australian Curriculum: English* and the NAPLAN marking guide?
WHAT is grammatical metaphor?

• Grammatical metaphor is a linguistic resource that characterizes the complexity of written language, and distinguishes between spoken and written language.
• It serves a range of important functions in academic, bureaucratic and scientific texts.
• Grammatical metaphor is a common linguistic resource in factual and persuasive writing in secondary schools, tertiary institutions and the workplace.

(Halliday, 1993)
WHAT is grammatical metaphor?

- Grammatical metaphor is the variation in the expression of a given meaning (Halliday, 1994).

- Grammatical metaphor is “a substitution of one grammatical class, or one grammatical structure by another” (Halliday, 1994, p.79).

He **submitted** his assignment late.

His late assignment **submission**.
WHAT are the types of grammatical metaphor?

Types of GM from the stratal tension model

- Ideational metaphor
- Interpersonal metaphor
- Logical metaphor
- Metaphor of mood
- Metaphor of modality

Grammatical metaphor

(Halliday, 1985, 1994)

Experiential metaphor

(Martin, 1992)
WHAT are the types of grammatical metaphor?

Types of GM from the stratal tension model

Grammatical metaphor

- Ideational metaphor
  - experiential metaphor
    - (Martin, 1992)
  - logical metaphor
  - metaphor of mood
  - metaphor of modality
- Interpersonal metaphor
  - (Halliday, 1985, 1994)

To et al. (2020)

To and Thomas (2017)
Experiential metaphor

• Experiential metaphor is realised by construing:

  - processes as things (e.g., *investigate* becomes *investigation*)
  - or qualities as things (e.g., *dense* becomes *density*).

• This involves nominalisation.
Nominalisation

- Nominalisation is the process of turning words that are not normally nouns into nouns (Eggins, 1994; Martin, 2008; Thomson & Droga, 2012), by adding suffixes to a verb or an adjective.

A bomb exploded

Verb → Noun

A bomb explosion

(Process) → (Thing)

She likes being free.

Adjective → Noun

She likes her freedom.

(Quality) → (Thing)
Nominal endings for verbs and adjectives (Adapted from Quirk et al., 1972, p. 993; Thomson & Droga, 2012, p. 17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominal endings for verbs</th>
<th>Nominal endings for adjectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-suffix</td>
<td>verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ion</td>
<td>Abstract and collective nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ment</td>
<td>verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ing</td>
<td>Abstract and collective nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>al/-ial</td>
<td>Dynamic verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ance</td>
<td>Abstract nouns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transcategorisation

- Transcategorising is the process of transferring one word class to another class by some syntactic and/or morphological means.
- Typically a root can be transcategorised by derivational morphemes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999).

For example:

happy => happily; happy => happiness
Adjective => Adverb; Adjective => Noun

Noun => Noun

care => careful => carefulness

For example:
Nominalisation

Experiential metaphor

?
Experiential metaphor

The conference was successful thanks to their great *organisation*.

The conference was successful because they *organised* it so well.
Nominalisation cannot be unpacked to the congruent form (Derewianka, 2003) can be unpacked to the congruent form Experiential metaphor (Not Experiential metaphor, Halliday, 2008) Dead metaphor (Halliday, 2008) The conference was successful thanks to their great organisation. The conference was successful because they organised it so well. It was a great organisation.
OUTLINE

- What is grammatical metaphor?
- What are the types of grammatical metaphor?
- Why is grammatical metaphor important in student persuasive writing?
- How does grammatical metaphor relate to *the Australian Curriculum: English* and the NAPLAN marking guide?
WHY is grammatical metaphor important in student persuasive writing?

• The use of grammatical metaphor in writing helps to create “a form of discourse which is highly explicit in its construction of argument (experimentation, formulation of general principles, logical steps in reasoning, and so on)” (Halliday, 1989, p. 6).

• In order to write convincing persuasive texts as adults, young people must learn to make extensive use of grammatical metaphor (Martin, 1989). Doing so allows them to build up technicality in different disciplines, and “enables the development of argumentation” (Christie & Derewianka, 2008, p. 24).
WHY is grammatical metaphor important in student persuasive writing?

- As grammatical metaphor emerges in young people’s writing, it enables them to construe *causal relationships within clauses*, “rather than being restricted to congruent realisations between clauses” (Christie & Derewianka, 2008, p. 90).

