

Grammatical metaphor: WHAT, WHY and HOW

Dr Vinh To
University of Tasmania



Systemic Functional Linguistics Interest Group

2020 Online research Seminars



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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?



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Writing persuasive texts: Using grammatical metaphors for rhetorical purposes in an educational context

(2020). Writing persuasive texts: Using grammatical metaphors for rhetorical purposes in an educational context. Australian Journal of Linguistics. Ahead of Print.

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

**Grammatical
metaphor**

**Ideational
metaphor**

**Interpersonal
metaphor**

experiential metaphor

logical metaphor

metaphor of mood

metaphor of modality

(Martin, 1992)

(Halliday, 1985, 1994)

WHAT are the types of grammatical metaphor?

Types of GM from the stratal tension model

To et al. (2020)

Grammatical metaphor

Ideational metaphor

experiential metaphor

(Martin, 1992)

logical metaphor

Interpersonal metaphor

metaphor of mood

metaphor of modality

(Halliday, 1985, 1994)

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 (Eggsin, 1994; Martin, 2008; Thomson & Droga, 2012), by adding suffixes to a verb or an adjective.

Verb



Noun

A bomb **exploded**
(Process)



A bomb **explosion**
(Thing)



Adjective



Noun

She likes being **free**.
(Quality)



She likes her **freedom**.
(Thing)



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

Nominal endings for verbs				Nominal endings for adjectives			
-suffix	verbs	nouns	examples	-suffix	adjectives	nouns	examples
-ion	verbs	Abstract and collective nouns	Perception, suspicion	-ity/-ty/-y	adjectives	Abstract nouns	capacity, honesty,
-ment	verbs	Chiefly Abstract nouns	Appointment, settlement	-ance/-ence	adjectives	Abstract nouns	assurance, importance
-ation	verbs	Abstract and collective nouns	Concentration, verification	-ness	adjectives	Abstract nouns	Weakness, awareness
-ing	verbs	Abstract and collective nouns	Reloading, warning	-ism	adjectives	Abstract nouns	Idealism, capitalism
-al/-ial	Dynamic verbs	Countable, abstract nouns	Proposal, arrival	-th	adjectives	Abstract nouns	Strength, length
-ance	verbs	Abstract nouns	Assistance	-gy	adjectives	Abstract nouns	Strategy Pedagogy

Transcategorisation

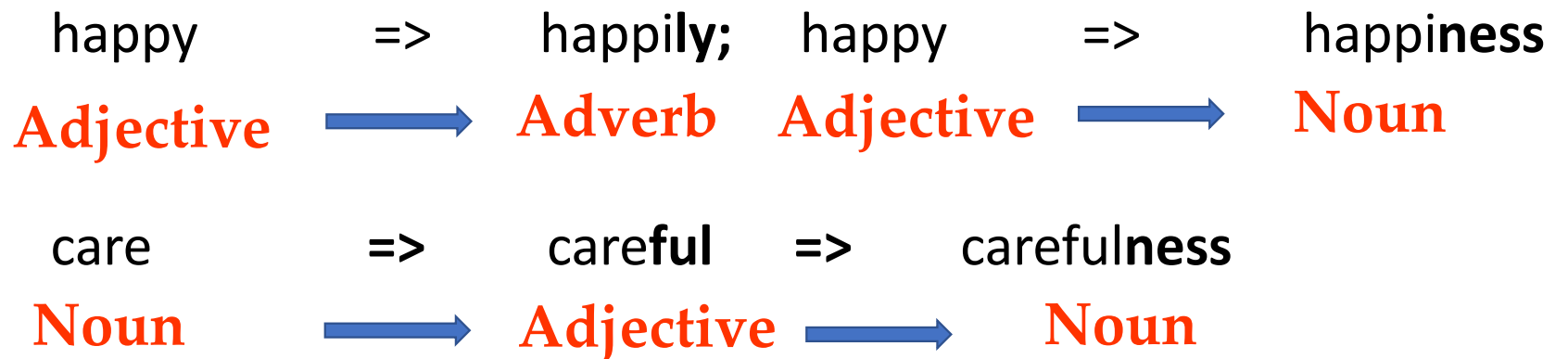
Experiential
metaphor

Nominalisation

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:





