



## **E303 English Grammar in Context**

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### **Taster Pack**

November 2008

## **Taster Pack: Contents**

1. Introduction to the Taster Pack
2. Extract 1: Book 1 Unit 2
3. Extract 2: Corpus Tasks Booklet
4. Extract 3: Book 2 Unit 10
5. Extract 4: Book 3 Units 15 and 16
6. Extract 5: Applications: Chapter 3
7. Extract 6: Assessment

## Open University Taster Pack

Welcome to the Taster Pack for the English Grammar in Context. This pack has been designed to give you a feeling for what it is like to study a third level course with the Open University. It is made up of excerpts taken directly from course material. We hope that by browsing through the pack you'll get a feel for the level of the course, its general style and approach and the topics covered.

We hope that this Taster Pack will be helpful to you but remember...

1. It's a tiny sample (rather less than 1%) of a large course and so can only give an approximate idea of level and content.
2. Because we have tried to represent the course as accurately as possible, excerpts may have been taken from part way through. We have tried to select material which does not rely too heavily on what has gone before, but occasionally concepts may be used which were more fully explained earlier in the course.
3. The taster pack is intended to give a general overview, not to act as a preparatory pack. If, after reading the pack, you would like further advice on preparatory study, please have a look at the E303 course information on the OU Courses and Qualifications website: <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses>
4. Students studying the course will have access to the following resources:

- Five Course Books:

Book 1: Getting started describing the grammar of speech and writing

Book 2: Getting inside English: interpreting texts

Book 3: Getting practical: evaluating everyday texts

Book 4: Getting down to it: undertaking research

Applications: Putting grammar into professional practice

- Course Reader: Applying English Grammar
- Assignment Book and Project Guide
- Corpus Tasks booklet
- Course Guide
- Glossary of key grammatical terms
- Guide to the CD-ROMs
- Readings Booklet
- Specimen Exam Paper
- Study Calendar
- CD-ROM 1: Concordancer and Corpus CD-ROM
- CD-ROM 2: Interactive Grammar Analysis Activities CD-ROM
- Set Book (to be bought by students): Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English

## Extract 1

### Book 1 Unit 2

*The following extract introduces the second unit in Book 1 and explains how contemporary studies of grammar make use of new computer based methods, namely **concordancing** software and what is referred to as a **corpus** (a large data base of language stored on a computer). You will see how in the introduction to each unit the writer sets out the learning aims for the unit and then begins the unit by explaining what a corpus is and how concordancing software works.*

### Introduction



This cartoon reflects what we learnt in Unit 1 about the ways in which language, and grammar in particular, has been researched and described. We discussed traditional methods of writing grammar books based on introspection, describing the sort of language you think you use. We hinted at the more recent methods based on describing large amounts of naturally occurring data, both speech and writing. This is represented in the second picture by the researcher sitting in front of her computer which can store masses of texts for analysis. Of course, in reality the grammarian with his/her computer will probably not ignore all the work that has gone before, but will test it to see whether it is an accurate description of how the language actually works.

In this unit, you will be introduced to methods for investigating grammar based on using large amounts of data stored on computer and analysed using special software tools. You will have the opportunity to use these tools yourself and to begin exploring grammar in speech and writing. You will also look at some of the findings presented in your reference grammar and relate those to how the authors explored large quantities of data using computers.

By the end of this unit you will:

- be familiar with new computerised methods of exploring English grammar
- be able to use a corpus and a concordancing program to explore a limited number of grammatical features

- understand how the authors of your reference grammar have used similar techniques and what their findings are in relation to grammar in conversation.

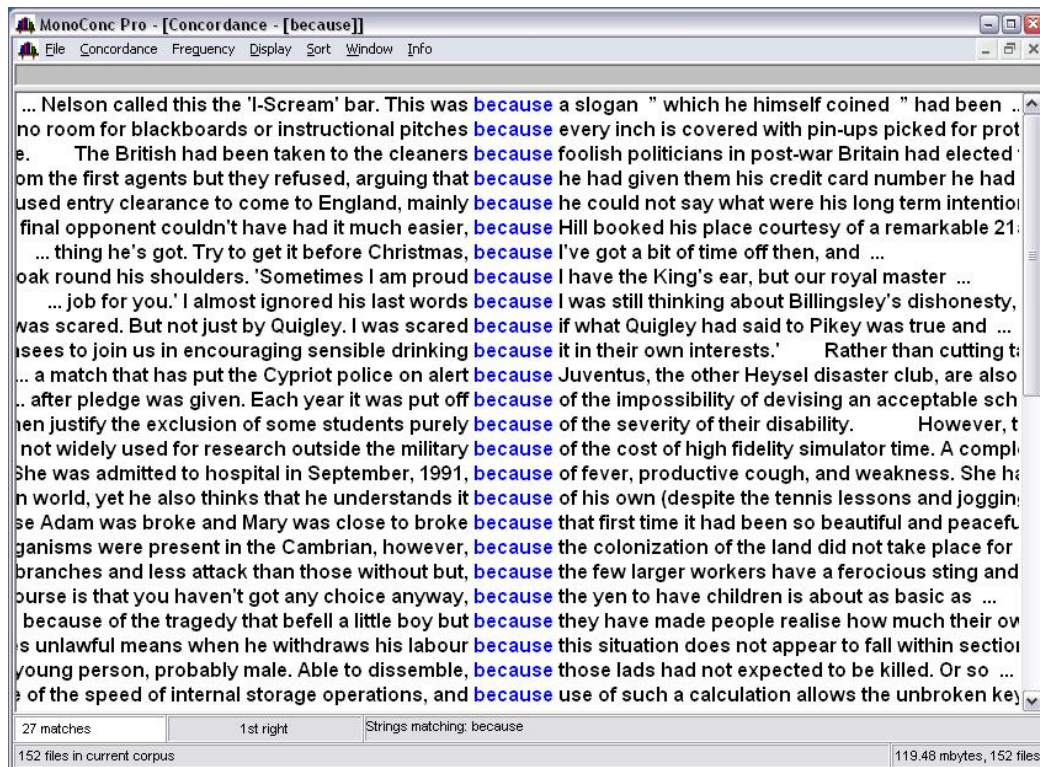
# 1 Introducing corpus analysis

What is this large amount of data stored on a computer and what use is it in exploring grammar? To answer these questions we first look at the what has become known as ‘corpus linguistics’ and then at how the techniques of corpus linguistics have been used in your reference grammar. At the end of this unit you will start to practise your own corpus analysis skills and to consolidate some of the grammatical points that have been introduced.

## 1.1 Terminology of corpus linguistics

We start by defining some of the important terms in corpus linguistics. There are many different definitions of a **corpus** and many different types of **corpora** (the plural of corpus). For our purposes, a corpus refers to a collection of naturally occurring language data (usually many millions of words). The data are in the form of texts, which can be written ones, e.g. books, letters and newspaper articles, or spoken ones, e.g. transcribed speech from radio and TV programmes and from spontaneous conversation. Usually this large collection of texts is stored on a computer and analysed using special software. The software allows language analysts such as grammarians and dictionary writers to find out how frequently different words are used and to display on their computer screens hundreds of examples for analysis in detail. Figure 1 shows you an example of the type of computer view a corpus linguist might study.

