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# Revisiting the role of embedding in Systemic Functional Linguistics: Construing depth in “big texts”

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## Abstract

This paper is concerned with exploring the role of embedded genres in expanding the meaning potential of long texts, focusing especially on complex tertiary assignments. A significant body of work has evolved in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) on modelling “big texts” as macrogenres since Martin (1994: 29) posed the question how texts “get bigger than a page”. However, based on detailed genre analyses of high-scoring undergraduate business country reports, this paper illustrates that not all big texts are macrogenres made up of elemental genre complexes. Analogising from clause grammar, it will show that these texts unfold through multiple layers of embedded genres in their generic stages. By revisiting current understandings of the occurrence of embedded genres as “a relatively rare phenomenon” (Martin 2012: 002), this paper argues that their role has not been sufficiently considered for understanding lengthy university assignments. By complementing and extending existing research on the analysis and representation of lengthy university assignments, this research provides the missing link in the theoretical conceptualisation of the “nature of big texts” (Martin 1994; 1995) in SFL.

**Keywords:** genre, macrogenre, embedded genre, complexing, embedding, student business reports

## 1 Introduction

This paper is concerned with exploring the role of embedded genres in expanding the meaning potential of long texts, focusing especially on long and complex tertiary assignments. The significant body of work in Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter: SFL) on genres students write throughout their primary and secondary education has shown that most of these texts fit neatly on half a page to a page (Martin 1994; Martin & Rose 2008). However, tertiary students are generally required to write much longer texts stretching

across many pages. Because writing such long assignments seems to be a challenging task for most university students, the generic structure of these types of text stands as an important area for research despite the significant challenges associated with re/presenting “big texts” and the time-consuming nature of manual analysis. To explore the structure of these texts in more detail, Halliday’s types of structure (1979; 1981; 1985), Martin’s early work on analysing text structuring principles in “big texts” (1994; 1995; 1996) and SFL genre theory (Martin 1992; Christie & Martin 1997; Martin & Rose 2008) serve as the points of departure for revisiting Martin’s (2012: 002) description of embedded genres as “a relatively rare phenomenon”. This paper will argue that current modelling of “big texts” in SFL is insufficient for understanding lengthy university assignments. Based on detailed genre analyses of high-scoring undergraduate business country reports, this paper will illustrate that not all “big texts” are macrogenres made up of elemental genre complexes but can unfold as genre simplexes through multiple layers of embedded genres in their generic stages. This research thus complements and extends existing research on the analysis and representation of lengthy university assignments in SFL.

The paper is organized as follows. §2 reviews relevant research on business reports. §3 introduces the theoretical foundations underpinning this study. §4 presents a detailed analysis of the generic structure of a high-scoring undergraduate business country report from a particulate perspective. §5 complements the genre analysis with a presentation of the business country report from an axial perspective on text structuring principles. The findings of these analyses demonstrate that despite their length these texts do not unfold in a univariate serial structure as genre complexes. Instead, they are genre simplexes whose multivariate structure unfolds in stages. This paper will conclude with the argument that embedded genres, while considered a “relatively rare phenomenon” in current SFL research (Martin 2012: 002), play a fundamental role in building the depth of business country reports and enabling texts of this length to grow bigger than a page through multiple layers of embedding.

## **2 Research on business genres**

The research literature on business writing and workplace genres covers a wide range of approaches. Business-related genres have received

considerable attention particularly in the fields of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (the latter focusing specifically on academic contexts; see Hyland & Hamp-Lyons 2002 and Hamp-Lyons 2011 for an overview). Most ESP research on business genres tends to focus on analyses of schematic structures, episodes, rhetorical moves as well as recurring stages within genres (see e.g. Backhouse et al. 1993; Bhatia 1993; 2000; Swales 2004; Zhu 2004; Yeung 2007; Bargiela-Chiappini 2009; Flowerdew & Wan 2010; Nathan 2013). Analyses of the genre structure (or rather, the rhetorical structure) seem to be based on major headings and sections of these reports (e.g. Introduction, Findings, etc.); however, the explicit criteria for identifying the rhetorical function of text segments, i.e. what linguistic resources they are realised through, often remains unclear in these studies.

SFL-based studies that focus on the application of standard analytical business frameworks such as the SWOT or PEST(LE), for example, the analyses of business reports by Stenglin et al. (2014) and Shrestha (2017), are of particular interest for this project.<sup>1</sup> Since both studies reveal the overall global structure of business reports, they provide a useful first step for generic analyses of business country reports. However, they do not reveal all the genres that can realise the different sections of these reports. Accordingly, a more detailed genre analysis is necessary in order to discover the whole range of different types of elemental genre from different genre families that appear in these texts. Nesi & Gardner's (2012: 173) framework classifies business reports as a kind of *apprenticeship* genre, whose purpose is to either find solutions to "complex" and "ill-structured" problems as in case study reports or present well-reasoned arguments to demonstrate business decision-making. § 4 will demonstrate that the country reports analysed for this study are in fact apprenticeship genres which present well-reasoned arguments: their primary goal is to convince the reader about the viability of investments rather than offer solutions to business problems.

In order to make principled decisions about the *naming* of typical business genres, it is useful to consider what these names are based on, i.e. whether they are to be shared within professional business contexts or within a community of linguists studying these text types. Nesi & Gardner (2012) and Zhu (2004) point out that the naming of these genres as "business reports"

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<sup>1</sup> *SWOT* stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. In frameworks similar to PEST(LE), the order of factors might change, e.g. STEP, STEEPLE.

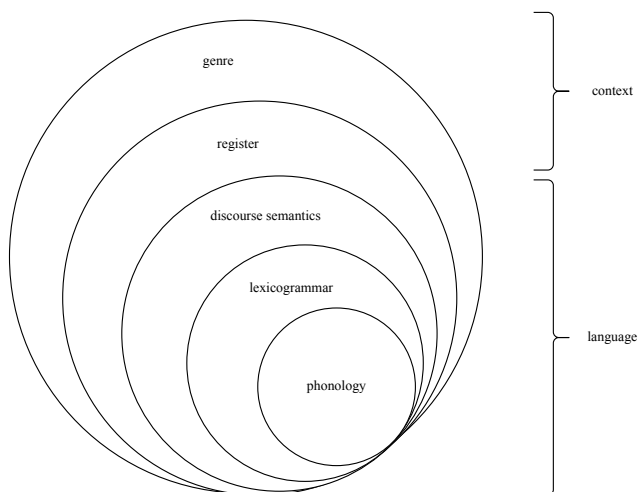
often relies on the canonical *professional* and *academic* rather than *linguistic* naming of these texts. This article will show in § 4 that the country report for example cannot be named “country report genre” because it is not a report from the perspective of SFL-informed genre analysis but an analytical discussion, i. e. an arguing genre.