For example:
- **Persuasive claim without grammatical metaphor:**

  *When plastic bags are made // toxic gases and other dangerous substances are released into the air // and these by-products pollute the atmosphere // and ruin water supplies.*

- **Persuasive claim with grammatical metaphor:**

  *The production of toxic gases during the manufacture of plastic bags causes air and water pollution.*

  (Derewianka & Jones, 2016, p.308)
HOW does grammatical metaphor relate to the Australian Curriculum: English?
The place of persuasive writing in the Australian Curriculum: English

Foundation to Year 10

• **Year 1:** *Describe* some differences between imaginative, informative and persuasive texts (ACELY1658)

• **Year 2:** *Create* short imaginative, informative and persuasive texts using growing knowledge of text structures and language features (ACELY1671)
Nominalisation is the powerful resource for creating grammatical metaphor (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
<th>Year 4</th>
<th>Year 5</th>
<th>Year 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognise and know how to use simple grammatical morphemes to create word families <em>(ACELA1455)</em></td>
<td>Build morphemic word families using knowledge of prefixes and suffixes <em>(ACELA1472)</em></td>
<td>Know how to use common prefixes and suffixes, and generalisations for adding a suffix to a base word <em>(ACELA1827)</em></td>
<td>Understand how to use knowledge of letter patterns including double letters, spelling generalisations, morphemic word families, common prefixes and suffixes and word origins to spell more complex words <em>(ACELA1779)</em></td>
<td>Understand how to use knowledge of known words, base words, prefixes and suffixes, word origins, letter patterns and spelling generalisations to spell new words <em>(ACELA1513)</em></td>
<td>Understand how to use knowledge of known words, word origins including some Latin and Greek roots, base words, prefixes, suffixes, letter patterns and spelling generalisations to spell new words including technical words <em>(ACELA1526)</em></td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Language strand - Word knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 7</th>
<th>Year 8</th>
<th>Year 9</th>
<th>Year 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand how to use spelling rules and word origins, for example Greek and Latin roots, base words, suffixes, prefixes, spelling patterns and generalisations to learn new words and how to spell them <a href="#">ACELA1539 - Scootle</a></td>
<td>Understand how to apply learned knowledge consistently in order to spell accurately and to learn new words including nominalisations <a href="#">ACELA1549 - Scootle</a></td>
<td>Understand how certain abstract nouns can be used to summarise preceding or subsequent stretches of text <a href="#">ACELA1559 - Scootle</a></td>
<td>Analyse how higher order concepts are developed in complex texts through language features including nominalisation, clause combinations, technicality and abstraction <a href="#">ACELA1570 - Scootle</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the effect of nominalisation in the writing of informative and persuasive texts <a href="#">ACELA1546 - Scootle</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understand how to use knowledge of the spelling system to spell unusual and technical words accurately, for example those based on uncommon Greek and Latin roots <a href="#">ACELA1573 - Scootle</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Australian NAPLAN tests

- introduced in 2008 by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)
- assess Australian students in Years 3, 5, 7, 9 about reading, **writing**, language conventions, and numeracy skills
- 2008, 2009 and 2010: narrative writing
- 2016 and 2019: narrative writing
HOW does grammatical metaphor relate to the NAPLAN marking guide? (To et al., 2020)

HOW does grammatical metaphor relate to the NAPLAN marking guide?  (To et al., 2020)

- Data: 32 highest scoring persuasive texts written by Tasmanian Years 3, 5, 7, 9 students for the 2011 NAPLAN writing test
Grammatical metaphor and the NAPLAN marking guide

**Table 3.** NAPLAN persuasive writing marking criteria (ACARA 2011d)

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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Skill focus</th>
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<tr>
<td>2 Text structure</td>
<td>The organization of the structural components of a persuasive text (introduction, body and conclusion) into an appropriate and effective text structure.</td>
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<td>The range and precision of contextually appropriate language choices.</td>
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<td>The control of multiple threads and relationships across the text, achieved through the use of referring words, ellipsis, text connectives, substitutions and word associations.</td>
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<td>7 Paragraphing</td>
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<td>8 Sentence structure</td>
<td>The production of grammatically correct, structurally sound and meaningful sentences.</td>
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<td>The use of correct and appropriate punctuation to aid the reading of the text.</td>
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**Table 4.** Category scores for the 10 persuasive writing marking criteria

| Audience | Text structure | Ideas | Persuasive devices | Vocabulary | Cohesion | Paragraphing | Sentence structure | Punctuation | Spelling |
|----------|----------------|-------|--------------------|------------|----------|--------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|---------|
Quantitative analysis of GM in student NAPLAN persuasive writing across year levels

(To et al., 2020)
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Grammatical metaphor and Audience (Criterion 1)

• To achieve this persuasive purpose, students need to ‘create an appropriate relationship with the reader (e.g. polite, formal, social distance)’ (ACARA, 2011, p. 8).

