Secret squirrel stuff in the Australian Curriculum English: The genesis of the ‘new’ grammar

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ABSTRACT

In much the same way that a squirrel stores a range of food in a range of places, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority’s (ACARA) Australian Curriculum: English (ACARA, 2015) stores references to grammar in a range of places. This paper explores some seemingly ‘hidden’ grammars within the AC:E to (re)discover their genesis and how they unfold across Foundation to Year 6. The first ‘Secret Squirrel’ moment centres on the introduction of a new grammar which weaves traditional Latin-based and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory. The second ‘Secret Squirrel’ moment centres on the use of one sub-system of SFL Theory, the System of Appraisal, and its potential to provide an analytical lens for ‘reading’ the interpersonal meaning within narratives. The remainder of the paper focuses on the System of Appraisal as it is introduced in the AC:E and then translates the Content Descriptions to an example analysis. One stimulus text, Melanie Watt’s (2012) children’s picture book ‘Scaredy Squirrel at the Beach’, is introduced then analysed using the System of Appraisal as an analytical lens for identifying how language choices ‘go to work’ (Macken-Horarik, 2003, p. 285) on readers, that is how Watt’s language choices are crafted so a ‘compliant’ child reader (Martin & White, 2005, p. 62) has the opportunity to ‘feel with’ and thus ‘adjudicate’ the behaviour of characters in particular ways (Macken-Horarik, 2003, p. 285).

Theoretical foundations of the New Grammar in the Australian Curriculum: English

The Australian Curriculum: English (hereafter AC:E), developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (hereafter ACARA) for implementation in schools in 2012, took, in the words of Derewianka (2012, p. 127), ‘a fairly radical step’ with the form and function of grammar made available for classroom use. The AC:E introduces a new model of grammar that weaves traditional Latin-based grammar theory with Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL) theory. Evidence of the genesis of this new grammar is not overtly marked in the AC:E, but rather ‘hidden’ as ‘Secret Squirrel Stuff’ across a number of sections of the AC:E. Myhill (2014, p. 116) hypothesised that a similar strategy was used in the United Kingdom to mediate between the politics of grammar as the mechanism to ensure ‘verbal hygiene’ vis-à-vis grammar as a ‘dynamic description of language in use’. Evidence of the weaving of traditional Latin-based grammar theory with SFL theory is contained within the AC:E in (i) a statement in the ‘Organisation’ section, (ii) the definition of ‘language features’ in the glossary, (iii) the structure of the sub-strands within the ‘Language Strand’, and (iv) within the Content Descriptions and Content Elaborations. Each of these four instances will be discussed in turn.

The first instance of the innovative weaving of traditional grammar theory and SFL theory is in the
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The ‘Organisation’ section of the AC:E where attention is drawn to the use of ‘standard grammatical terminology within a contextual framework, in which language choices are seen to vary according to the topics at hand, the nature and proximity of the relationships between the language users, and the modalities or channels of communication available’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7). The import of this statement is not only the implication that the AC:E draws on two separate systems of grammar, but also that one system is subsumed within the other (Exley & Mills, 2012). Specifically, the nomenclature of ‘standard grammatical terminology’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7) refers to the use of traditional Latin-based grammar theory such as that revealed via an analysis of the form of language such as noun, verb, adjective and adverb and so forth. The nomenclature of ‘contextual framework’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7) identifies the underpinning theory of SFL, a theory in which the relationship between form and function is paramount. In SFL theory language is understood to be construed via three interrelated systems of meaning: field, tenor and mode. In his landmark text, Language as Social Semiotic, Halliday (1978, p. 62) explained field, tenor and mode as the determinants that collectively ‘serve to predict text’. Although the AC:E does not explicitly use the terms of field, tenor and mode, their systematic norms are identifiable in the following ways. The ‘topics at hand’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7) refer to the situational elements of field (or subject matter) of the text. The ‘relationships between the language users’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7) refer to the situational elements of tenor within the text. ‘Modalities or channels of communication’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7) refer to the situational elements of mode, otherwise known as or channels of communication, such as spoken, written, visual or multimodal text. In SFL theory, field, tenor and mode work together to influence register (Halliday, 1978). Derewianka (2012, p. 139) explains how the model of register ‘suggests a systematic relationship between context and text’. The choices made by text producers (authors, speakers, artists or web-designers and so forth) and text consumers (readers, listeners, viewers or web users and so forth) vary along the ‘commonsense – specialised’ field (subject matter) continuum, the ‘informal–formal’ tenor (roles and relationships) continuum, and the ‘spoken–written’ mode (channel of communication) continuum (see Humphrey, Droga & Feez, 2012, p. 9 for an extended explanation).