Figure 1 A corpus search for the word ‘because’



The purpose of a corpus is not to access texts in order to read them, but to allow the texts, as data, to be studied in new ways.

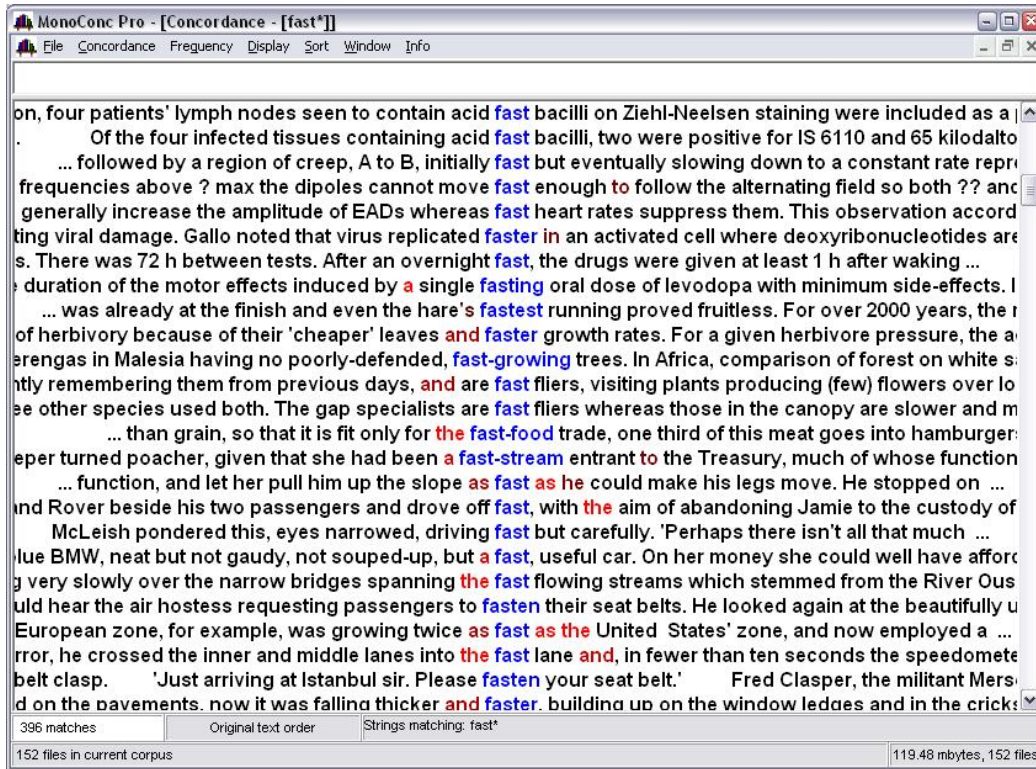
Concordance lines bring together many instances of use of a word or phrase, allowing the user to observe regularities in use that tend to remain unobserved when the same words or phrases are met in their normal contexts.

(Hunston, 2002, p. 9)

The most common way of accessing corpus data is by using a **concordancing programme** also known as a **concordancer**. This displays the texts in the form of **concordance lines** as shown in Figure 1. You can see that a concordancer presents a particular word at the centre of the page, or screen on the computer. The word or phrase that is searched for is called the **node** or **key word** and it is displayed with the other words that occur to the left and right of it. These other words are referred to as context or **co-text**, here meaning only those words found immediately to the left or right and not anything further away. This type of display is known as **key word in context (KWIC)**. The words to the right and left of the key words can also be sorted, that is ordered on the basis of their initial letter of the alphabet. In Figure 1 the lines have been sorted alphabetically 'to the right'. This results in examples of the key word followed by words beginning with the letter 'a' coming at the top of the list. The concordance lines could be resorted alphabetically 'to the left' to see if there are any patterns to the words that occur before the key word. When we talk about concordance lines we often use the word 'pattern'. This is because, when you sort the lines, you often notice that certain word or classes of words occur to the left and right in blocks and these can be noticed visually as patterns.

*Because* is a simple word to search on as it does not change its form. However, if you wanted to search for *house* you are also likely to be interested in the plural form *houses*. A concordancer can help you do a search for both forms. In Figure 2 we have chosen to look at all the forms associated with the string of letters F A S T. You will notice that there are concordance lines for *fast*, *faster*, *fastest*, etc. This is because I searched for the key word *fast\**. The symbol \* is called a **wildcard** and it means that the concordance programme will find any words that begin with the letters *fast*. This shows another useful feature of the concordancer; it can search for and display the different forms of a particular word. Usually we are interested in say all the forms of a verb. So for the verb *walk* we would need to look at the forms *walk*, *walks*, *walking*, *walked*. Collectively these forms are known as a **lemma**. The concordancer does not recognise lemmas in the way that you and I do. It does not know that *walks* and *walking* are part of the same lemma. It finds them using wildcards which just match the first string of letters such as W A L K and then accepts anything which follows them. That is why in Figure 2 we have examples such as *fasten* and *fast-growing*. Because a concordance programme can sort words only on the basis of their form, it will include words that are of different grammatical classes but have the same form. It is an important point to remember that even though words can have the same or similar forms, they may belong to different grammatical classes or have different meanings.

Figure 2 Concordance lines for *fast*\*



## Extract 2

### Corpus Tasks Booklet

*In extract 2 you will see how the corpus tasks booklet gives you hands on practice in using a corpus and concordancing software. So this course is not just concerned with learning how academics study grammar but how you yourself can use the latest computer techniques to carry out your own exploration and research. The instructions are designed for students who have no experience in using software of this type. You will find them clear and easy to use as they take a step by step approach and are supported by diagrams showing you what your computer screen should look like. Task 1 is the first task that students complete after having worked their way through Book 1, unit 2.*

#### Task 1: Getting started

Start MonoConc BNC. You should see a window which looks like the one in Figure 1.