Experiential
metaphor



Nominalisation

Experiential metaphor

can be unpacked to the congruent form
(Derewianka, 2003)

live metaphor (Halliday, 2008)

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

*The conference was successful because they **organised** it so well.*

Nominalisation

can be unpacked to the congruent form

Experiential metaphor

(Derewianka, 2003)

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

The conference was successful because they *organised* it so well.

cannot be unpacked to the congruent form

NOT Experiential metaphor

Dead metaphor (Halliday, 2008)

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:

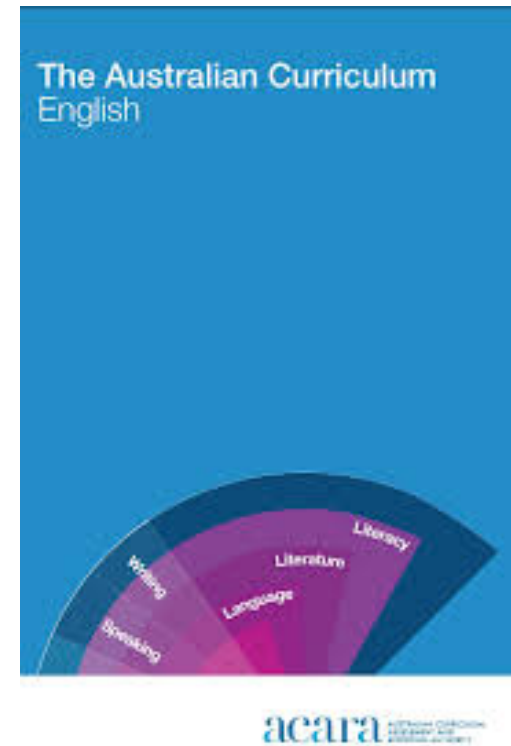
When plastic bags are made // toxic gases and other dangerous substances are released into the air // and these by-products pollute the atmosphere // and ruin water supplies.

- 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

imaginative

informative

persuasive

- **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)

The place of grammatical metaphor in *the Australian Curriculum: English*



Year 8: The effect of ***nominalisation*** in the writing of persuasive texts (ACELA1546)

Year 10: The language features of ***nominalisation, technicality and abstraction*** (ACELA1570)

↓ ↓ ↓
Grammatical metaphor (experiential metaphor)

Nominalisation is the powerful resource for creating grammatical metaphor (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

Language strand - Word knowledge

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
<p>Recognise and know how to use simple grammatical morphemes to create word families (ACELA1455)</p>	<p>Build morphemic word families using knowledge of prefixes and suffixes (ACELA1472)</p>	<p>Know how to use common prefixes and suffixes, and generalisations for adding a suffix to a base word (ACELA1827)</p>	<p>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 (ACELA1779)</p>	<p>Understand how to use knowledge of known words, base words, prefixes and suffixes, word origins, letter patterns and spelling generalisations to spell new words (ACELA1513)</p> <p>Understand how a suffix changes the meaning or grammatical form of a word (ACELA1514)</p>	<p>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 (ACELA1526)</p>

Language strand - Word knowledge

Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
<p>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 (ACELA1539 - Scootle)</p>	<p>Understand how to apply learned knowledge consistently in order to spell accurately and to learn new words including nominalisations (ACELA1549 - Scootle)</p> <p>Understand the effect of nominalisation in the writing of informative and persuasive texts (ACELA1546 - Scootle)</p>	<p>Understand how certain abstract nouns can be used to summarise preceding or subsequent stretches of text (ACELA1559 - Scootle)</p>	<p>Analyse how higher order concepts are developed in complex texts through language features including nominalisation, clause combinations, technicality and abstraction (ACELA1570 - Scootle)</p> <p>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 (ACELA1573 - Scootle)</p>

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
- 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018 : persuasive writing
- 2016 and 2019: narrative writing



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

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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



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Too much money is spent on toys and games

People like to play with toys and games to have fun and to relax.

Some people think that too much money is spent on toys and games. They think the money could be used for more important things.

What do you think? Do you agree or disagree?