The second instance of the innovative weaving of traditional Latin-based grammar theory with SFL theory is located in the glossary where ‘language features’ are defined as:

... the features of language that support meaning (for example, sentence structure, noun group/phrase, vocabulary, punctuation, figurative language). Choices in language features and text structures together define a type of text and shape its meaning. These choices vary according to the purpose of a text, its subject matter, audience and mode or medium of production. (ACARA, 2015, p. 126, emphasis added)

This definition of language features highlights the new grammar as a study of form (for example, ‘noun group/phrases’, an element of traditional Latin-based grammar theory) and function (for example, ‘choices in language features’ and ‘purpose of a text’, concepts from SFL theory). As a case in point, Exley and Wilson (2012) detail how the structure of nouns can be undertaken as a study of form and function.

The third instance of the innovative weaving of traditional grammar and SFL theory is inherent in the structure of the sub-strands of the ‘Language Strand’. Specifically, the ‘Language Strand’ is made up of five sub-straunds:

• Language Variation and Change;
• Language for Interaction;
• Text Structure and Organisation;
• Expressing and Developing Ideas; and
• Sound and Letter Knowledge (ACARA, 2015, p. 7).

The first and final sub-strand are not relevant to this discussion, but the remaining three sub-straunds warrant attention for the way they align with SFL’s construct of ‘Register’. The sub-strand ‘Language for Interaction’ is where students ‘learn that the language used by individuals varies according to their social setting and the relationship between the participants’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7). This sub-strand deals with the SFL concept of tenor (see Derewianka, 2012, pp. 135–136 for an extended discussion of tenor in the AC:E). The sub-strand ‘Text Structure and Organisation’ is where students ‘learn how texts are structured to achieve particular purposes; how language is used to create texts that are cohesive and coherent; how texts about more specialised topics contain more complex language patterns and features; and how the author guides the reader/viewer through the text through effective use of resources at the level of the whole text, the paragraph and the sentence’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7). This sub-strand deals with the SFL concept of mode (see Derewianka, 2012, pp. 136–137 for an extended discussion of mode in the AC:E). The sub-strand ‘Expressing and Developing Ideas’ is where students ‘learn how, in a text, effective authors control and use an increasingly differentiated range of clause structures, words and
word groups, as well as combinations of sound, image, movement, verbal elements and layout’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7). This sub-strand deals with the SFL concept of field (see Derewianka, 2012, pp. 134–135 for an extended discussion of field in the AC:E).

The fourth instance of the innovative weaving of traditional grammar and SFL theory shows through in a number of the Content Descriptions which ‘describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and processes that teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 6) as well as a number of the Content Elaborations which ‘illustrate and exemplify content and assist teachers in developing a common understanding of the content description’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 6). These instances occur on multiple occasions across the three sub-strands identified above. As a case in point, I draw attention to one oft-used traditional grammar term, in this case, ‘nouns/noun groups’, and show how this grammatical resource has been located within a ‘contextual framework where language choices are seen to vary’ (ACARA, 2015, p. 7) on at least three occasions.

- The Content Elaboration of the Year 2 Content Description ACELA 1462 from the ‘Language for Interaction’ sub-strand requires students to explore ‘how language is used to construct characters and settings in narratives, including choice of nouns such as ‘girl’, ‘princess’ or ‘orphan’, and choice of adjectives such as ‘gentle’, ‘timid’ or ‘frightened’’ (ACARA, 2015b, p. 37, emphasis added).
- The Content Elaboration of the Year 3 Content Description ACELA 1491 from the ‘Text Structure and Organisation’ sub-strand requires students to identify ‘how participants are tracked through a text by, for example, using pronouns to refer back to noun groups/phrases’ (ACARA, 2015b, p. 53, emphasis added).
- The Content Elaboration of the Year 1 Content Description ACELA 1451 from the ‘Expressing and Developing Ideas’ sub-strand requires students to know that, ‘in terms of meaning, a basic clause represents: a happening or a state (verb), who or what is involved (noun group/phrase), and the surrounding circumstances (adverb group/phrase)’ (ACARA, 2015b, p. 30, emphasis added).