### 3 Theoretical foundations: Systemic Functional Linguistics

#### 3.1 Theorising genre from a systemic-functional perspective

The theoretical framework underpinning this paper is Systemic Functional Linguistics that treats language as a social semiotic, “a meaning-making resource” (Halliday 1978; 1979; 1985; Martin 1992; Halliday & Matthiessen 1999; 2004). This research draws on Martin’s (1992) stratified model of context and language (Figure 1). Martin’s model theorises genre as “recurrent configurations of meaning” unfolding in stages (which are themselves recurrent configurations of meaning) (Martin & Rose 2008: 230; Rose & Martin 2012: 47) across language and attendant modalities of communication in a culture (Martin 2014b: 309). For Martin, “genre is a pattern of register patterns” (2014a: 14), i. e. of the register variables of field, tenor and mode. In Martin’s stratified model of genre, *field* refers to social activity, *tenor* to social relations, and *mode* to the amount of work language is doing in a more or less multimodal text (Martin & Rose 2008). Because language is *functional*, i. e. it shapes and is shaped by *social* functions (Halliday 1969; 1976; 2003), it is organised *metafunctionally*: field, tenor and mode are associated with the ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions respectively (Halliday 2009: 62).

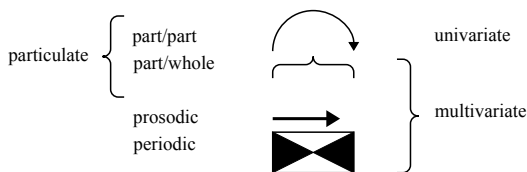
In contrast to formalist grammars, SFL privileges paradigmatic over syntagmatic relations and conceptualises language as a system network of choices rather than a set of grammatical rules (Martin 1992; 2013). The system network will be of crucial importance in this paper for modelling the options that account for the generic structure of business country reports at the stratum of genre. As this paper is concerned with different types of structure in relation to text structuring principles in business country reports, Halliday’s work on types of structure (1981; 1985; 2002a) and Martin’s early work on analysing text structuring principles in “big texts” (1994; 1995; 1996) provide crucial guiding principles for this research.



**Figure 1.** Martin's stratified context plane (adapted from Martin 2014a: 14)

### 3.2 Evolution of SFL work on types of structure

It is important to note that genre systems are not metafunctionally organised but realised *through* different types of structure (Martin 1996). For Halliday (2002a: 202–212), experiential meanings activate *part/whole* constituent-like, *multivariate* structures (meanings construed as segments/constituents which together construe the structure as a “whole”, i.e. a closed, bounded structure), logical meanings are part of ideational meanings that activate “part/part” logical recursive or *univariate* structures (i.e. open-ended iterative structures involving *the same* variable), interpersonal meanings activate *prosodic* structures (meanings saturating/colouring other units of meanings), and textual meanings activate culminative *periodic* structures (meanings construed as waves). In terms of *representation*, experiential structures are constituent structures of *wholes*; therefore, multivariate structure is traditionally represented by constituency trees. Logical meanings realised by univariate structures (Halliday 1981) are represented by interdependency chains (Halliday 1981: 36; 2002a: 203). Halliday's metafunctions and types of structure, i.e. types of meaning related to their realisations, are consolidated by Martin (1996: 40, following Halliday



**Figure 2.** Halliday's proposed notations for types of structure (adapted from Martin 1996: 41 based on Halliday 1985)

2002a). Figure 2 sums up Martin's (1996) reading of Halliday's proposed notations (1985) for the representation of the three types of structure reviewed above.

Since this research explores the recurring configurations of meanings that construe the generic structure of business country reports, the following section reviews work on elemental genres from an SFL perspective.

### 3.3 SFL research on elemental genres

Martin's theory of genre as an additional level of abstraction beyond register was used to identify and provide descriptions of genres in Australian school settings in the 1980s. Based on the linguistic resources patterning into recognisable phases and generic stages, key primary school genres and secondary genres in Australian schools were mapped into different genre families according to their social purpose in a wide range of disciplinary areas (see e.g. Halliday & Martin 1993; Coffin 1996; 1997; van Leeuwen & Humphrey 1996; Christie & Martin 1997; Christie & Derewianka 2008; Martin & Rose 2008; Christie 2012; and Rose & Martin 2012). Rose & Martin (2012: 128) categorise three broader genre families based on their social purpose as *engaging*, *informing* and *evaluating*.<sup>2</sup> As §4 will show below, genres with the social function of *evaluating* prove to be of most significance for business country reports: namely, the discussion, exposition and challenge genres from the arguing type of evaluative genres.

<sup>2</sup> With respect to the *informing* genres, reports and explanations are also relevant for this study: specifically, one type of report genre (the descriptive report) and one type of explanation genre (the consequential explanation) were also found in the data texts. However, since only one instance of a descriptive report and relatively few instantiations of consequential explanation genres have been found across the entire data set, their review is beyond the scope of this paper.

**Table 1.** Typical staging and realisation of arguing genres (adapted from Martin & Rose 2008: 134)<sup>3</sup>

Genre [staging]	Informal description	Key linguistic features (Halliday 1994; Martin 1992)
exposition – one sided; promote [Thesis ^ Arguments]	problematic interpretation that needs justifying	internal conjunctions keying on thesis
challenge – one sided; rebut [Position ^ Rebuttal]	someone else's problematic interpretation that needs demolishing	internal conjunctions keying on thesis
discussion – multi-sided; adjudicate [Issue ^ Sides ^ Resolution]	more than one interpretation considered	internal conjunctions keying on thesis; & internal organisation of points of view

Arguing genres do not unfold chronologically but rhetorically. Three main types of arguing genres have been identified and grouped into *one-sided* versus *multi-sided* depending on whether they are organised around one or multiple positions (Martin & Rose 2008). According to this classification, expositions and challenges are one-sided, discussions are multi-sided. Canonical expositions typically promote a position without introducing alternative positions into the discourse. Similar to expositions, challenges are also one-sided as their social purpose is to “demolish” a position. Discussions on the other hand are multi-sided because they introduce several points of view on an issue, which will be negatively or positively appraised; one of the positions will typically be more dominant (Martin & Rose 2008). The typical stages, social functions and linguistic features are summed up in Table 1.

The identification of genre families in SFL research was mostly based on analyses of primary and secondary school texts. However, most university assignments tertiary students are required to write – such as the country report – are much longer texts, which could be from 1,500 (e.g. essays) up to

<sup>3</sup> In SFL the caret sign ^ is used to indicate that the elements are realised in a sequence in the structure.