Perhaps you can think of ideas for both sides of this topic.

Write to convince a reader of your opinions.

- **Start with an introduction.** An introduction lets a reader know what you are going to write about.
- **Write your opinions on this topic.**
- **Give reasons** for your opinions. Explain your reasons for your opinions.
- **Finish with a conclusion.** A conclusion sums up your reasons so that a reader is convinced of your opinions.

Remember to:

- plan your writing
- choose your words carefully to convince a reader of your opinions
- write in sentences
- pay attention to your spelling and punctuation
- use paragraphs to organise your ideas
- check and edit your writing so it is clear for a reader.

Grammatical metaphor and the NAPLAN marking guide

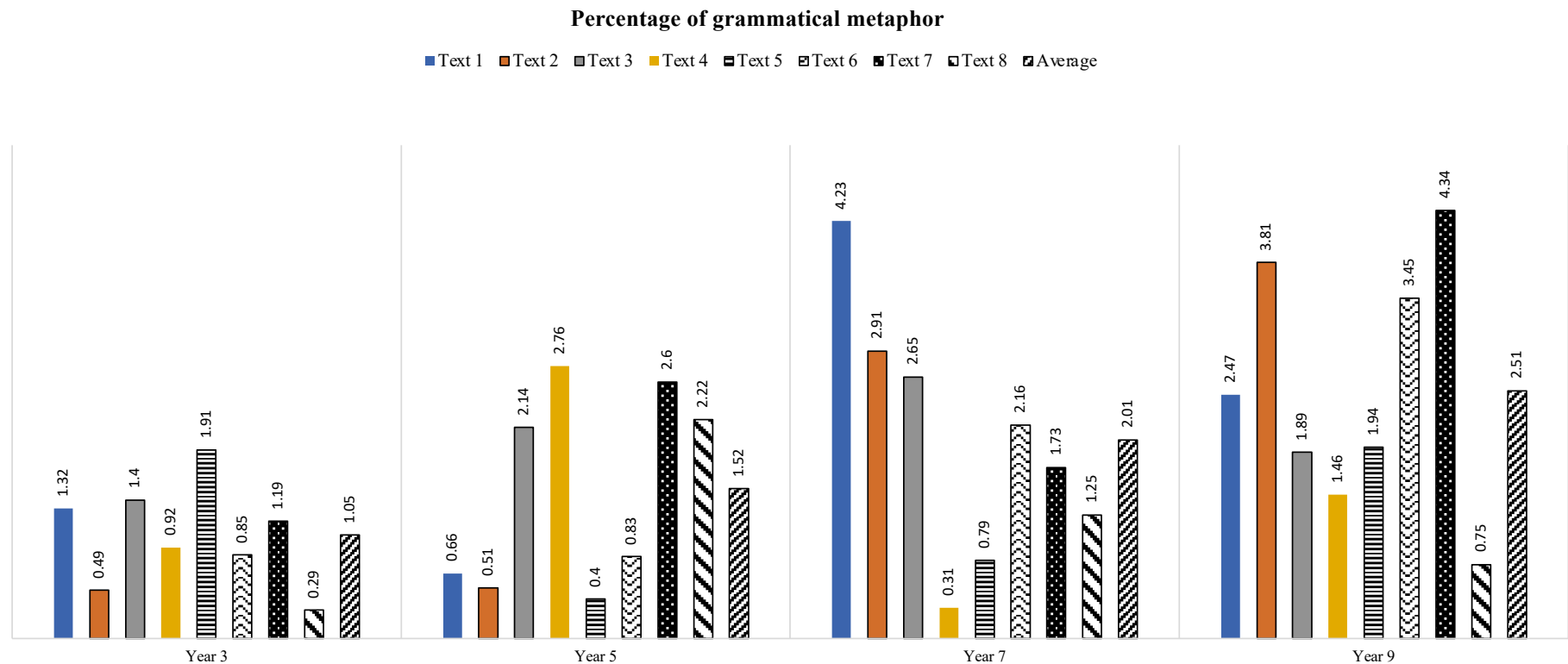
Table 3. NAPLAN persuasive writing marking criteria (ACARA 2011d)