Thus, the carefully woven theories that form the new grammar of the AC:E provide a metalanguage which is concerned with identifying, naming, exploring and analysing how language works to provide resources for representing meaning in specific contexts for specific purposes (Macken-Horarik, Love & Unsworth, 2011). Diagrammatically, the relationship of the two underpinning theories of the new grammar in the AC:E (ACARA, 2015a) can be represented as per Figure 1.

Another ‘Secret Squirrel’ AC:E moment occurs in the attention given to emotion and ethics within language in use. The ontogenesis of this work derives from a subset of SFL theory called tenor: the System of Appraisal. The next section of this paper introduces the System of Appraisal and explains how it has come to be known in the AC:E. Whist the System of Appraisal provides resources for reading and writing the interpersonal meanings across a range of genres (Ferguson, 2001; Macken-Horarik, 2006), the research in hand will focus on reading the interpersonal meanings within narratives.

The System of Appraisal

Originally developed by Martin and White (2005) for work in linguistics, the Appraisal System extends Halliday’s notion of interpersonal meaning in language and Poynton’s ‘pioneering work on gender, affect, naming practices and amplification in the nominal group’ (see Martin & White, 2005, p. 29). Martin and White (2005) considered more specifically how word choices provided a lens into the possibilities of interpersonal meanings in text. ‘The expression of human feelings, emotions, opinions and judgements is very rich and complex and involves delicate language choices’ (Derewianka, 2011, p. 119). At a more technical level, the System of Appraisal looks into the text to consider ‘the subjective presence of writers/speakers in texts as they adopt stances towards both the material they present and those with whom they communicate’ (Martin & White, 2005, p. 1). The System of Appraisal also looks outward from the text to the reader/listener to consider ‘how writers/speakers approve and disapprove, enthuse and abhor, applaud and criticise, and
with how they position their readers/listeners to do likewise’ (Martin & White, 2005, p. 1). The System of Appraisal offers an analytical framework made up of the three interconnected resources of Attitude, Graduation and Engagement.¹

- **Attitude** is concerned with expressions of positive and negative ‘feelings, including emotional reactions, judgements of behaviour and evaluation of things’ (Martin & White, 2005, p. 35). Attitude is divided into three regions of ‘feelings’: (a) affect which deals with ‘resources for construing emotional reactions’, (b) judgement which is concerned with ‘resources for assessing behaviour according to normative principles’ and (c) appreciation which looks at ‘resources for construing the value of things’ (Martin & White, 2005, pp. 35–36) and ‘processes’ (Derewianka, 2011, p. 120). Humphrey, Droga and Feez (2012) clarify that some words can relate to more than one type of attitude. For example, ‘good’ can refer to a ‘good feeling’ (affect), ‘a person of good character’ (judgement) or ‘an item being good value for money’ (appreciation). Other words are quite specific to particular fields and purposes. For example, the term ‘well-written’ would only be used to assess a written text’ (Humphrey, Droga & Feez, 2012, p. 102).

- **Graduation** attends to ‘grading’ the phenomena of Attitude through force (gradable meaning) and focus (ungradable meaning) (Martin & White, 2005, p. 35). More specifically, Derewianka (2011) refers to the interpersonal resource of force as boosting or lowering the strength of Attitude in a message. The interpersonal resource of focus either (a) sharpens or narrows the voice and contracts the possibilities of comprehension of a message, or (b) softens or broadens and blurs the voice and opens the possibilities of comprehension of a message (Derewianka, 2011).

- **Engagement** deals with ‘sourcing attitudes and the play of voices around opinions in discourses’ (Martin & White, 2005, p. 35). Voice and comprehension options can be (a) contracted by aligning with the listener/reader, countering and using the negative (Derewianka, 2011), modal adjuncts (e.g. probably), concessive conjunctions (e.g. although), contrastive conjunctions (e.g. but) and proclaimers (e.g. declare) (Humphrey, Droga & Feez, 2012, see Chapter 4) or (b) opened by attribution, intertextuality, modality (modal verbs) (Derewianka, 2011), expanding questions or creating distance through negative reporting verbs (e.g. assume) (Humphrey, Droga & Feez, 2012, see Chapter 4).