4,000–5,000 words (e.g. research reports). In fact, a common argument in studies focusing on tertiary assignments is that students need to move from controlling genres learnt in high school to writing longer and more complex texts at university. Examining knowledge-building in the field of undergraduate biology, Humphrey & Hao (2013) map key genres in core biology courses, for example, explanation genres within the lab report macrogenre. Hao (2015) points out the complexity involved in producing tertiary assignments and its implications for analysing the various genres, e.g. procedural recounts within research reports, that play a role in construing these texts. Humphrey's (2013) work on biology textbooks arrives at the same conclusion. Similarly, Drury's (2006) research on short-answer tasks in undergraduate first-year biology identified a range of elemental genres such as reports, explanations and expositions. Humphrey & Dreyfus (2012) analyse approximately 2,000-word postgraduate *interpretive genres* in the field of applied linguistics. These texts were found to have a Research context ^ Results/Discussion ^ Conclusion staging. Even though not stated explicitly in Humphrey & Dreyfus' (2012) paper, this finding is significant since it implies that despite their length, these linguistic interpretation essays are structured as elemental genres. The researchers focus on smaller units of analysis such as phases and moves within these stages in order to explore more delicate linguistic resources linguistics students draw on to "make a point". This research is significant because it can provide a model for future research on longer tertiary assignments.

Based on analyses of literacy needs for constructing valued disciplinary knowledge in tertiary contexts, there have been continued calls for explicit, scaffolded genre-based instruction in higher education contexts (see e.g. Hood 2004; 2008; 2010; Jones 2004; Drury 2006; 2011; Dreyfus et al. 2008; Coffin & Donohue 2014; Humphrey & Economou 2015; Humphrey & Macnaught 2015).<sup>4</sup> While important (as demonstrated by the research interest in tertiary writing discussed above), research on long tertiary assignments can be challenging due to the time-consuming nature of manual analyses that SFL-based text analysis requires (Martin 1992: 571). Each of the studies reviewed above has highlighted that compared to primary and high school genres, university assignments demonstrate far more complexity; therefore,

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<sup>4</sup> See especially Humphrey et al. (2010), Dreyfus et al. (2015) and Martin (2011) on the SLATE (Scaffolding Literacy in Academic and Tertiary Environments) project; Gardner & Nesi (2013) and Nesi & Gardner (2012) on corpus-assisted genre analyses of university student writing in the U.K.; and Ravelli & Ellis (2004) on analyses of undergraduate academic writing.

researching successful models of tertiary assignments remains an important area for research. The following sections revisit Martin's question of how texts "get bigger than a page" (1994: 29) and review SFL research focusing on texts that may combine or include not only one genre but also several genres in a single text, such as the tertiary assignments studied in this research.

### 3.4 "How big texts grow bigger than a page": complexing versus embedding

Martin's early work on text structuring principles in "big texts" has established that longer texts "get bigger than a page" (1994: 29) in two typical ways: complexing or embedding (1994; 1995). The combination of several elemental genres into a univariate serial structure has been termed *serial expansion* or *complexing*. The elemental genres combined within a text represent the "parts" in the univariate sequence (termed *linear ordering* by Halliday 1981: 29). The types of texts that combine "familiar elemental genres such as recount, report, explanation, exposition and so on" (Martin 1997: 16) have been termed *genre complexes* or *macrogenres* (Martin 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997; 2002; 2012; for detailed discussions see also Christie 1997; 2002; Jordens 2002; Muntigl 2004; 2006; Martin & Rose 2008). The elemental genres that make up a macrogenre are linked together by the logico-semantic relationships of *expansion*, i.e. linking clauses to other clauses within clause complexes, and *projection*, i.e. the reporting or quoting of speech or thought (Halliday 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). Building on Halliday's (1985; 2002b) work Martin (1994) has found that if "a text is like a clause" (Halliday 2002b: 234), then "big texts" that are macrogenres are proportional to clause complexes.

One challenge of analysing longer texts arises from questions such as what counts as a macrogenre and whether all big texts are macrogenres.<sup>5</sup> This might lead to terminological confusion and has implications for replicability. In fact, the automatic treatment of longer texts as macrogenres may pose a challenge

<sup>5</sup> The notions of *hybrid genres* and *genre mixing/blending* have also been applied to explain the structure of longer texts. Related work in SFL explores hybridity (see e.g. Miller & Bayley 2015) and register mixing or hybridity of registers (see Matthiessen & Teruya 2015). However, simply because texts may include different kinds of genres, it does not mean that they are hybrids; instead of mixed genres they can be referred to as "mixed texts" (Martin 2002; emphasis mine). Indeed, the country reports analysed for this study – despite their inclusion of several genres from the arguing, explaining and reporting genre families – are *not* mixed or hybrid genres but *mixed texts* that expand their meaning potential through embedded genres.

for *analysis* and *representation*, i.e. maintaining descriptive conventions and extending work in our field. Due to some inconsistencies in the SFL literature and our insufficient understanding of long tertiary assignments, it was thus necessary to revisit Martin's description of the occurrence of embedded genres as "a relatively rare phenomenon" (Martin 2012: 002) and examine the role they might play in expanding the meaning potential of big texts.

Apart from combining genres into a serial univariate structure, longer texts can also grow bigger through *embedding* genres. This means that elemental genres can function as stages of another genre in a multivariate structure. Analogising from the structure of the clause, macrogenres were found to be proportional to clause complexes and elemental genres proportional to clauses. Following Halliday's (1994; Matthiessen & Halliday 2009) conceptualisation of the fractal properties of language, Martin (1995) extended this principle to embedding: the same properties of language operating at larger scales can be observed on smaller scales (Martin 2008), i.e. all levels of language. Therefore, if an elemental genre is proportional to the clause, then an embedded genre is proportional to the embedded clause:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{macrogenre : clause complex ::} \\ \quad \text{genre : clause ::} \\ \text{embedded genre : embedded clause} \end{array}$$

### 3.5 Analytical process and the data

Since texts can also grow bigger through embedding, this paper explores the nature of embedded genres in building long texts. Identification of expositions, discussions and challenges from the arguing genre family is based on the descriptions of arguing genres outlined in Martin & Rose (2008: 134). The specific genres embedded in the texts were analysed as configurations of linguistic resources selected from the discourse semantic systems of PERIODICITY (i.e. information flow and texture, the "rhythm of discourse"), CONNEXION (i.e. connecting events and processes through resources of conjunctive relationships), IDEATION (i.e. representing experience, the content of a discourse) and APPRAISAL (i.e. the language of evaluation, negotiating attitudes) (Martin 1992; Martin & Rose 2003).<sup>6</sup> Genre stage boundaries were confirmed based on the resources of CONNEXION.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed presentation of discourse semantic analyses see Szenes (2021).