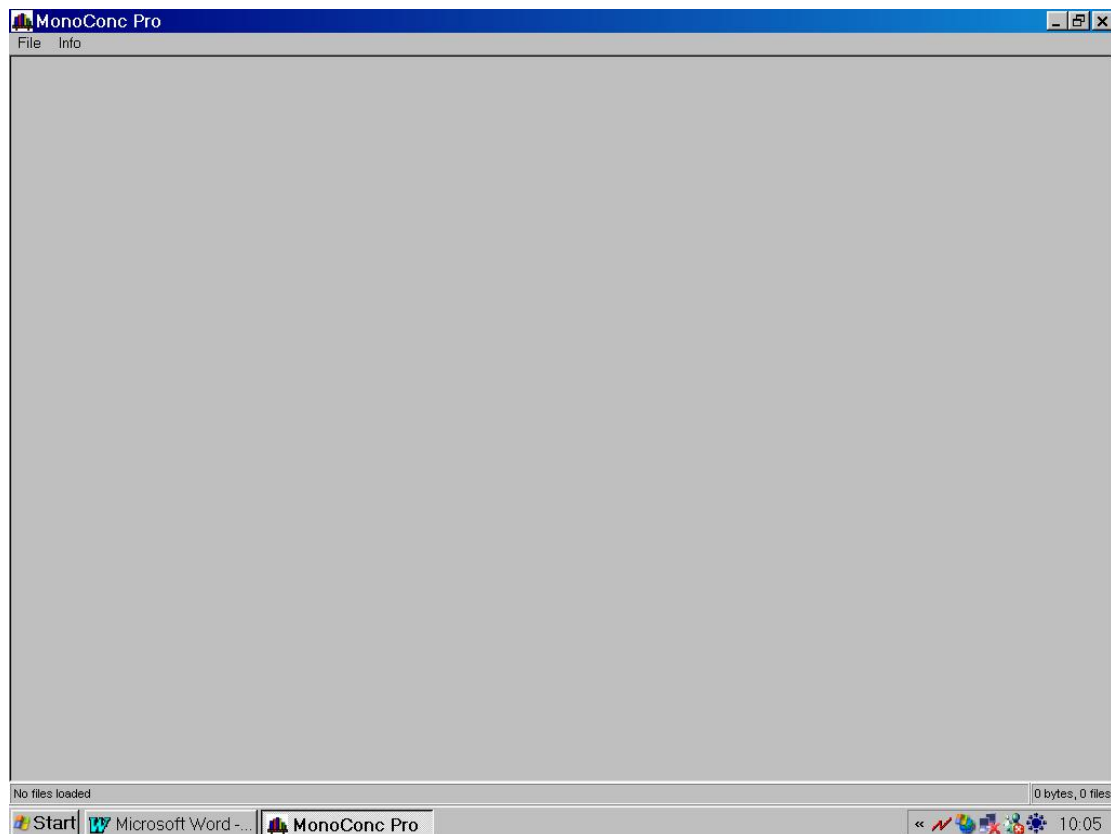


Figure 1 The MonoConc opening screen

Click on the **File** menu and click on **Load Corpus File(s)...**, as shown in Figure 2. (This function can also be accessed with the key combination **Ctrl+L**, i.e. hold down the **Ctrl** key and press the **L** key at the same time.)

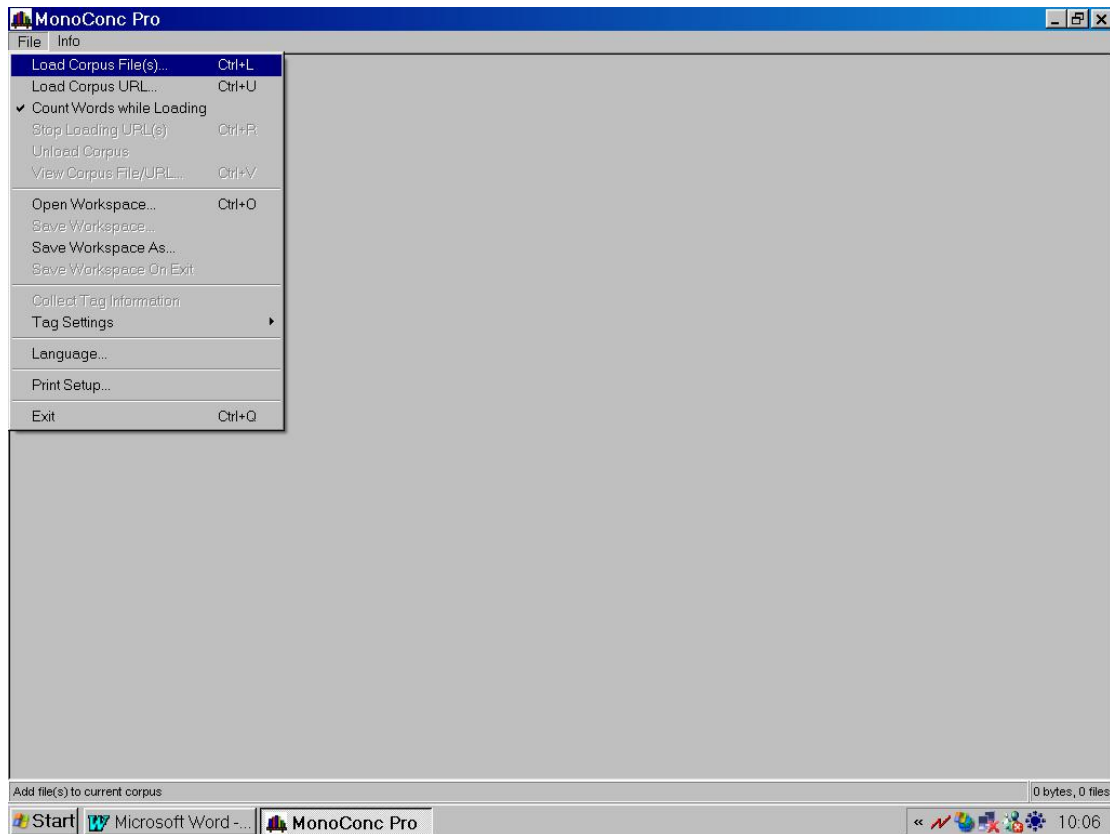


Figure 2 The File menu

You should now see a window entitled **Select File(s) to Open**. This should be displaying folders called **Corpus1** and **Corpus2**. Double-click on **Corpus1** and you should get a window as in Figure 3.