Criteria	Skill focus
1 Audience	The writer's capacity to orient, engage and persuade the reader.
2 Text structure	The organization of the structural components of a persuasive text (introduction, body and conclusion) into an appropriate and effective text structure.
3 Ideas	The selection, relevance and elaboration of ideas for a persuasive argument.
4 Persuasive devices	The use of a range of persuasive devices to enhance the writer's position and persuade the reader.
5 Vocabulary	The range and precision of contextually appropriate language choices.
6 Cohesion	The control of multiple threads and relationships across the text, achieved through the use of referring words, ellipsis, text connectives, substitutions and word associations.
7 Paragraphing	The segmenting of text into paragraphs that assists the reader to follow the line of argument.
8 Sentence structure	The production of grammatically correct, structurally sound and meaningful sentences.
9 Punctuation	The use of correct and appropriate punctuation to aid the reading of the text.
10 Spelling	The accuracy of spelling and the difficulty of the words used.

Table 4. Category scores for the 10 persuasive writing marking criteria

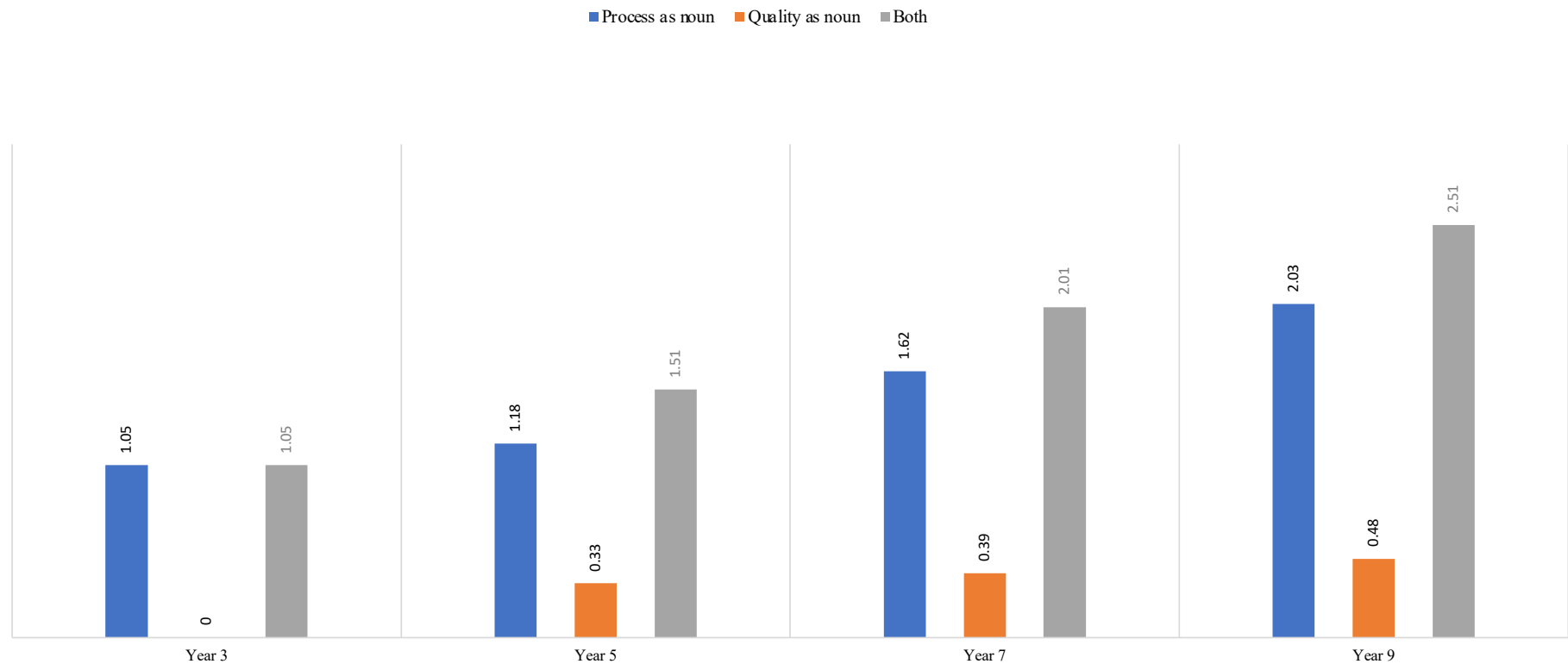
Audience	Text structure	Ideas	Persuasive devices	Vocaa- bulary	Para- graphing	Cohesion	Sentence structure	Punctuation	Spelling
0-6	0-4	0-5	0-4	0-5	0-3	0-4	0-6	0-5	0-6