The data for this research comprise approximately 3,000 to 3,500-word business country reports prepared for a core senior interdisciplinary unit of study in international business at a metropolitan Australian university. Students were assigned a business scenario, based on which they were to select a country for market analysis. Using the PESTLE framework, i.e. the external business environments of the selected market, as the assigned methodology, students were then required to research relevant factors from the political, economic, socio-cultural, technological, legal and ethical external environments in which companies and businesses operate (Morrison 2006) and conclude their reports with a recommendation for or against investment. 64 students consented to the collection and analysis of their marked country reports after securing ethics approval for the project by the Human Research Ethics Committee. Due to the time-consuming nature of SFL-informed manual text analyses and the length of the texts the ten highest scoring assignments were analysed in order to identify *successful* student assignments that met the complex literacy demands of writing the country report. The identifying details of students were removed. No distinction was made between local and international high-scoring student texts, which were then numbered as Texts 1 to 10 and renamed based on the name of the target market selected for analysis, e.g. “Canada Report”, “China Report”. Two of these ten texts, the Canada Report and the China Report, were used as models of exemplary business country reports in an academic literacy intervention project in the unit (Stenglin et al. 2009).

For reasons of space, only the generic structure of the China Report will be illustrated in full in the following section below, while the other high-scoring texts analysed for this study will be reviewed from a synoptic perspective to describe overarching patterns and generic structure potential.

## **4 Construing depth through three layers of embedding: the generic structure of the China Report**

### **4.1 The superstructure of the China Report**

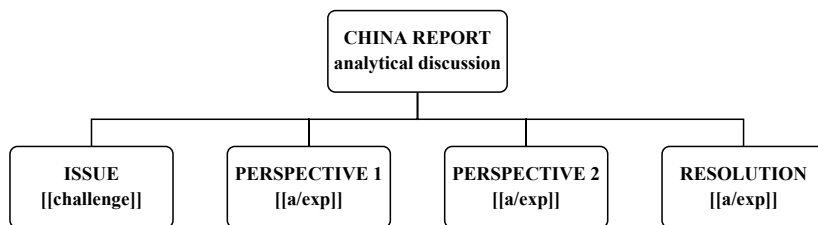
Generically the China Report is an elemental analytical discussion whose social purpose is to evaluate the viability of investment and make a proposal about whether the Australian company should enter the emerging market of China to export solar panels. This text achieves its social purpose by

moving through four distinct stages: the **ISSUE**, two **PERSPECTIVES** and a final **RESOLUTION**.<sup>7</sup> The opening **ISSUE** stage functions to put forward a general proposition as to whether the Chinese energy market is conducive to producing and selling solar panels for the Australian company conducting the market analysis. The **PERSPECTIVE 1** puts forward a proposition in favour of investment (or a canonical argument for) by arguing throughout the stage that the economic, political, technological and socio-cultural environments of China provide opportunities for the Australian firm conducting this market analysis. These opportunities include PESTLE factors such as market size, economic growth, government policies that support the renewable energy industry and China's collectivist culture.<sup>8</sup> The **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage on the other hand is concerned with an analysis of risk factors selected from PESTLE. It functions to promote the proposition (or a canonical argument against) that poverty and economic inequality, domestic competition and protectionism, a weak legal framework, corruption and Confucianism, and weak IPR laws present economic, technological, political, legal and socio-cultural risks for investment. The final **RESOLUTION** stage (the canonical conclusion and recommendation section of country reports) presents the conclusive recommendation that instead of eliminating the Chinese market from the list of viable markets to export solar panels to, the firm should continue further research.

The remainder of this paper will show that each stage of the superstructure of the China Report is realised by an elemental genre, which functions as a multivariate stage. Focusing on this ideational perspective, then, these stages of the analytical discussion can be represented as functional constituents or parts of a whole (cf. Martin 1994; 1995; 1996; Halliday 2002a). As reviewed in § 3.4 above, when an elemental genre is downranked to the level of a genre stage in a multivariate structure, it becomes an embedded genre (indicated by the double brackets similarly to the representation of embedded clauses). As illustrated by the constituency representation in Figure 3, the **ISSUE** stage is realised by a [[challenge]]; both **PERSPECTIVES** and the final

<sup>7</sup> Following SFL notational conventions, the names of individual genres will be written in lower case (e.g. discussion) and their functional stages in capital letters (e.g. Issue). Bold capital letters will be used throughout this paper in order to distinguish the stages of the superstructure of the country reports (e.g. **PERSPECTIVE 2** versus Argument 1 of an embedded [[ [analytical exposition]]]).

<sup>8</sup> In this paper *factor* in lower case refers to components of the PESTLE framework to distinguish *Factor* with a capital F as a stage in a factorial explanation in SFL.



**Figure 3.** Embedded genres realising the generic structure of the China Report

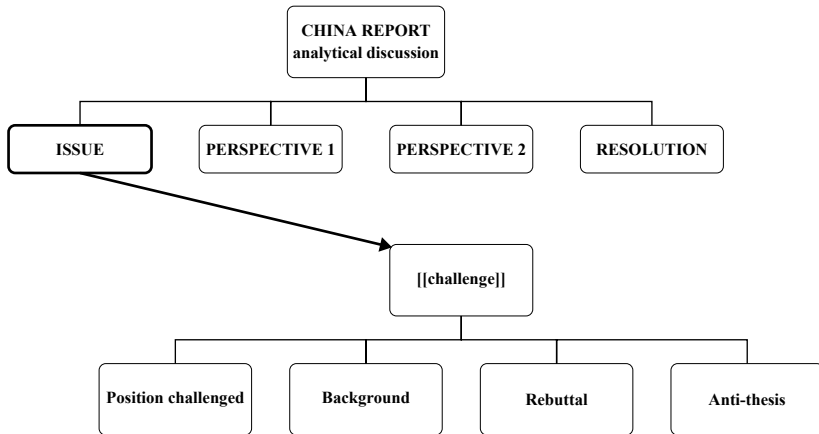
**RESOLUTION** are realised by [[analytical exposition]] genres.

The kind of constituency representation exemplified by the structure of the China Report in Figure 3 implies a whole, realised by the analytical discussion of the China Report that can be broken down into its parts, or stages. As noted in § 3.4, Martin's early work on macrogenres (1994; 1995) reveals that the functional segments of a genre could in fact be construed as embedded wholes. In other words, a genre, which is a whole in itself, could potentially realise a stage in a genre and become one of its parts or constituents. As it will be demonstrated below, this kind of embedding happens in the business country reports analysed in this study – where, for instance, a challenge genre is made to function as a stage in an analytical discussion. The following section will illustrate how the stages of the analytical discussion of the China Report draw on embedding to expand their meaning potential and achieve their social purpose.