† Recontextualising the system of Appraisal to the AC:E

The System of Appraisal, as presented by Martin and White (2005), is a theory of linguistics, and as such needs to be recontextualised for use in the AC:E and then further recontextualised as the content for teaching young children. Bernstein (2000) introduces the term ‘recontextualisation’ to refer to the process whereby discourses external to education are relocated to sites of education, and in this process ‘recontextualised’ within sites of education. The case under investigation in this article is the recontextualisation of the System of Appraisal as conceived by Martin and White (2005) and its relocation into the AC:E (ACARA, 2015) to create the Content Descriptions and the Content Elaborations that determine the goals of teaching and learning. As curriculum does not exist as prescription per se, it is further relocated by the teachers as the content for teaching young children to read the interpersonal meaning within narratives. During these multiple relocations and recontextualisations, discourses may not necessarily maintain their original form. Such is the socially constructed nature of curriculum (Goodson, 1990). Fundamental to the principle of recontextualisation is the notion of a potential discretionary gap, that is, a space that provides the potential for the original discourse to change, or as Dowling (1998) points out, for the original discourse to be misrepresented.

Macken-Horarik’s (2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2014) research has carefully documented the recontextualisation of Appraisal theory into secondary school English curricula. Veel (2006) similarly recounts the Write it Right project undertaken in secondary schools in New South Wales between 1991 and 1995 where the System of Appraisal was a resource for a more focused pursuit of the interpersonal meanings of a range of genres. However, there is a dearth of research which documents the recontextualisation of the System of Appraisal into the early and primary years of subject English. One research study from Sweden highlights that when students from Years 5, 8 and 11 are taught the resources of the System of Appraisal, students are better able to ‘identify and discuss the evaluative resources used in their own writing of narratives, resulting in substantial improvements’ (Folkeryd, 2006, cited in Derewianka, 2012, p. 140).

In the lead up to the release of the inaugural AC:E, the challenge for writers was to take a robust theory such as the System of Appraisal and (re)configure (i) which of the resources should be relocated to the early and primary years, (ii) which resources have utility for teaching students to read the interpersonal meanings within narratives, (iii) if and how these resources
should be renamed, (iv) and how resources should be sequenced across the early and primary years. A systematic reading of the Content Descriptions and Content Elaborations of the AC:E (ACARA, 2015) reveals how the System of Appraisal is inscribed in the AC:E as a resource for reading the interpersonal meaning of narratives (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Grammar of Appraisal resources in the Australian Curriculum: English (ACARA, 2015)**

| Year 2 – ACELA1462 | Identify language that can be used for *appreciating* texts and the *qualities of people and things* |
| Year 3 – ACELA1477 | Examine how evaluative language can be varied to be more or less *forceful* |
| | • exploring how modal verbs, for example ‘must’, ‘might’, ‘or ‘could’ indicate degrees of probability or obligation |
| | • distinguishing how choice of adverbs, nouns and verbs present different *evaluations* of characters in texts |
| Year 3 – ACELA1484 | Learn extended and technical vocabulary and ways of expressing opinion including modal verbs and adverbs |
| | • exploring examples of language which demonstrate a range of *feelings and positions*, and building a vocabulary to express *judgments about characters or events*, acknowledging that language and *judgments* might differ depending on the cultural context |
| Year 4 – ACELT1603 | Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a *point of view* |
| | • sharing and discussing students’ own and others’ understanding of the effects of particular literary techniques on their appreciation of texts |
| Year 4 – ACELT1606 | Understand, interpret and experiment with a range of devices and deliberate word play in poetry and other literary texts, for example nonsense words, spoonerisms, neologisms and puns |
| | • discussing poetic language, including unusual *adjectival use* and how it *engages us emotionally* and brings to life the poet’s subject matter (for example ‘He grasps the crag with crooked hands! wee timorous beastie) |
| Year 5 – ACELT1609 | Present a *point of view* about particular literary texts using appropriate metalanguage, and reflecting on the viewpoint of others |
| | • posing and discussing questions, such as ‘Should this character have behaved as they did?’, and beginning to make balanced *judgements* about the dilemmas characters face and relative merit and harm |
| Year 5 – ACELT1610 | Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different *viewpoints*, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses |
| | • identifying the narrative *voice* (the person or entity through whom the audience experiences the story) in a literary work, discussing the impact of first person narration on *empathy and engagement* |
| Year 5 – ACELY1698 | Show how ideas and points of view in texts are conveyed through the use of vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions, objective and subjective language, and that these can change according to context |
| | • identifying the narrative *voice* (the person or entity through whom the audience experiences the story) in a literary work, discussing the impact of first person narration on *empathy and engagement* |
| Year 6 – ACELT1613 | Make connections between students’ own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts |
| | • recognising the influence our different historical, social and cultural experiences may have on the meaning we make from the text and the *attitudes* we may develop towards characters, actions and events |
| Year 6 – ACELT1617 | Identify the relationship between words, sounds, imagery and language patterns in narratives and poetry such as ballads, limericks and free verse |
| | • identifying how language choice and imagery build *emotional connection and engagement* with the story or theme |
In some instances the inscription of the System of Appraisal is explicit, for example, when Content Descriptions or Content Elaborations use the nomenclature of ‘appreciating’ (ACELA1642), ‘forceful’ (ACELA1477), ‘judgements’ (ACELA1484, ACLET1609), ‘appréciation’ (ACELT1603), ‘engages’ (ACELT1606), ‘engagement’ (ACELT1610, ACELY1698, ACLET1617) or ‘attitudes’ (ACELT1613). In other instances, the inscription of the System of Appraisal is more implicit, and thus more open to interpretation. I consider the System of Appraisal to be more prevalent, for example, when Content Descriptions or Content Elaborations reference the interconnected resources of ‘affect’ (ACELT1610, ACELY1698, ACELA1518) or ‘focus’ and ‘engagement’. Martin and White (2005, p. 62) conceive of a ‘compliant’ reader as one who subscribes to the author’s intended reading position. A ‘compliant’ reader stands in contrast to a ‘tactical’ reader who ‘aims to deploy a text for social purposes other than those it has naturalised’, and a ‘resistant’ reader who opposes the ‘reading position naturalised by the co-selection of meanings in a text’ (Martin & White, 2005, p. 62).