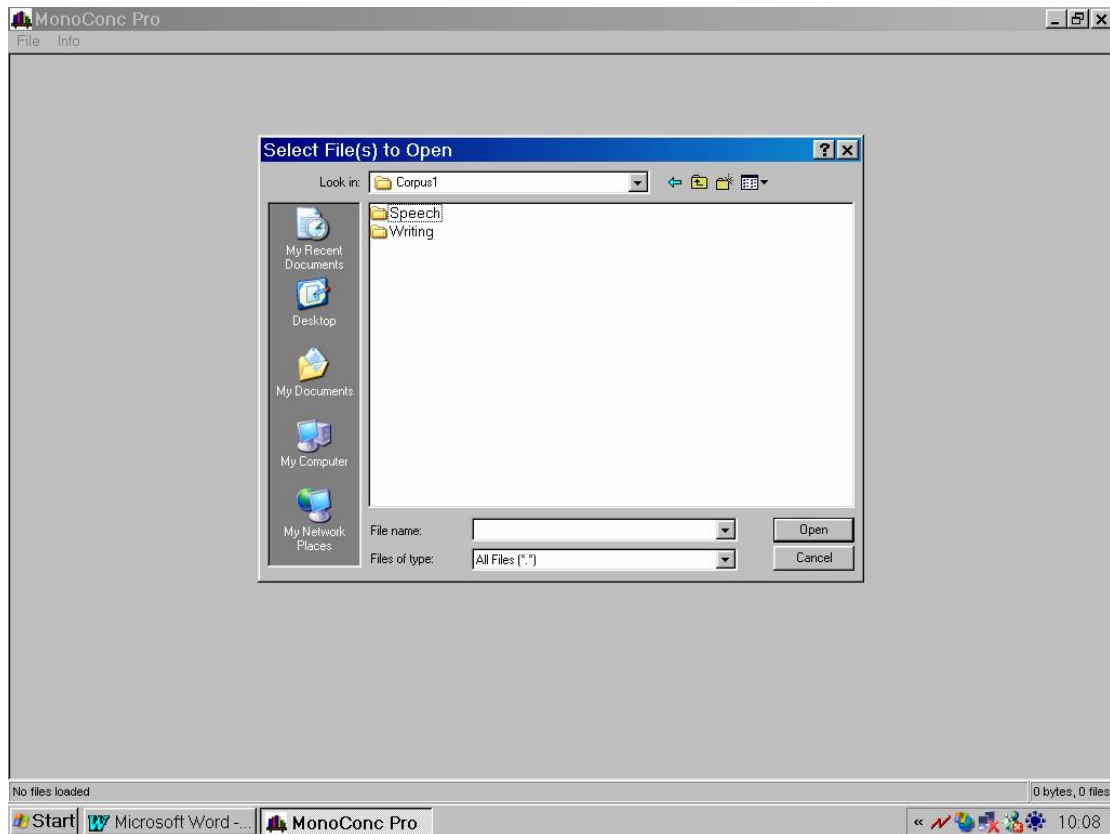


Figure 3 The window showing the folders in Corpus 1

The **Writing** and **Speech** folders contain texts representing these two modes in the corpus. Select the **Writing** folder by double-clicking on it, and you should then see a long list of files. Press **Ctrl+A** and all of these file names should now be highlighted, as in Figure 4. (If this does not happen, left click with your mouse on the window in which the files will have appeared and press **Ctrl+A** again).

## Extract 3

### Book 2 Unit 10

The following extract is taken from the second course book and introduces students to how writers or speakers use grammar to position their audience to take up a particular viewpoint. The comic strip illustrates a key area of grammar – referred to as modality - that will be explored throughout the unit. Following the introduction (and several sections that we have not included in the taster pack) you will then find an activity (Activity 1). Although you will probably not be able to complete the activity (as it requires an understanding of various concepts built up in the course) you will be able to see the role played by activities in helping you to both test and deepen your understanding of grammar. Again, I'd like to emphasise that the course is very much about hands on analysis: our overall aim is to enable students to use their skills of grammatical analysis to both take apart (deconstruct) texts and improve them.

As you can see, activities are accompanied by some form of feedback – either answers (where responses to an activity are clear cut), a comment or more extensive discussion.

## Introduction

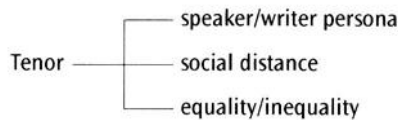
To start this unit, imagine this scene:





News texts like the one being discussed in the cartoon work like this a lot of the time, particularly at the populist end. Such newspapers like to play on fears such as the fear of losing one's job, as is the case here. While the actual experiential meaning of someone's words is not necessarily transformed in populist newspapers, it is common to find the interpersonal force increased. With regard to important political matters, people should ideally be given the facts as far as possible so they can weigh them up for themselves, in this case how the facts might affect their own employment circumstances and the employment circumstances of others in their country. Being able to isolate aspects of a text which try to position readers into a particular way of seeing the world – which may be a misleading or sensationalised one – is a useful skill to possess.

It is the purpose of this unit to give you some insight into how readers can be positioned by texts and to give you some skills of analysis in order to articulate how patterns of interpersonal meaning are being created. You will also see later how the use of a concordancer can help in isolating patterns of interpersonal meaning which are not so obvious when reading a text. By the end of the unit, you will be better able to maintain a critical distance from texts; that is, be better able to resist misleading positioning. Because we shall be dealing with interpersonal meanings, we are interested in the aspect of the context of situation called tenor. You came across this concept in Unit 8, where you saw that aspects of tenor can be divided into three:



In Unit 8, we looked at linguistic indicators of social distance and equality/inequality. You will meet these areas again in Book 3. In Unit 8, we also examined how writers create a persona which can potentially position us into a particular interpretation. By persona I mean the ‘personality’ of the text – something analogous to the personality of a speaker. When we listen to someone speak, we do not just listen to what they say (experiential meaning) but also to how they say it (interpersonal meaning and textual meaning). The interpersonal aspect of meaning includes how the speaker engages us. How engaged we are depends very much on how engaging their personality is. We may be engaged because we respect the speaker, or they have authority over us, or because they are easy to be with, are charming, etc. In the same way, a text has a persona which can engage us as readers because we regard the writer as communicating with authority or because we find the writer entertaining, etc. Since we are interested in this unit in how writers position readers into potentially accepting a point of view, we shall look at writer persona in more detail.

(Following on from the introduction there are several sections explaining the grammatical resources of modality, a key area of language used for positioning readers and listeners.)

### **Activity 1 (allow about 15 minutes)**

Imagine you were debating with someone and he or she made the following statements. In them you will see the same experiential meaning in the declarative mood being invested with different interpersonal meanings. These interpersonal meanings are achieved through modal finites and other grammatical resources which express epistemic modality. The sentences can be divided into those which position strongly and those which do not.

- (a) Divide the statements into two categories – those with strong positioning and those with soft positioning. The first two have been done for you. (See ‘Answers to the activities’ for the others.)
- (b) Underline the modal finites and any other grammatical resources that you have seen so far in this course that are used to communicate modality. The first two have been done for you.
  - (i) Darwin’s theory of evolution will never explain human nature. **STRONG POSITIONING**
  - (ii) Darwin’s theory of evolution probably explains human nature. **SOFT POSITIONING**
  - (iii) Darwin’s theory of evolution would explain human nature for many people if they only knew what it was.
  - (iv) Darwin’s theory of evolution possibly explains human nature.
  - (v) Darwin’s theory of evolution definitely explains human nature.
  - (vi) Darwin’s theory of evolution can’t explain human nature.

- (vii) Darwin's theory of evolution might explain human nature.
- (viii) Darwin's theory of evolution explains human nature.
- (ix) It is possible that Darwin's theory of evolution explains human nature.
- (x) Darwin's theory of evolution doesn't explain human nature.
- (xi) It is likely that Darwin's theory of evolution explains human nature.

### Comment

The modal finites used in the above are *would*, *can't*, *will* and *might*. Words like *definitely*, *possibly*, *probably*, *never* which communicate meanings of epistemic modality are known as **modal adverbs** since they modify the verbs. Adjectives which correspond to these adverbs, i.e. *definite*, *possible*, *probable* are known as **modal adjectives** and are commonly used with **it-clauses**, as in:

It is possible that Darwin's theory of evolution definitely explains human nature.

The use of modal markers such as *might*, *probably*, *possibly* (and also *may*, *could*, etc.) tells you that the speaker is prepared to negotiate to differing extents. The stance is not so assertive. The writer's persona is a reasonable one. What I mean by reasonable is that they imply that they are aware of alternative positions or that they recognise the possibility of alternative positions. You as a reader are not being positioned so strongly. By the regular use of such instances of epistemic modality, the writer can construct a persona which is **dialogic** in the broad sense of the term, i.e. not in the sense of being involved in a face-to-face conversational exchange with another speaker, but in the sense of acknowledging that whenever people speak or write they are necessarily being influenced by what has been written and spoken by others before, and that, as they speak or write, they anticipate how others are likely to respond and choose their words accordingly. By choosing such wordings, the writer/speaker can indicate a particular stance towards other speakers/writers and other points of view – one by which they recognise and acknowledge those alternatives. Equally, by choosing not to use such wordings, they can indicate a different stance – one in which they ignore, suppress or deny the validity of alternative points of view, e.g. *Darwin's theory of evolution will never explain human nature* and the other examples of strong positioning which you can see in 'Answers to the activities'.