#### 4.2 Defeating a position: embedded [[challenge]] in the ISSUE stage of the China Report

The opening **ISSUE** stage is concerned with the proposition as to whether the Chinese energy market is conducive for the company as far as producing and selling solar panels is concerned. As shown in Figure 4, this stage is realised by a canonical elemental challenge genre, which moves through three obligatory stages (a **Position challenged**, a **Rebuttal Arguments** and an **Anti-thesis**) and an optional **Background** stage to achieve its social purpose. From a top-down perspective, it is clear that these stages are parts of a whole, and together they construe the whole of an elemental challenge genre.

However, it can be seen in Figure 4 that this challenge genre does not stand on its own in a sequence of genres; rather, it becomes a part of the



**Figure 4.** An embedded [[challenge]] providing the **ISSUE** stage of the China Report

superstructure of the whole China Report. By having been down-ranked to the level of a genre stage, the whole has become a part; this means that it now functions as the **ISSUE** stage of the analytical discussion that realises the China Report. In other words, by taking the place of a part it has become an embedded [[challenge]] genre functioning as a multivariate stage. Figure 4 outlines this part/whole staging as a multivariate structure where each part functions to play a different role (as signalled by the multivariate labelling). It is important to mention that compared to a canonical analytical discussion genre that moves directly through various Side or Perspective stages (Martin & Rose 2008) to reach a final Resolution stage, the **ISSUE** stage of the China Report does not merely introduce an issue. After identifying potential opportunities and risks, it also previews the final recommendation by evaluating how likely the risks are; and it concludes that the firm should invest in more research before committing to investment, as in Table 2. Experientially, then, it can be concluded that the embedded arguing [[challenge]] genre realises the **ISSUE** stage; it develops the depth of the stage in order make room for another layer of experiential meaning potential.

Thus, it is through the structure of a [[challenge]] that an initial favourable position on investment is defeated by a negative assessment of the Chinese marketplace. Setting up a preferred position that will be further scaffolded throughout the **PERSPECTIVE** stages to be presented as the final

**Table 2.** The ISSUE stage in the analytical discussion of the China Report

<b>ISSUE</b> [[challenge]]	Text
<b>Position challenged</b>	<p>INTRODUCTION</p> <p>In the search for a viable market to export solar panels, the emerging market of China seems at first glance to be overwhelmingly attractive.</p>
<b>Background</b>	<p>With a population of 1.3 billion (Chinese Statistical Yearbook 2007) and a growth rate averaging above 10% in the past decade, China is now the world's fourth largest economy (Dorsch 2008; Lambe 2008). Such growth has led to China's energy consumption escalating to the point at which it now accounts for 10.8 percent of world consumption, surpassed only by the US (Xorte 2008). Increased consumption of energy, compounded by its inefficient use, has, moreover, resulted in a rapidly worsening environmental crisis: eight out of the ten most polluted cities can be found in China (Cavusgil, Knight and Riesenberger 2008). The need for renewable energy solutions is clear and urgent, and the Chinese Government has certainly set ambitious renewable energy targets.</p>
<b>Rebuttal Arguments</b>	<p>This report commences by presenting and evaluating the key – largely economic – opportunities offered by this market. Yet at the same time, there are considerable risks which suggest that a foreign exporter such as ourselves would face significant obstacles in trying to realise these opportunities. This report then goes on to assess these risks, which are argued to be largely political in nature.</p>
<b>Anti-thesis</b>	<p>While the concluding recommendation of this report is that we should continue to invest the time and resources into further investigation of the Chinese market, it is clear at this stage of our analysis that a case for entering China is yet to be established.</p>



**Table 3.** A synoptic overview of the [[challenge]] providing the **ISSUE** stage of the China Report

GENRE STAGES	[[embedded genre stages]]
<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>[[challenge]]</b> <b>Position challenged</b> <b>Background</b> <b>Rebuttal Arguments</b> <b>Anti-thesis</b>

recommendation in the final **RESOLUTION** stage is one of the features that all high-scoring texts in this data set share. Table 3 provides a synoptic overview of the generic structure of this **ISSUE** stage.

The opening **ISSUE** stage of the China Report is followed by two **PERSPECTIVE** stages before reaching the final **RESOLUTION**. Both **PERSPECTIVES** are realised by embedded [[analytical exposition]] genres. Canonical expositions scaffold a position through a number of arguments, which may or may not be followed up by the reiteration of the thesis promoted by the exposition (Coffin 1996; Martin & Rose 2008). The genre analysis of the China Report found that the two **PERSPECTIVE** stages following the **ISSUE** promote one particular position each to arrive at the final recommendation: **PERSPECTIVE 1** scaffolds a pro- and **PERSPECTIVE 2** an anti-investment position through the staging of expositions. The following section will discuss in detail how these **PERSPECTIVE** stages draw on elemental arguing genres to build the depth of genre simplexes that are significantly longer than a page.

#### 4.3 Promoting a position through multiple embedding: building depth in the **PERSPECTIVE 1** stage of the China Report

The **PERSPECTIVE 1** stage promotes a position *in favour of* investment in the Chinese solar energy market. It instantiates an embedded [[analytical exposition]] genre that moves through four stages. As summarised in Table 4, its **Thesis** puts forwards the writer's pro-investment position that China's market size, economic growth and the government's economic policies provide mainly economic opportunities, supported by three **Arguments**.

**Table 4.** The **PERSPECTIVE 1** stage of the China Report: an analytical exposition

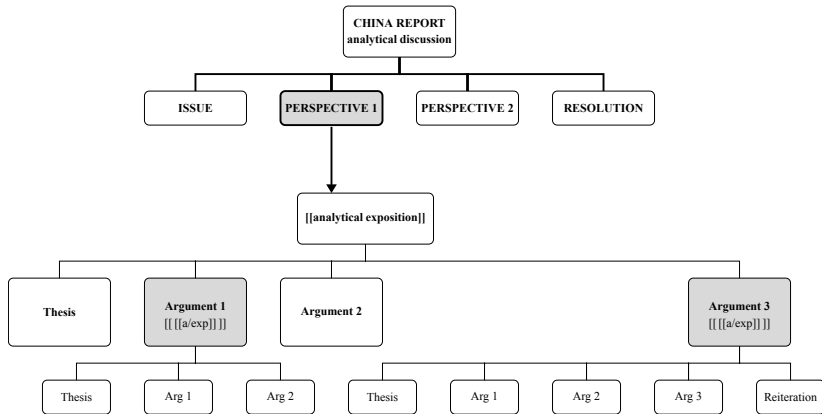
<b>analytical exposition</b>	Text OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Thesis</b>	China's market size and growth and the government's economic reforms present economic opportunities for investment.
<b>Argument 1</b>	Growing purchasing power parity signals market potential for solar panels in China.
<b>Argument 2</b>	Demand for solar power in China is expected to increase as government policies support renewable energy.
<b>Argument 3</b>	China's collectivist culture and community awareness about environmental degradation should therefore encourage investment in solar panels.