**Stimulus text: Scaredy Squirrel at the Beach (Melanie Watt, 2012)**

The Scaredy Squirrel text is one of a number of Scaredy Squirrel post-modern picture books written and illustrated by Canadian author/illustrator, Melanie Watt (2012). The focus book, *Scaredy Squirrel at the Beach* (Watt, 2012) introduces Scaredy as a character who prefers to vacation at home rather than go to the beach for a range of im/plausible reasons. Scaredy decides to build a beach at home. This is the point where the narrative breaks away from the oft-used stages of (i) orientation, (ii) complication, (iii) resolution, and (iv) re-orientation, instead presenting a procedural text for ‘Building a Safe Beach’. Despite Scaredy’s best efforts, the homemade beach is no substitute for a ‘real beach’. Scaredy musters up a plan to make a quick trip to a real beach. Again, the narrative pushes the genre boundaries by presenting an itinerary and a map for the new mission as well as a labelled diagram of Scaredy’s beachwear. The narrative then continues the chronology of Scaredy’s trip to the beach, detailing another complication (Scaredy’s fear of crowds), a final resolution and a re-orientation to Scaredy’s home-based beach. Humour
shows though as Scaredy ‘improves’ his homemade beach by adding a crowd of garden gnomes.

Like many of the written narratives used in school, Scaredy Squirrel is infused with what Macken-Horarik (2003, p. 286) has described as a ‘special kind of instructiveness which is injunctive without being overtly moralising’. These narratives teach implicitly, whereby readers ‘absorb the ethical values that narratives impart but do not name’ (Macken-Horarik, 2003, p. 286). Philosophically, the Scaredy Squirrel narratives embody an emotional and ethical message about the lived reality of social awkwardness and the implications of misinformed stereotyping. The ‘compliant’ child reader (Martin & White, 2005, p. 62) is asked by Watt to discern these salient messages, and the humour within, so that meaning can be made and the reading experience entertaining.

Another feature of the Scaredy Squirrel narratives is the way the written text integrates with visual, spatial and gestural text (Martin, 2008). Visual, spatial and gestural forms are also socially constructed forms of representation and communication that can be ‘read’ for meaning (Exley & Cottrell, 2012; Macken-Horarik, Love & Unsworth, 2011). However, due to my focus on traditional (print-based) reading practices, the following analysis will be limited to the written word. Due to the constraints of copyright and publishing space, the following linguistic analysis is limited to the first cycle of orientation, complication and resolution which also includes the diversion to a procedural text, as presented in Table 2. My goal is to examine how the System of Appraisal unfolds, or patterns, across this sequence of text.