## Extract 4

### Book 3 Unit 15 and 16

*Extract 4 comes from two of three units dealing with the area of grammar that serves to make texts cohesive. The first part gets students to think about what we mean when we say a text does or doesn't 'hang together'. In the extract from Unit 16 which follows you will then see how an understanding of cohesion can help you to identify why some texts are more or less effective. Specifically students are asked to look at an essay written by an 11 year old schoolgirl and consider the advice they might give her in order to improve her text.*

### Unit 15: Introduction

This text doesn't hang together very well.

I couldn't follow what he was saying – he seemed to be jumping all over the place

I'm getting confused over what exactly it is you're referring to...

I wonder how often you find yourself saying similar things? I am sure that at some point you have found yourself caught up in a discussion where you have found it hard to keep track of where the conversation was going. Or perhaps you have been listening to speeches where it is hard to work out what the main thread is? Maybe too you have come across densely written articles or pieces of fiction where it is not always very clear what is being referred to. In some cases – such as the advertisement below – this may be deliberate. In other cases it may simply be a matter of poor communication. Out of interest, what do you think is being referred to in the advertisement below? Do you think it works to 'hook' you in and make you more aware of, and interested in, the product it is promoting?



(BBC Homes and Antiques, August 2002, pp. 16–17)

### Comment

The advertisement uses two possessive determiners – *our* and *their* – to point to people whose identity is not immediately obvious. However, once we work out that the advertisement is promoting a roasted Mediterranean vegetable sauce produced by the supermarket, Sainsbury's, then we can deduce that:

- in the phrase placed above the less appealing sauce (i.e. the one on the left-hand side which has far fewer vegetables), *their* – in *their hunt the roast vegetable* – refers to sauces produced by other people (i.e. Sainsbury's competitors)
- in the phrase placed above the more appealing sauce (i.e. the one on the right hand side which has considerably more vegetables), *our* – in *our roast vegetable sauce* – refers to the sauce produced by Sainsbury's.

Because the answer to the puzzling *their* and *our* lies in the small print at the bottom, the advertisement works to hook us into thinking about the text surrounding the visual images and in particular whom the possessive determiners might refer to. Obviously the longer we linger over an advertisement to try to make sense of its message, the more likely we are to remember the product it is promoting.

In the next two units we will be exploring the way in which both grammar and lexis (lexicogrammar) work to weave together our ideas and thoughts in what is often referred to in commonsensical (as well as technical) terms as **cohesive** and **coherent** speech and writing (defined in greater detail later). Because this area of lexicogrammar is concerned with information flow the main contextual domain it relates to is mode. Let us remind ourselves of the relationship between mode, the textual metafunction and lexicogrammar by looking at Figure 1 below. Here we can see the territory we have covered so far and where our exploration will take us in the next two units.

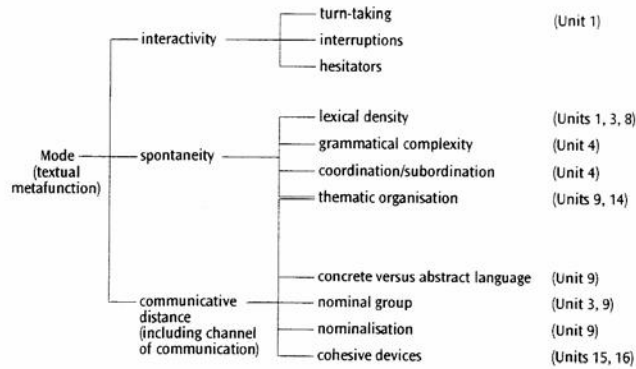


Figure 1 The mode–grammar ‘hook up’

## 1 What makes a text hang together?

### Activity 1 (allow about 15 minutes)

To begin thinking about what people mean when they describe a text as cohesive and/or coherent, read the following two texts. Can you make sense of them easily? Why/Why not?

#### Text 1

Economics was defined by the late Alfred Marshall, one of the great Victorian economists, as ‘the study of mankind in the everyday business of life’. There are other definitions which are discussed later in this book, but Marshall’s definition draws attention to that unique feature of human society: that unlike other animals, man provides for his everyday needs by means of a complex pattern of production, distribution and exchange. This everyday business of providing the means of livelihood is called by the general term ‘economy’.

#### Text 2

Outsiders often dismiss this specialised vocabulary as jargon but this is a mistake. Similarly, a decision by a local authority to have only comprehensive schools in its area will divert resources of building accommodation and teaching staff towards this type of education. It was the result of 20 years’ study of the industrial developments taking place around him in Britain, which was just passing through the stage known to history as the Industrial Revolution.

#### Comment

It is quite likely that you had little difficulty in understanding Text 1, even if you are not particularly interested in the topic. You were also probably able to guess that it might be an extract from an introductory book on Economics (which it is<sup>1</sup>). Text 1, in other words, is a coherent and cohesive text. But Text 2 is quite different – it is ‘non-text’. In fact it was created by copying the first sentence from every fifth page in the introductory book to Economics that Text 1 comes from. You probably found yourself wondering what the passage was about, and might have thought that

<sup>1</sup> Whitehead, G. (1982) *Economics Made Simple*, Heinemann: London (p. 1).

something was missing or mixed up. Each of the three sentences is a perfectly grammatical English sentence but together they do not form a *text*. This is because the sentences do not relate to each other in any meaningful way.

## 1.1 Coherence and cohesion

Text, in other words, only becomes text when:

(a) meanings are related or tied together by linguistic devices such as repetition or linking adverbials (referred to as **cohesive devices** or **cohesive ties**)

and/or

(b) meanings in a text make sense in relation to the context of the text as well as the listener's or reader's prior experience and cultural knowledge (this is what is meant by **coherence**).

## Unit 16: Giving feedback

### Activity 1 (allow about 20 minutes)

Reproduced below is a short essay entitled *Should children's TV programmes be taken off air?* It was written by an 11-year-old schoolgirl called Jessica as part of her preparation for the British national school test known as SATS. It was written under pressure (45 minutes) and not surprisingly displays a number of spelling and punctuation errors (which we have retained to keep the full flavour of the text). As you read the essay, consider how you might react to it as a teacher or parent. What advice might you give Jessica in order to improve her text? Think particularly about:

- the tenor that Jessica constructs (reflect here on the grammatical devices used, e.g. mood structure, pronoun use, lexical choices, etc.)
- the organisation of the discussion (here it would be useful to consider her use of theme)
- the cohesive quality of the essay (it might be helpful here to underline any examples of the cohesive lexical devices that you came across in Unit 15 and think about how effective they are – see 'Answers to the activities' for feedback on this).

### Text 1

#### Should childrens TV programs be taken off air?

Nearly every household in Britain has the familiar television set. Almost every child has watched a childs programe but the question is should they. Should childrens TV programes be taken off air.

On one hand, the television has been a endless source of education for both young and old. Sesame Street, which is for younger children, has helped many children acquire general knowledge skills such as the alphabet, basic maths problems and has increased the variety of vocabulary. In addition, adults can learn about life in the underwater world or maybe find out about Britain's fascinating past.