• This suggests the **formality** of the text and **social distance** contribute to the persuasiveness of the text. The use of grammatical metaphor realised by nominalisation contributes to the formality of the text as demonstrated in the following examples.

(To et al., 2020)
(Year 3): Quick action must be taken before it is too late.
(Year 5): It is vital for children ‘to learn how to save money’, not wasting money is a big part of that education that is not taught in schools!
(Year 7): Evidence suggests the cost of living is going up.
(Year 9): To sum it up, too much money is spent on self-satisfaction and indulgence.

(To et al., 2020)
The NAPLAN marking rubric explains that to be awarded higher marks for Criterion 2, texts should be structured effectively and include an **introduction** outlining a clear position statement, a **body section** with reasons and detailed supporting evidence, and a **conclusion** reinforcing the writer’s position. The conclusion may reflect on issues raised earlier in the text (ACARA, 2011).
(Year 5): (Thesis statement) *I strongly believe that the money spent on toys should be spent on other things. Today I will be explaining about cost, bullying and creativity.*

*Firstly, you must consider cost...*

*Secondly, having too many toys in the house can become a source of bullying...*

*Now, onto my next point creativity...*

(To et al., 2020)
Games and toys can be unhealthy and uneducational. Firstly, video games are one of the most unhealthiest things on the planet... Secondly, the massive productions of toys are bad for the environment... Thirdly (and finally), toys and games can distract children from important matters... In conclusion, I strongly believe that too much money is spent on games and toys for the reasons of unhealthiness, harshness on the environment and distractions of the task at hand.

(To et al., 2020)
Grammatical metaphor and Ideas (Criterion 3)

For Criterion 3 on Ideas, the NAPLAN marking rubric requires markers to reward ideas that ‘are generated, selected and crafted to be highly persuasive’ (ACARA, 2011, p. 10) and ideas may be elaborated by ‘explaining cause and effect’ (ACARA, 2011, p. 10).

(Year 5): Games can cause obesity.
(Children can become obese // if they play games)

(Year 9): The environmental impact caused by toy production is hardly worth it.
(When toys are produced, // it impacts the environment, // and this is hardly worth it)

(To et al., 2020)
Grammatical metaphor and Persuasive devices (Criterion 4)

• To score highly for Criterion 4, students must use ‘sustained and effective use of persuasive devices’ (ACARA, 2011, p. 11).

• The relationship between grammatical metaphor and the first three NAPLAN marking criteria already demonstrated how high scoring students used this linguistic resource to persuade readers by:

  ➢ establishing a socially distant, formal and polite relationship with the audience, an objective argument to persuade the reader,
  ➢ structuring the text logically and coherently,
  ➢ and explaining causal relationships effectively within a clause.

(To et al., 2020)
Grammatical metaphor and Persuasive devices (Criterion 4)

• Halliday (2004) explains that in the process of constructing an argument or rationality using grammatical metaphor, this necessarily involves ‘a movement from Theme to Rheme’ (p. 106).

• Theme is the departure of the clause, and Rheme is the remainder of the clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The Theme ‘will typically pick up something that has gone before’ and becomes a ‘résumé’ of the previous argument (Halliday, 2004, p. 107).

• ‘The only way to package a piece of argument ... of a clause is to turn it into a nominal group’ (Halliday, 2004, p. 107).
Grammatical metaphor and Persuasive devices
(Criterion 4)

(Year 9): A child can be any of these without needing any toys or games. A couch and some pillows can become an army fort. A dog becomes a dragon. The possibilities are endless when it comes to imagination.

(Year 9): There is nothing wrong with a phone or computer or other such technologies, but when people, kids especially, start getting addicted to a handheld device or gaming sites, or waste time (days even) watching TV, there is clearly a lack of social and physical lifestyles. Such self indulgence is totally unacceptable!