**An analysis of Appraisal**

I concede that the following analysis, and my attempt to place myself as a ‘compliant child reader’, is inherently a socially positioned reading (Janks, 2010). Who I am and what I bring to the text influences my processing of text. As per Martin and White (2005, p. 25), I therefore need to declare my interests as best as I can. Even though I am of middle age, I still really enjoy reading Watt’s Scaredy Squirrel series. I find these books humorous both in the written text and visual display. I am cognisant that I connect with Scaredy’s quirky nature, in particular his habit of list making, sporting an eye for detail and being comfortable with solitary company. In terms of my involvement with squirrels in real life, I acknowledge that as a resident of Australia, I’ve been quite distant from the lived reality of many farmers and home gardeners in other parts of the world who find squirrels to be a pest. One of my most endearing memories of a cartoon squirrel is the affable Skrat from the Ice Age movies. I admire Skrat’s persistence and find the documentation of his wordless shenanigans hilarious; it’s gestural literacies at its finest. I also have to declare one time when I was windsurfing on the Pumicestone Passage at Caloundra the turning tide brought a swarm of blue blubber jellyfish into the passage. I tried in vain to find the clear path through the smack of pulsating jellyfish but disaster struck and I ended up in the water surrounded by a mass of trailing
tentacles. In a moment of complete panic, I scrambled back onto board. I still remember that feeling of fear to this very day. I bring this fear with me to my reading of this narrative.

Humphrey, Droga and Feez (2012, p. 102) suggest some probing questions to help identify the kinds of evaluations being made by the characters or description of events in a text, as well as a colour coding system for the Attitude resources so that students across Australia can be consistent with their approach. In doing so, Humphrey, Droga and Feez (2012, p. 102) rename the ‘Affect’ resource as ‘Feeling’ and reconfigure the ‘Appreciation’ resource as ‘Position’ to account for the process of ‘assessing the quality or objects or people’s appearances’ (see Table 3).

### Table 3. Recontextualisation of the system of Appraisal for classroom use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System of Appraisal (Martin &amp; White, 2005)</th>
<th>System of Appraisal recontextualised for classroom use (Humphrey, Droga &amp; Feez, 2012, p. 102)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affect</td>
<td>Feelings (pink)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do the characters express happiness/unhappiness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do the characters express security/insecurity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do the characters express satisfaction/dissatisfaction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgement</td>
<td>Judgement (blue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the characters portrayed as capable/incapable or socially competent/incompetent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the characters portrayed as morally and/or legally sound (a good character)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>Position (green)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessing the quality of objects or people's appearances by asking 'Did I like it?' (reaction), 'Was it well constructed?' (composition) or 'Was it worthwhile?' (valuation).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the limitations of printing, I do not use the colour patterning suggested by Humphrey, Droga and Feez (2012, p. 102) for the analysis of Attitude. Instead I use bold for ‘feelings’, italics for ‘judgement’ and underlining for ‘position’. I chose the markings of bold, italics and underlining in this order as it is the same order as used on the standard Microsoft Word font toolbar; I thus find it easy to remember the coding system.

### An analysis of Graduation and Engagement

In undertaking an analysis of the use of Attitude in the stimulus text, I am undertaking a process of Critical Language Awareness (Janks, 2010) to better understand how Watt uses written language to close down the options for me, qua reader, to make judgments and infer certain values (Buckland & Simpson, 2008) about the protagonist, in this case Scaredy Squirrel. I understand what matters less is each instance of Attitude (as shown in Table 4); what matters more is the unfolding of patterns of language use (Butt et al., 2006). It is for this reason that I keep the focus text as a whole text, rather than considering sentences in isolation. In Table 5, I consider the construal of Graduation of Force and Focus and Engagement. The left hand column presents the written text whilst maintaining the coding features of Attitude (bold for feelings, italics for judgement and underlining for position). I use the highlight function on Microsoft Word to identify the instances of Graduation and Engagement and use the right hand column as my explanation.

### Discussion of patterns of language use

As is typical of narratives, a range of Appraisal resources are present; this highlights Watt’s maturity as an author and her skill with the subtle weaving and building of a highly layered text. Thus interpersonal meaning is strung through multiple clauses as a continuous motif or colouring; the effect is cumulative, referred to as ‘prosodic’ by Halliday (1979, p. 67) since the meaning is ‘distributed … throughout a continuous stretch of discourse’. Martin and White (2003, p. 19) purport that the ‘prosodic structure is arguably more difficult to model and understand, probably because is it the kind of structure that is the most obscured’. This prosodic structure is in contrast to the lack of Appraisal resources in the section of text that undertakes the procedural function on Pages 10 and 11. Watt, however, continues to play with generic structure, subtly opening up the space for Appraisal resources in the procedural section, and continuing the amplification to pages 12 and 13 so the prosody makes a bigger splash which reverberates through the surrounding discourse.