Nevertheless, childrens TV can sometimes be a bad influence. Grange Hill features swearing and stealing. Also violent scenes could make children think its cool to fight, which could lead to accidents from them fighting.

However, it has to be recognised that children could start watching unsuitable adult TV if there was no more kids TV. This could show swearing and other things of that sort.

Nonetheless, children could become addicted to the television which would make them stay inside all day which is just lazy and unhealthy; this could make children overweight.

On the other hand, television is a great source of employment. It provides work for adults and children alike. In addition children can improve acting skills by featuring on programmes and adults can work but have fun to.

On the one hand to many cartoons can block childrens imagination.

Furthermore, when writing storys children sometimes get ideas from programmes which can also block imagination.

However, television is also a social thing. People may talk about Eastenders the next day with friends which can bring strong opinions and good discussions. This can improve skills in school.

In conclusion, many people will have there say as there are plenty of arguments on both sides so I'll leave you to decide.

### **Comment**

Taking into account Jessica's age and the fact that there was limited time for her to plan and write her essay (students are encouraged to spend 10 minutes on developing a plan, 30 minutes on writing the essay and five minutes on checking it), I think you would probably agree that the essay is reasonably successful. It presents a number of arguments for and against the proposition that children's TV programmes should be taken off air. The arguments are well organised and there is a clear introduction and conclusion even though the opening paragraph (the macro-theme) could have been further developed by previewing the evidence discussed in the body of the essay. At the level of hyper-theme, Jessica makes effective use of their organising capacity to lay out and develop the different sides of her argument. Certainly the teacher made the following comments: 'Well done! You gave very balanced arguments on both sides. Overall very high standard.'

In terms of the tenor, I expect you judged the overall writer-reader relationship as relatively – and appropriately – impersonal and distant. Students are in fact encouraged to adopt a neutral style when they write a factual essay or report. You may, however, also have noticed that, in places, the essay draws on the interrogative structure, a structure more typically associated with spoken interaction (*the question is should they. Should childrens TV programes be taken of air*). You will also probably have noticed some other informal features (e.g. *kids, social thing*) which, combined with the dialogism of the interrogatives and the direct address to the reader in *I'll leave you to decide*, create at times a more engaging, personal style. Perhaps it might be worth pointing out to Jessica that she has successfully engaged with the reader whilst retaining a formal, neutral writer position (there is only one instance of a first person pronoun – so *I'll leave you to decide*). At the same time she might also need to

be made aware that too much informality, particularly the use of colloquial lexis, might be perceived negatively by examiners.

No doubt you will have observed that the main form of lexical cohesion in Jessica's essay is repetition (e.g. *children, television*) with some (limited) use of synonymy (*children, kids; employment, work*) and antonymy (*young, old; adult TV, kids TV*). There is no use of hyponymy (e.g. in the form of, say, *types of children's programmes* or *types of TV influences such as its effect on health, socialisation, etc.*)

Despite the absence of hyponymy which arguably could have led to a more sophisticated discussion (appropriate at a higher level of schooling), the text hangs together very successfully. There is a sustained, focused treatment of the issue under discussion with each argument presented being relevant and 'on topic' (as shown in the lexical chains running throughout the text). Perhaps the main advice you would want to give Jessica (with regard to lexical cohesion) is to try to reduce the amount of repetition. We will see how she could do this in Section 3 below. Another piece of advice you might want to offer concerns the linking together of arguments. Jessica's teacher did in fact observe that the arguments did not always quite fit together. But how can we pinpoint what is not working for Jessica? How can we be more precise so that she knows what to alter in order to improve her essay?

No doubt you have at some point received vague comments from teachers or lecturers. Do the comments 'poor organisation', 'badly structured' or 'illogical argument' sound at all familiar? And have you ever felt frustrated at not knowing how you can prevent the same comment being made the next time you hand in an assignment?

Just as we were able to articulate some of the grammatical and lexical reasons for the particular tenor adopted in Jessica's essay, we can also use a conscious understanding of grammar to diagnose weaknesses in the logical links between her ideas and arguments.

## **Activity 2 (allow about 20 minutes)**

Now read Jessica's essay again and pull out all the linking phrases (what your reference grammar refers to as **linking adverbials**) that connect ideas and arguments across (but not within) clause complexes and stretches of text. Complete Table 1 below to show how linking adverbials are used to connect ideas in some or all of the following ways:

- introducing or contrasting viewpoints (**contrast**)
- adding information (**addition**)
- pulling ideas together (**summation**)
- listing pieces of information (**enumeration**)
- restating information (**apposition**)
- signalling results or consequences (**result/inference**)
- marking contrast or conflict (**contrast/concession**)
- signalling a transition to new information (**transition**).

To get you started, I have filled in the first two examples.

**Table 1**

<i>Linking phrase</i>	<i>Argument/idea</i>	<i>Type of relationship linking ideas</i>
On one hand	television is an endless source of education	contrast
In addition	adults can also learn from children's programmes	addition
Nevertheless		

**Comment**

By completing Table 1 (see 'Answers to the activities') you will have seen how the arguments for and against children's TV are woven together to create a balanced discussion. In particular, you will have seen how the main relationships between ideas are those of contrast and addition. Column 1 will have highlighted for you how these semantic links were expressed through a variety of linking adverbials.

In general, I would say that Jessica is successful in relating one idea to another. Nevertheless, by looking at the text closely, it is apparent that *nonetheless* is used somewhat confusingly. In addition, we can see that perhaps too many ideas are introduced and too many different viewpoints contrasted. In the future it may be better for Jessica to reduce the number of arguments and develop each of them more fully through exemplification and supporting evidence. As a next step in her writing development she might also be encouraged to use other devices for linking her arguments such as the use of reference (explored later in this unit), for example another argument supporting children's TV is...

In sum we have seen in this section how **metalanguage** – a language for talking about language – can be valuable in pinpointing problems in the way a text has been put together. Such precision on the part of a teacher/editor in showing a student/author where things are going wrong can be extremely constructive in helping them to develop and improve as writers. In other words, although a certain amount of investment may be needed in order to build up a metalanguage, specific instructions such as the following can be very helpful:

In order to make explicit the logic in your argument, this piece of information needs to be introduced by a result/inference linking adverbial.

Vague comments such as *poorly organised, this essay doesn't hang together, illogical, fragmented*, etc., can leave a student nonplussed as to what they need to do to make their arguments clearer or more logical.

## Extract 5

### Applications Chapter 3 (2.1)

*The following extract comes from the final book in the course and therefore assumes a considerable amount of knowledge on the part of a student. You will see that areas of grammar that students have learned in a previous section of the course are recycled in later parts. The main aim is to show how grammar is used in a wide range of professions and in this extract we see how forms of cohesion can serve as evidence in a legal context. That is, in Activity 2, students are asked to work out the grammatical evidence for whether it is likely that a witness might have said something that the police have recorded him or her as having said. You will also see how you can use a corpus and concordancing software to help make these sorts of decisions. And finally, you will once again see how this course is about using grammatical tools to find out how language is used in the real world.*

#### 2.1 Evidence from grammatical cohesion

In a legal context, it is not enough to recognise (as in Activity 1) whether or not an exchange could *plausibly* have occurred. Rather, it is important to establish, beyond reasonable doubt, whether it has *genuinely* occurred and, more specifically, who is likely to have said what and in what sequence they said it.