In the following sections, a closer look at the **Argument** stages will show that two of these are in fact construed by elemental arguing genres. For example, **Argument 1** is an analytical exposition genre, which achieves its social purpose by moving through three stages, a Thesis and two Arguments:

Thesis ^ Argument 1 ^ Argument 2

By functioning as parts, the three multivariate stages introduced above construe the whole of an elemental analytical exposition genre – as captured by the constituency representation in Figure 5. Accordingly, following the convention of representing embedded clauses with double brackets in grammar, the two embedded arguing genres at the bottom layer that provide the **Argument** stages are represented as [[[analytical exposition]]] for instance; and the analytical exposition realising the **PERSPECTIVE 1** is represented as [[analytical exposition]]. Thus, this double bracketing indicates the status of each embedded genre in the overall superstructure: the more brackets, the lower the order of the genre in the overall multivariate superstructure. The constituency representation in Figure 5 shows that the four multivariate stages of **PERSPECTIVE 1** expand their meaning potential through two layers of embedded genres. **Argument 1** and **3** are both second-order [[[analytical exposition]]] genres.

The two expositions are the only second-order embedded genres in **PERSPECTIVE 1**. By taking on the function of **Arguments**, these arguing genres function as embedded genres – as indicated by the double square



**Figure 5.** Two layers of embedded arguing genres in the **PERSPECTIVE 1** stage of the China Report

brackets [[ [[...]] ] ] in Table 5. In order to provide a full view of how depth is constructed in **PERSPECTIVE 1**, Table 5 shows the full generic staging of the two layers of embedded genres that have been identified in this stage.

Thus, the writer's overall position about the opportunities provided by the economic environment of China has been staged as an embedded [[analytical exposition]] genre, which unfolds through four multivariate stages. When considering the function of these stages in relation to each other, this section has demonstrated the crucial role they play in building depth in the superstructure of the genre simplex of the China Report. This is consolidated in the synoptic overview in Table 6: a snapshot of the **PERSPECTIVE 1** stage as construed by two layers of embedded arguing genres.

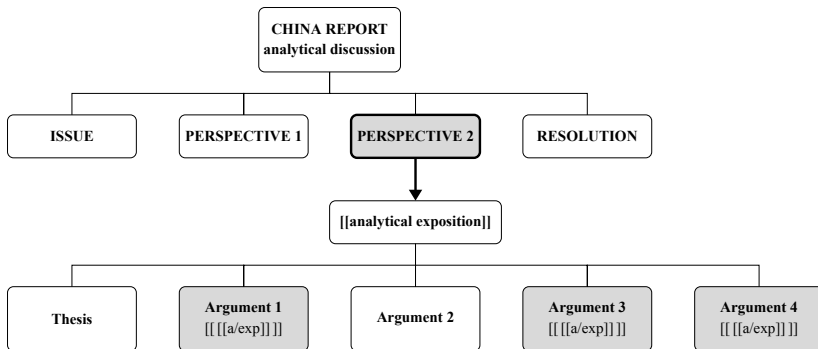
It is the **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage of the China Report where the most layers of embeddings were found in this data set. The following section will illustrate how the depth of this stage is built through three layers of embedded arguing genres, such as challenges, analytical discussions and expositions, and an explaining genre, a consequential explanation.

**Table 5.** Embedded arguing genres functioning as multivariate stages to build the depth of the **PERSPECTIVE 1** stage of the China Report

<b>PERSPECTIVE 1</b> [[analytical exposition]]	Text OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Thesis</b>	China's market size, economic growth and the government's economic reforms present economic opportunities for investment
<b>Argument 1</b> [[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	<u>Market Size &amp; Growth</u>
Thesis	despite concerns that economic growth may slow down, China's economy is expected to remain stable due to increasing economic prosperity brought about by new economic reforms
Argument 1	the market potential of China is signaled by growing purchasing power parity (PPP) and the rise in private consumption and disposable incomes
Argument 2	increased government spending on social services has resulted in a stronger social safety net, which provides market potential for renewable energy due to <u>greater spending power</u>
<b>Argument 2</b>	<u>Political and Cultural Support for Renewable Energy Options</u>
	China's economic growth together with low energy efficiency has resulted in an environmental crisis, which will drive an increased demand for solar energy
<b>Argument 3</b> [[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
Thesis	China's collectivist culture would be compatible with a green movement...
Argument 1	... because the needs of the wider community are considered before the individual
Argument 2	... because social harmony is achieved by social commitment and hierarchy
Argument 3	... because cultural practices can impact consumption patterns
Reiteration of Thesis	... because despite the cost of solar energy community awareness about the environmental crisis should encourage change in energy consumption habits

**Table 6.** Synoptic view of the generic structure of the [[analytical exposition]] realising the **PERSPECTIVE 1** stage of the China Report

GENRE STAGES	[[embedding]]	[[ [[embedding]] ]]
<b>PERSPECTIVE 1</b>	<b>[[analytical exposition]]</b>	
	<b>Thesis</b>	
	<b>Argument 1</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]
	<b>Argument 2</b>	
	<b>Argument 3</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]



**Figure 6.** Second-order [[ [[analytical expositions]] ]] realising **Arguments** in the **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage of the China Report

#### 4.4 Building depth through three layers of embedding in the **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage of the China Report

The **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage analyses the economic, technological, political, legal and socio-cultural external business environments of the Chinese solar energy market. The constituency representation in Figure 6 shows that generically it is an embedded [[analytical exposition]]. Its **Thesis** contra investment is scaffolded through a series of four **Argument** stages (without a final **Reiteration** stage). Three of these **Arguments** (1, 3 and 4) are second-order [[ [[analytical exposition]] ]] genres as shown in Figure 6.