This analysis has shown that the new grammar of the AC:E provides a useful analytical lens for understanding ‘language in context’ and ‘language in text’. The analysis has shown that this new grammar, and the recontextualisation of the System of Appraisal, is useful ‘if we want to bring light to the linguistic patterns that work together (or ‘conspire) to produce particular fashions of meaning’ (Macken-Horarik, 2006, p. 103). The point is to show how careful attention to both the
meanings and wordings yields powerful insights into the kinds of knowledge about language that should be made explicit if teachers are to help students. SFL is a useful analytical resource for the way it enables a close tracking of the meanings ‘embodied in written texts’ (Macken-Horiak, 2006, p. 106), evident by its tolerance of different interpretations of context and meaning.

**Discussion**

In conclusion, this paper has carefully documented the genesis of the new grammar inherent in the AC:E, paying

### Table 4. Attitude Analysis of written script from *Scaredy Squirrel at the Beach* (Watt, 2012, p. 4–13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages 4–5: Orientation &amp; Complication #1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Scaredy Squirrel never goes to the beach. He'd rather vacation at home alone where it’s safe than risk being surrounded by the wrong crowd. | • *would* rather constructs an emotional reaction of preference  
• *at home where it’s safe* offers a positive valuation of home, as a place of safety, compared with other non-safe places  
• *the wrong crowd* judges the behaviour of others |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages 6–7: Complication #1 continued</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A few crowds Scaredy Squirrel wouldn’t want to be caught in the middle of:  
• flocks of seagulls  
• *tribes* of jellyfish  
• *herds* of sea monsters  
• *packs* of pirates  
• *tons* of falling coconuts  
• *mobs* of lobsters. | • *wouldn’t want* constructs an emotional reaction of not wanting  
• *tribes, herds, packs, tons and mobs* offers a negative evaluation of these other characters; jellyfish are positioned as tribal, sea monsters move around like a herd of stampeding cattle, pirates do not act alone, but in packs, a falling coconut is not an isolated instance, but something that happens by the ton-ful, and lobsters potentially attack in mobs. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages 8–9: Resolution to Complication #1</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| So he’s perfectly happy to build his very own private beach. | • *perfectly happy* constructs an emotional reaction of happy in the extreme  
• *his very own private beach* expresses a security with privacy/ isolation and by default, an insecurity with anything that is either not private or is public. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages 10–11: Continue resolution to complication #1</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Scaredy Squirrel’s Guide to Building a Safe Beach.  
What you need to get started:  
• Paper and crayons  
• 1 stick  
• 1 inflatable pool  
• 1 flashlight  
• 1 bag kitty litter  
• 1 plastic flamingo  
1. Draw beach ‘scenery’  
2. Use stick to hold upright  
3. Cover ground with ‘sand’  
4. Inflate ‘ocean’  
5. Turn on ‘sunlight’  
6. Install beach ‘wildlife’. | • *a safe beach* offers a positive valuation of Scaredy’s beach as a place of safety, compared with other beaches which may not be safe  
• as is typical of a procedural text, no overt use of feelings, judgement or position in the equipment list  
• use of quotation marks around *scenery, sand, ocean, sunlight* and *wildlife* hint at a negative evaluation of these artefacts; Scaredy seems to be calling their authenticity into question. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages 12–13: Finalise resolution to complication #1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And ENJOY! It looks like a beach and feels like a beach …</td>
<td>• <em>looks like a beach and feels like a beach</em> offers a positive valuation of Scaredy’s newly constructed beach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Graduation and engagement Analysis of written script from Scaredy Squirrel at the Beach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages 4–5: Orientation &amp; Complication #1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Scaredy Squirrel never goes to the beach. He'd rather vacation at home alone where it's safe than risk being surrounded by the wrong crowd. | never contracts the space for alternative perspectives (engagement)  
[would] rather adjusts the focus on a gradable meaning (force) whereby Scaredy is not constructed as ‘unreasonable’; he just has some preferences  
at home where it's safe adjusts the focus on a gradable meaning (force) where home is a place of safety and other places are potentially not safe  
the wrong crowd adjusts the focus on a gradable meaning (force) where crowds can be ‘wrong’ |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pages 6–7: Complication #1 continued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A few crowds Scaredy Squirrel wouldn't want to be caught in the middle of:  
• flocks of seagulls  
• tribes of jellyfish  
• herds of sea monsters  
• packs of pirates  
• tons of falling coconuts  
• mobs of lobsters. | tribes, herds, packs, tons and mobs sharpens the focus on the negative evaluation of these other characters (focus).  
Solidarity is built with the ‘compliant’ reader, first by offering a logical collective noun, that of a ‘flock of seagulls’, and then a reasonable collective noun, ‘tribes of jellyfish’. Because of my recent brush with masses of jellyfish, I have no problem identifying with the collective noun of ‘tribes of jellyfish’. Watt then invites the ‘compliant’ reader to accept the gradual adjustment to focus, offering us absurd concoctions such as ‘herds of sea monsters’, ‘packs of pirates’, ‘tons of falling coconuts’ and ‘mobs of lobsters’. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages 8–9: Resolution to Complication #1</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| So he's perfectly happy to build his very own private beach. | perfectly happy adjusts the force of a gradable meaning  
his very own private beach sharpens the focus on privacy |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages 10–11: Continue resolution to complication #1</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Scaredy Squirrel’s Guide to Building a Safe Beach. What you need to get started:  
• Paper and crayons  
• 1 stick  
• 1 inflatable pool  
• 1 flashlight  
• 1 bag kitty litter  
• 1 plastic flamingo  
1. Draw beach ‘scenery’  
2. Use stick to hold upright  
3. Cover ground with ‘sand’  
4. Inflate ‘ocean’  
5. Turn on ‘sunlight’  
6. Install beach ‘wildlife’. | a safe beach adjusts the force of a gradable meaning  
placing ‘scenery’, ‘sand’, ‘ocean’, ‘sunlight’ and ‘wildlife’ in quotation marks is an attempt to build solidarity (engagement) with the audience in a ‘wink, wink, nudge, nudge’ sort of way. Space is created for readers to bring in an alternative reading; readers who identify the sarcasm are able to predict the next complication and in doing so, reward themselves with the pleasure of confirming a prediction. |