#### Activity 2 (allow about 10 minutes)

Imagine you are a witness to a murder (perhaps you were even the murderer...). The police interview you and they ask you the following three questions. Write down quickly what you might say in reply. (For the purposes of this exercise, the truth value of what you write is immaterial!)

- 1 What were the others doing?
- 2 Who said what?
- 3 Did you see the boy's body?

Now, in the light of what you know about textual cohesion from earlier parts of the course, consider the following question and answer sequences, and make a note of anything that seems grammatically odd to you about the responses.

- 1 What were the others doing?  
The three of them were still in the room.
- 2 Who said what?  
I heard Jimmy say 'It went off by accident'.
- 3 Did you see the boy's body?  
Yes, sir, he was on the settee.

#### Comment

These apparent exchanges are all taken from the actual police interview record of a 1978 murder case (the so-called Bridgewater Four case), on which British forensic linguist, Malcolm Coulthard, was asked to comment as part of an appeal process in the 1990s (Coulthard, 2002). The task I have set you is in some ways more challenging than that facing Coulthard, since he had access to a larger corpus of

interview material on which to develop a judgement. Nevertheless you may, like Coulthard, have observed that the responses above do not seem to follow in a conventional grammatical way from the questions, for the following reasons.

Question 1 asks for a material process (*doing*) and gets a relational process (*were*) in response. In addition, the answer seems to provide rather more information than necessary in referring to *The three of them*. My guess would be that your own answer, picking up on the wording of the question, began with ‘They...’.

Question 2 asks for the name of the third-person sayer and gets a first-person response. My guess would be that your own answer began with a named individual. In addition – though I did not provide you with this clue – a question like this would normally be expected to follow from a previous discussion about a conversation. In the evidence presented to the court, however, there was one intervening exchange which referred to (the same three) people ‘shouting at each other’. Typically this would have been expected to prompt a question such as ‘Why were they shouting?’, ‘What were they shouting about?’ or, less plausibly, ‘Who shouted what?’.

Question 3 asks about an inanimate body, which would normally prompt a response with ‘it’, as in ‘Yes, I saw it’, or ‘No, I didn’t see it’. (Was this the case in your own answer or did you perhaps mention something else that you saw?) Here, the question receives a rather dissonant response with an animate *he*. In any case, a more natural response to a Yes/No question would be a straightforward ‘Yes, I did/ No, I didn’t’, involving ellipsis of the main verb. The actual response given reads more like an answer to the question ‘Where was the boy?’.

Coulthard’s conclusion, based on all the evidence, was that the question-and-answer sequences were implausible, and that the apparent questions had in fact been overlaid by the police on an original monologue by one of the murder suspects, with the overall intention (not specifically evident in the examples here) of making their line of questioning appear more benign than it had in fact been. As a result of further evidence of malpractice becoming available, the original sentences were in fact quashed before Coulthard was called to present his evidence, and so, as he comments, ‘It was, sadly, never possible to test the persuasiveness of this discourse evidence in court’ (2002, p. 27).

### **Reading A (allow about 10 minutes)**

Now read Coulthard’s own account of the Bridgewater Four case in Section 5 ‘Creating one text on the basis of another’ of his article ‘Whose text is it? On the linguistic investigation of authorship’ from Sarangi, S. and Coulthard, R. M. (2000) *Discourse and Social Life*, London, Longman (reproduced in the Readings Booklet).

Notice especially Coulthard’s comment that the ‘massive identity in phrasing and lexical choice [between an alleged dictated monologue and an alleged spontaneous dialogue] was seen by the lay audience as reinforcing the claimed authenticity, whereas for professional linguists it is highly suspicious’ (p. 278).

### **2.2 Evidence from lexical choices**

Coulthard contributed significantly to another celebrated appeal case, that of 17-year-old Derek Bentley, who was hanged for murder in 1952, but finally received a posthumous pardon in 1998, largely on the basis of Coulthard’s evidence. Here is the full text of Bentley’s written statement, as presented to the court in 1952:

## **Derek Bentley's legal statement**

I have known Craig since I went to school. We were stopped by our parents going out together, but we still continued to go out with each other – I mean we have not gone out together until tonight. I was watching television tonight (2 November 1952) and between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. Craig called for me. My mother answered the door and I heard her say I was out. I had been out earlier to the pictures and got home just after 7 p.m. A little later Norman Parsley and Frank Fazey called. I did not answer the door or speak to them. My mother told me that they had called and I then ran after them. I walked up the road with them to the paper shop where I saw Craig standing. We all talked together and then Norman Parsley and Frank Fazey left. Chris Craig and I then caught the bus to Croydon. We got off at West Croydon and then walked down the road where the toilets are – I think it is Tamworth Road.

When we came to the place where you found me, Chris looked in the window. There was a little iron gate at the side. Chris then jumped over and I followed. Chris then climbed up the drainpipe to the roof and I followed. Up to then Chris had not said anything. We both got out on to the flat roof at the top. Then someone in a garden on the opposite side shone a torch up towards us. Chris said: 'It's a copper, hide behind here.' We hid behind a shelter arrangement on the roof. We were there waiting for about ten minutes. I did not know he was going to use the gun. A plain clothes man climbed up the drainpipe and on to the roof. The man said 'I am a police officer – the place is surrounded'. He caught hold of me and as we walked away Chris fired. There was nobody else there at the time. The policeman and I then went round a corner by a door. A little later the door opened and a policeman in uniform came out. Chris fired again then and this policeman fell down. I could see he was hurt as a lot of blood came from his forehead just above his nose. The policeman dragged him round the corner behind the brickwork entrance to the door. I remember I shouted something but I forget what it was. I could not see Chris when I shouted to him – he was behind a wall. I heard some more policemen behind the door and the policeman with me said: 'I don't think he has many more bullets left.' Chris shouted 'Oh yes I have' and he fired again. I think I heard him fire three times altogether. The policeman then pushed me down the stairs and I did not see any more. I knew we were going to break into the place. I did not know what we were going to get – just anything that was going. I did not have a gun and did not know that Chris had one until he shot. I now know that the policeman in uniform is dead. I should have mentioned that after the plain clothes policeman got up the drainpipe and arrested me, another policeman in uniform followed and I heard someone call him 'Mac'. He was with us when the other policeman was killed.

(Woolls and Coulthard, 1998, p. 34)

### **Activity 3 (allow about 10 minutes)**

Make a note of any aspects of the transcript which strike you as odd. In particular, are there any lexical items or phrases which seem unlikely to have come from the mouth of a poorly educated and functionally illiterate 17 year old? Be as precise as you can in formulating your reasons.

## Comment

Some of the grammatical choices seemed to me to be stylistically marked: the use of the preposition *towards* rather than *at* in *shone a torch up towards us* (line 17); the use of simple past tense *walked* rather than progressive *were walking* in *as we walked away* (line 22); and the choice of passive voice and irregular word order of *we were stopped by our parents going out together* (lines 1–2). In addition lexical choices such as *shelter arrangement* (lines 18–19), *brickwork entrance to the door* (lines 27–28), *plain clothes (police)man* (lines 20 and 37), *policeman in uniform* (lines 24, 36 and 38) and *the place is surrounded* (lines 21–22) seem dissonant in the mouth of a youth such as Bentley, either because the concept is relatively specialised or because it seems overly precise in the context of this narrative. Similarly, the precision of the dates, times and places seems implausible in what purports to be an unprompted account.