Table 7 shows the generic staging of **PERSPECTIVE 2**. Each of the four **Argument** stages that scaffold the **Thesis** is concerned with PESTLE factors

**Table 7.** Second order embedded arguing genres functioning as multivariate stages to build the depth of the **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage of the China Report

<b>PERSPECTIVE 2</b> [[[analytical exposition]]]	Text RISKS
<b>Thesis</b>	risks such as the rise in inequality, social unrest and political instability; protectionism, the absence of the rule of law and insufficient intellectual property protection may present our company with prohibitive costs and barriers
<b>Argument 1</b> [[[analytical exposition]]]	<u>Poverty and Economic Inequality</u>
Thesis	the risks associated with economic disparity place a limit on market size and growth
Argument 1	economic development has resulted in growing income inequality, especially between coastal and rural regions
Argument 2 [[[analytical exposition]]]	extreme poverty and the prohibitive cost of solar energy limit China's consumer market size
Argument 3 [[[consequential explanation]]]	poverty brings the threat of social unrest, which may erode the country's political stability
Reiteration of Thesis	growing economic inequality among regions and the rising unemployment in cities may create a challenging environment for foreign businesses
<b>Argument 2</b>	<u>Domestic Competition and Protectionism</u>
	due to more than 150 Chinese producers of photovoltaic cells, intense local competition may present a risk to the company
<b>Argument 3</b> [[[analytical exposition]]]	<u>Weak Legal Framework and Corruption</u>
Thesis	market-based economic development is undermined by corruption still prevalent in many business transactions
Argument 1	corruption is a deeply embedded practice which could only be eradicated by fundamental political reform, due to the lack of any independent system of accountability
Argument 2	China's cultural practices arising out of Confucianism could make difficult for the company to deal with bribery
Argument 3 [[[challenge]]]	despite the government's attempts to eradicate corruption, a lack of transparency and conflicting regulations could pose a risk to the company
Argument 4	corruption is a result of the weak legal system, which is tied to political influence
Reiteration of Thesis	the weak legal system and absence of rule of law pose a serious threat to the company
<b>Argument 4</b> [[[analytical exposition]]]	<u>Weak Intellectual Property Rights</u>
Thesis	local protectionism and weak law enforcement has resulted in serious intellectual property rights (IPR) infringements
Argument 1	the government's attempts to combat intellectual property crime are insufficient
Argument 2 [[[analytical exposition]]]	China's cultural and political practices and weak IPR protection laws can pose significant operational risk to the company

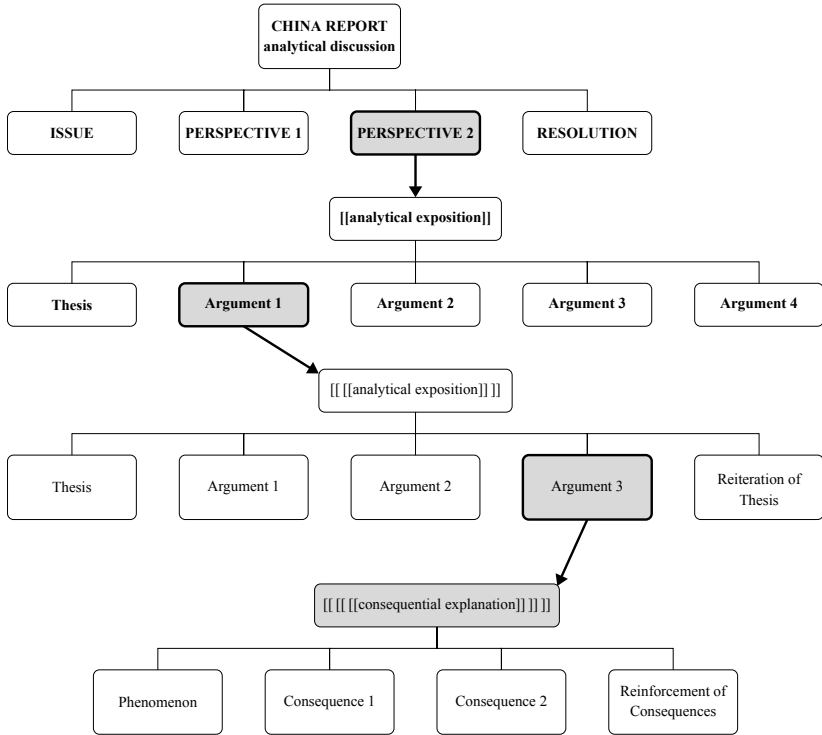
selected from the economic, political and legal environments. These factors (poverty and economic inequality, domestic competition and protectionism, a weak legal framework, corruption and Confucianism, and weak IPR laws) are all evaluated as potential risk factors for investing in solar power in China through the staging of first- and second-order embedded [[ [[analytical expositions]] ]].

The presentation so far has shown that two layers of embedded arguing genres construe the depth of some **Argument** stages in the China Report. The following section takes a closer look at the **Argument** stages realised by second-order [[ [[exposition]] ]] genres. The analysis found that these genres further embed third-order genres made to function as their Argument stages such as [[ [[[[exposition]] ]]] and [[ [[[[challenge]] ]]] genres that construe a further layer of meaning potential in the China Report. Apart from these arguing genres, a fourth text type was identified from the family of explaining genres: a third-order [[ [[[[consequential explanation]] ]]]].

#### 4.4.1 Explaining a position: third-order [[ [[[[consequential explanation]] ]]] in the PERSPECTIVE 2 stage of the China Report

A closer analysis of **Argument 1** of the **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage of the China Report reveals an instance of a consequential explanation from the genre family of explanations. The Argument 3 stage of **Argument 1** investigates economic factors from a political perspective to prove that the threat of social unrest will have a negative impact on investment. The constituency representation in Figure 7 illustrates the generic staging of the text as it moves through four multivariate stages, a Phenomenon, two Consequences and a Reinforcement of Consequences stage. It is realised by a third-order text type, a [[ [[[[consequential explanation]] ]]]], indicated by the triple bracketing.

Canonical consequential explanations unfold through several *Effect* or *Consequence* stages in order to explain the impacts and consequences of various factors or phenomena. A similarity these text types share with arguing genres is that they unfold rhetorically rather than chronologically (Coffin 2006; Martin & Rose 2008). The opening obligatory stage of a consequential explanation is termed *Input* in the Disadvantaged School Program materials (Coffin 1996) and *Input* or *Phenomenon* in Martin & Rose (2008). For the China Report the term *Phenomenon* is more appropriate than *Input* since it introduces the economic factor of poverty as an already existing significant



**Figure 7.** A third-order [[ [[ [[consequential explanation]] ]]] providing Argument 3 of Argument 1 of the PERSPECTIVE 2 stage of the China Report

risk for investment. This stage sets up the *result* of widespread poverty (*the threat of social unrest*) as a risk. This is followed by two Consequence stages that elaborate this Phenomenon: the Consequence 1 stage explains that this threat resulted in the government’s attempts to reduce poverty in rural areas; Consequence 2 shows urban poverty as another reason for social unrest. The final Reinforcement of Consequences stage concludes that these effects will reduce market potential if social unrest is a threat to China’s political stability. It is worth pointing out here that the evaluation of social unrest as a threat is achieved in this stage tacitly rather than overtly. The factor of political stability is considered the basis for development, a necessary condition for a company aiming to invest in China. While the nominal group