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<tr>
<td>And ENJOY! It looks like a beach and feels like a beach …</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
particular attention to how Traditional Grammar and SFL theories are woven together. A recontextualised version of one sub-system of SFL theory, the System of Appraisal, was identified within the AC:E. Taken together, the recontextualised forms of this new grammar provided an analytical lens for students to read complex narratives relationally, and be sensitive to the hierarchy of voices and values offered in the stimulus text. This framework also proved itself to be useful for reading texts that break free of the constraints of classical genres. This analysis has also shown that narratives can be deconstructed at the level of the text, the sentence and the word so that the author’s choices and their effects, intended or otherwise, can be analysed according to the reader’s different historical, social and cultural experiences. In the demonstration analysis, I was able to bring my historical, social and cultural experiences to my reading of the stimulus text. Finally, from a reading development point of view, this analysis showed that complex texts are not necessarily formed by many words in a sentence or heightened vocabulary choices. As shown in Exley and Cottrell (2012), Exley and Mills (2012), Exley and Wilson (2012), Exley and Kervin (2013) and Exley, Kervin and Mantei (2015), short but carefully designed texts based on everyday words can carry significant reading comprehension demands.

Notes
1. SFL terms are written with an initial capital letter. Whilst the AC:E borrows from SFL theory, the tradition to capitalise the initial letter is not continued.
2. Derewiaka (2011, p. 120) explains that ‘affect’ is used as a noun, and pronounced with a stress on the first syllable.

References

Beryl Exley is an experienced early years and middle years teacher who is now an Associate Professor and researcher within the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology. She has a special interest in the teaching of the English Curriculum and the development of socially just pedagogies for students most disenfranchised from institutionalised schooling. She has been a CI on an ARC DP and has co-authored Playing with Grammar in the Early Years (2013) and Exploring with Grammar in the Primary Years (2015), both published by ALEA. She co-edited Pedagogic rights and democratic education: Explorations in the sociology of knowledge and pedagogy, published by Routledge in 2016. Her research articles are available at eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/Exley,_Beryl.html.