## Activity 4 Corpus and concordancer activity (allow about 30 minutes)

Now load Bentley's legal statement onto your concordancer, and

- conduct a word-frequency search to find the 10 most frequent words in the statement
- run a concordance for the word *then*.

What distinctive patterns do you notice in the usage of the word *then* in Bentley's statement?

## Comment

In their 1998 article 'Tools for the Trade', David Woolls and Malcolm Coulthard refer to the Bentley case in order to illustrate the potential of corpus linguistics for the forensic analysis of texts. What they discovered from their own word frequency search of Bentley's statement was that the appearance of the word *then* as number 8 in the list of most frequent words was atypical of English usage in general and of spoken English in particular, when compared with the *COBUILD Bank of English corpus* (B of E). This prompted them to examine in more detail the precise nature of Bentley's use of the word *then*. Below are the comparative word frequency tables, and their own concordance lines for *then* (using another well-established concordancing program, *WordSmith Tools*).

**Table 1 Word frequency table from Woolls and Coulthard, 1998**

	<i>Bentley statement</i>	<i>B of E spoken English</i>	<i>B of E all texts</i>
1	I	the	the
2	the	I	of
3	and	and	to
4	a	you	and
5	to	it	a
6	we	to	in
7	Chris	that	that
8	<b>then</b>	a	is
9	was	of	it
10	policeman	in	for

No.	Word	Position	File
1/11	367	62%	BENT.TX
1	a policeman in uniform came out. Chris fired again then and this policeman fell down. I could see he was hurt as a lot of blood		
2	a bus to Croydon. We got off at West Croydon and then walked down the road where the toilets are - I think it is Tamworth Road		
3	where I saw Craig standing. We all talked together and then Norman Parsley and Frank Fazey left. Chris Craig and I then caught a		
4	bus. Chris then jumped over and I followed. Chris then climbed up the drainpipe to the roof and I followed. Up to then Chris had		
5	said nothing. There was a little iron gate at the side. Chris then jumped over and I followed. Chris then climbed up the drainpipe to the		
6	roof. Norman Parsley and Frank Fazey left. Chris Craig and I then caught a bus to Croydon. We got off at West Croydon and then walked		
7	down the road. My mother told me that they had called and I then ran after them. I walked up the road with them to the paper shop where		
8	nobody else there at the time. The policeman and I then went round a corner by a door. A little later the door opened and a policeman		
9	heard him fire three times altogether. The policeman then pushed me down the stairs and I did not see any more. I knew we were		
10	going to the flat. I climbed up the drainpipe to the roof and I followed. Up to then Chris had not said anything. We both got out on to the flat roof at the		
11	top. We both got out on to the flat roof at the top. Then someone in a garden on the opposite side shone a torch up towards		

Figure 1 Concordance lines for *then* from WordSmith Tools.

(Woolls and Coulthard, 1998, pp. 35–36)

Woolls and Coulthard (1998, p. 35) observed that the word *then* ranked 58th in the B of E corpus of spoken English and 83rd overall, as compared to 8th in the Bentley statement. You may have noticed from your own concordance lines that there is a rather distinctive use of *then* preceding the verb, as in *(We) then walked, Chris then climbed*. In his report to the court, Coulthard concluded that the frequency of the word *then* ‘was unusual in ordinary witness statements, but very typical of written police reports. A further observation was that it was not just the frequency that was typical of police reports but also the frequent post-positioning of the word after the subject of the clause’ (Woolls and Coulthard, 1998, p. 35). Taken with other supporting evidence, this convinced the judge that ‘the statement was indeed a jointly produced document, in part authored by the police officers who wrote it down’ (Coulthard, 2002, p. 33). Although this kind of aided statement – effectively the augmented or *tidied-up* written transcription of spoken evidence – had at the time been standard police practice in Britain, and continued to be so until the late 1980s, it has now largely been replaced in cases of serious crime by audio or video recording of statements and interviews.

### 2.3 Grammatical evidence revisited

The significance of this analysis in the case of Bentley was far reaching, because a major argument in the original prosecution case against him had been his claim early in his statement that *I did not know he was going to use **the** gun* (lines 19–20, emphasis added). It was argued from this that he must have known that his friend Chris had a gun, and Bentley was therefore equally culpable in law despite the fact that he did not pull the trigger. The fact that later in his statement (line 35) he claimed

that *I did not have a gun and I did not know Chris had one until he shot* was taken as evidence of self-contradiction, and thus marked him out as an unreliable witness (Coulthard, 2002, pp. 28–9). However, we can also interpret Bentley’s statements in lines 19–20 and 35 as *answers* to a series of police questions (now deleted from the official record) along the lines of ‘Did you know Chris was going to use the gun?’, ‘Did you have a gun?’, ‘Did you know that Chris had a gun?’. In this case his use of the determiners becomes grammatically unmarked. Tragically, by the time that his pardon was granted, Derek Bentley had already been dead for 46 years.

## Extract 6

### Assessment

*This extract is from the Assessment Book and Project Guide and provides you with an overview of how you will be assessed throughout the course. You will see that the emphasis is on your skills of grammatical analysis and that you will also be asked to carry out your own small scale piece of research.*

#### ***How will I be assessed on the course?***

E303 has six tutor marked assignments (known as TMAs), five of which are designed to coincide with the completion of your work for Parts 1-4 of the course. TMA06 is the proposal for the End-of-course assessment (ECA).

You are expected to submit all six assignments. As well as contributing to the overall assessment of the course, the TMAs will help to consolidate your work on each Part of the course, and your grade will indicate how well you are doing in relation to the learning outcomes. Your tutor's comments will explain the grade more fully and provide guidance on how your performance relates to the course assessment criteria. You should also find the TMAs helpful in pacing your work. The precise distribution of TMAs throughout the course is shown in the Study Calendar.

The End-of-course assessment (ECA) is a project where you are expected to apply skills learned on the E303 course to a body of data of your choosing.

#### **The balance between components**

Your course result will depend on your achievements across the different components of assessment, equally balanced between TMAs and the ECA. The TMAs as a whole constitute 100% of the Continuous Assessment Component and the ECA constitutes 100% of the Examinable Component. You must obtain at least 40% in each of the two Components to be certain of a pass result.

Continuous Assessment:

TMA course reference	%OCAS
1 Unit 1-3 Bk 1 + Foundation Grammar	15
2 Part 1, Part 2 corpus ling. Elements	15
3 Part 2	15
4 Part 3	15
5 Whole course	30
6 Part 4 + rest of course	10
	=100% continuous assessment

## **Examination Component**

ECA whole course + data = 100% examination component

TMA 01, 02, 03 and 04 each represent 15% of the overall continuous assessment score (OCAS). TMA 05 represents 30% and TMA 06 10% of the OCAS.

In all these assessment components, you will be assessed according to criteria which are based on the learning outcomes for the course. (N.B. these are not provided in this extract for the taster pack.)