(To et al., 2020)
Grammatical metaphor and Vocabulary (Criterion 5)

- The NAPLAN marking rubric explicitly includes ‘nominalisation’ as a language resource for argumentation for Criterion 5 on Vocabulary, with examples ‘probability, likelihood, shortsightedness’ (ACARA, 2011, p. 12).

(Year 9): To sum it up, too much money is spent on self-satisfaction and indulgence.

(Year 9): The possibilities are endless when it comes to imagination

(To et al., 2020)
Grammatical metaphor and Cohesion (Criterion 6)

- Grammatical metaphor serves a cohesive function when it is considered as ‘an alternative lexico-grammatical realization of a choice in the semantics’ (Ravelli, 1988, p. 136).

- Grammatical metaphor can act like an incongruent reference to a semantic element or elements in the preceding text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

(Year 5): It is vital for children to learn how to save money; // not wasting money is a big part of that education that is not taught in schools.

(To et al., 2020)
• For this criterion, the NAPLAN marking rubric describes that strong paragraphing supports argumentation, and evidence of this in the investigated NAPLAN data set was analysed and shown in the Section on *Grammatical metaphor and Text structure* (Criterion 2).

• Moreover, it states that ‘a single sentence may be used as a final comment for emphasis’ (ACARA, 2011, p. 14). This is evident in a series of concluding sentences in the investigated persuasive texts when grammatical metaphor was used to summarise the key points of arguments in the body section and reinforce the author’s thesis statement.

(To et al., 2020)
(Year 5)
(Thesis statement): Games and toys can be unhealthy and uneducational.

(Series of arguments): Firstly, video games are one of the most unhealthiest things on the planet... Secondly, the massive productions of toys are bad for the environment... Thirdly (and finally), toys and games can distract children from important matters...

(Reinforcement of the thesis): In conclusion, I strongly believe that too much money is spent on games and toys for the reasons of unhealthiness, harshness on the environment and distractions of the task at hand.

(To et al., 2020)
Grammatical metaphor and Sentence structure (Criterion 8)

Effective sentence structure as described in the marking rubric involves a variety of clause types and patterns (ACARA, 2011d). As grammatical metaphor has the function of construing a causal relationship within a clause, and condenses meanings within nominal groups to construct an argument cohesively and coherently.

(Year 5): *Games can cause obesity.*
(Year 9): *The environmental impact caused by toy production is hardly worth it.*
(Year 9): *The possibilities are endless when it comes to imagination.*
(Year 9): *As you are reading this sentence, four children have died due to malnourishment in a third world country.*

(To et al., 2020)
Grammatical metaphor and Spelling (Criterion 10)

The use of grammatical metaphor necessarily involves difficult and challenging words, which are important to score highly on the NAPLAN marking rubric’s final criterion on spelling.

This is because grammatical metaphor realised by nominalisation involves

- consonant alteration patterns (*decide/decision, indulgent/indulgence*),
- many three- and four-syllable words,
- multi-syllabic words ending in suffixes (e.g., *malnourishment, immobilisation*),
- and longer words with unstressed syllables (e.g., *responsibility*)

=> Making words more difficult to spell (ACARA, 2011d).

To score highly for this criterion, students should be able to spell at least 10 difficult words correctly.

(To et al., 2020)
Summary

• The results indicate that the percentages of grammatical metaphor use increased across the year levels from Year 3 to Year 9 and they were used effectively in the high scoring texts to achieve a range of persuasive purposes

• Grammatical metaphor plays a vital role in 9 of the 10 NAPLAN marking criteria. This emphasises the critical function of this powerful language choice in persuasive discourse in an educational context.

(To et al., 2020)
Summary

- Students will encounter grammatical metaphor in the texts they read from middle primary school (Derewianka & Jones, 2012),

- Therefore, teaching children how to read grammatical metaphor and how to use this advanced language choice in their writing may lead to more successful writing outcomes.

- For this to occur, teachers would first need an understanding of the nature of grammatical metaphor and its significance in shaping meanings in written discourse to both scrutinise student progress and identify teaching strategies to deal with the problems that arise in its absence (Christie, 2012).
Recommendation for further research

• Low scoring NAPLAN persuasive texts vs high scoring NAPLAN persuasive texts

• Grammatical metaphor used in more authentic contexts.

(To et al., 2020)

Please see the full list of references in this article
Thank you for your time!

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Systemic Functional Linguistics Interest Group

2020 Online research Seminars