Quantitative analysis of GM in student NAPLAN persuasive writing across year levels



(To et al., 2020)

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Grammatical metaphor and the NAPLAN marking guide

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0-6	0-4	0-5	0-4	0-5	0-4	0-3	0-6	0-5	0-6

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)

Grammatical metaphor and Audience (Criterion 1)

(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)

Grammatical metaphor and Text structure (Criterion 2)

- 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).

Grammatical metaphor and Text structure (Criterion 2)

(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)

Grammatical metaphor and Text structure (Criterion 2)

(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 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)

Grammatical metaphor and Paragraphing (Criterion 7)

- 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)

Grammatical metaphor and Paragraphing (Criterion 7)

(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

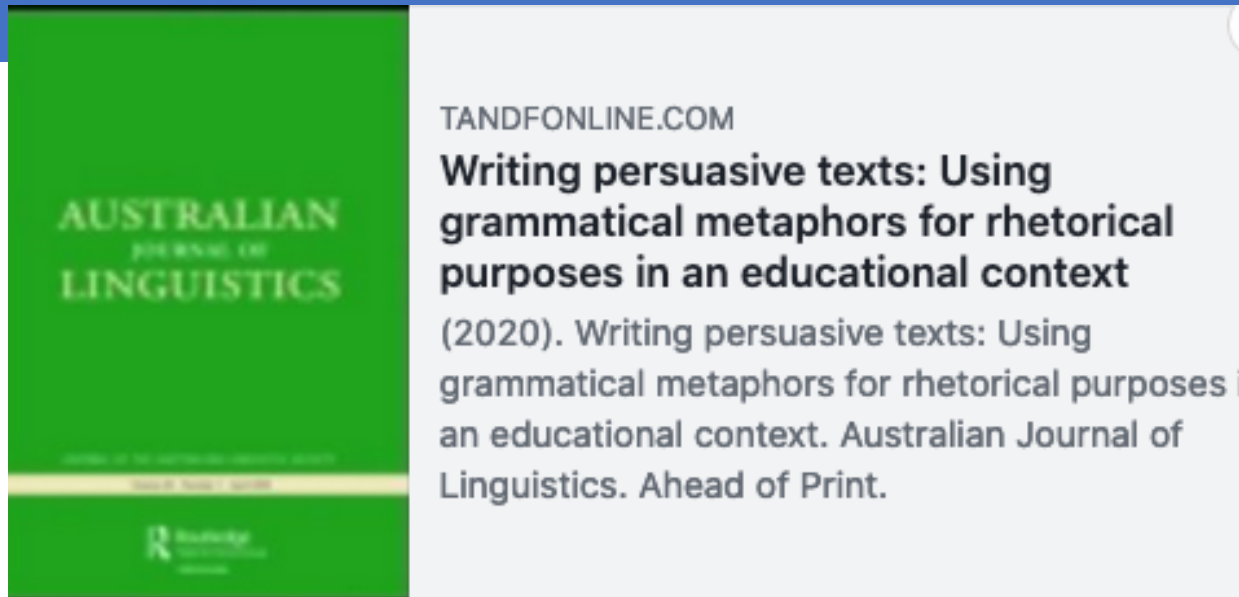
- Students will encounter grammatical metaphor in the texts they read from middle primary school (Derewianka & Jones, 2012),
- Therefore, teaching children how to read grammatical metaphor and how to use this advanced language choice in their writing may lead to more successful writing outcomes.
- For 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)

Main reference



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Please see the full list of references in this article

Thank you for your time!

Dr Vinh To



Vinh.To@utas.edu.au

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Systemic Functional Linguistics Interest Group

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