**Table 8.** The staging of a third-order [[ [[ [[consequential explanation]] ]]] in the **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage of the China Report

<b>PERSPECTIVE 2</b>	Text
<b>Argument 1</b>	<u>Poverty and Economic Inequality</u>
Argument 3	
[[ [[ [[consequential explanation]] ]]]	
Phenomenon	As well as constraining the size of the market, poverty brings with it the threat of social unrest.
Consequence 1	This has been acknowledged by the government's measures to redress rural poverty, which include an end to arbitrary taxes, the securing of farmers' land rights, and improved health and education (Batson 2008).
Consequence 2	Social unrest has also affected urban areas, where the restructuring of state-owned enterprises has led to large-scale redundancies and subsequent feelings of resentment towards the Government (Rosenberger 2007).
Reinforcement of Consequences	In the long term, inequality may erode the country's political stability, which until now has been the basis for China's development.

*political stability* contains a Classifier signalling which PESTLE environment the factor is chosen from, the Classifier *economic* is missing from the nominal group realising the factor of *development*. Even though the writer does not try to convince the reader through the structure of an arguing genre that the lack of political stability is an investment risk, Table 8 illustrates how the staging of this third-order [[ [[ [[consequential explanation]] ]]] scaffolds an anti-investment position from a *political* perspective that poverty would result in social unrest. The writer's analysis of an *economic* factor (*poverty*) is linked to other *political* factors, i. e. factors from another PESTLE environment (*social unrest, political stability*). Thus through the staging of a [[ [[ [[consequential explanation]] ]]] different factors from different PESTLE environments are related to each other in terms of their negative impact on investment. This text becomes a *third-order* embedded genre by taking on the function of the Argument in the second-order [[ [[ [analytical exposition]] ]]] realising **Argument 1**. Its status in the overall superstructure is indicated by the triple bracketing in Table 8. Table 9 highlights the total of four third-order embedded arguing and explaining genres (two expositions, a

**Table 9.** Embedded arguing and explaining genres functioning as multivariate stages to build the depth of the **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage of the China Report

<b>PERSPECTIVE 2</b> [[[analytical exposition]]]	Text RISKS
<b>Thesis</b>	risks such as the rise in inequality, social unrest and political instability; protectionism, the absence of the rule of law and insufficient intellectual property protection may present our company with prohibitive costs and barriers
<b>Argument 1</b> [[[analytical exposition]] ]]	<u>Poverty and Economic Inequality</u>
Thesis	the risks associated with economic disparity place a limit on market size and growth
Argument 1	economic development has resulted in growing income inequality, especially between coastal and rural regions
Argument 2 [[[ [analytical exposition]] ]]]	extreme poverty and the prohibitive cost of solar energy limit China's consumer market size
Argument 3 [[[ [consequential explanation]] ]]]	poverty brings the threat of social unrest, which may erode the country's political stability
Reiteration of Thesis	growing economic inequality among regions and the rising unemployment in cities may create a challenging environment for foreign businesses
<b>Argument 2</b>	<u>Domestic Competition and Protectionism</u>
	due to more than 150 Chinese producers of photovoltaic cells, intense local competition may present a risk to the company
<b>Argument 3</b> [[[analytical exposition]] ]]	<u>Weak Legal Framework and Corruption</u>
Thesis	market-based economic development is undermined by corruption still prevalent in many business transactions
Argument 1	corruption is a deeply embedded practice which could only be eradicated by fundamental political reform, due to the lack of any independent system of accountability
Argument 2	China's cultural practices arising out of Confucianism could make difficult for the company to deal with bribery
Argument 3 [[[ [challenge]] ]]]	despite the government's attempts to eradicate corruption, a lack of transparency and conflicting regulations could pose a risk to the company
Argument 4	corruption is a result of the weak legal system, which is tied to political influence
Reiteration of Thesis	the weak legal system and absence of rule of law pose a serious threat to the company
<b>Argument 4</b> [[[analytical exposition]] ]]	<u>Weak Intellectual Property Rights</u>
Thesis	local protectionism and weak law enforcement has resulted in serious intellectual property rights (IPR) infringements
Argument 1	the government's attempts to combat intellectual property crime are insufficient
Argument 2 [[[ [analytical exposition]] ]]]	China's cultural and political practices and weak IPR protection laws can pose significant operational risk to the company

**Table 10.** Synoptic view of the generic structure of the [[analytical exposition]] realising the **PERSPECTIVE 2** stage of the China Report

GENRE STAGES	[[embedding]]	[[ [[embedding]] ]]	[[ [[ [[embedding]] ] ] ]]
<b>PERSPECTIVE 2</b>	<b>[[analytical exposition]]</b>		
	<b>Thesis</b>		
	<b>Argument 1</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
		Argument 2	[[ [[ [[analytical exposition]] ] ] ]]
		Argument 3	[[ [[ [[consequential explanation]] ] ] ]]
	<b>Argument 2</b>		
	<b>Argument 3</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
		Argument 3	[[ [[ [[challenge]] ] ] ]]
	<b>Argument 4</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
		Argument 2	[[ [[ [[analytical exposition]] ] ] ]]

challenge and an explanation) that take on the function of Argument stages in higher order [[ [[analytical exposition]] ]] genres. These second-order expositions also function as **Arguments** in the [[analytical exposition]] realising **PERSPECTIVE 2**.

#### 4.4.2 Summary: a synoptic representation of three layers of embedding

The synoptic overview of **PERSPECTIVE 2** in Table 10 highlights the depth of this stage construed by three layers of embedded arguing and explaining genres, with its **Argument 1** containing the most layers of embedding.

The discussion above illustrated that each **PERSPECTIVE** stage of the China Report achieves its social purpose by the resource of embedding to expand its meaning potential and build its depth. Each scaffolds a *one-sided* position on investment potential in the Chinese solar energy market. For this reason, it is not very surprising that both **PERSPECTIVE** stages instantiate [[analytical exposition]] genres in order to achieve their social purpose of promoting one position throughout their respective stages. **PERSPECTIVE**

2 is the stage that was demonstrated to contain the most layers of embedding – in other words, to construe its depth through *three* layers of embedded genres. Table 11 provides a synoptic snapshot of the three layers of embedded genres that build the depth of the whole text of the China Report.

The reason for foregrounding the exposition genre has to do with the organisation of the **PERSPECTIVES** with regards to the PESTLE framework and the factors selected for evaluation from each of its environments. These **PERSPECTIVES** evaluate factors from *different* PESTLE environments. Successful country report writers link factors to other relevant factors from the same or a different environment rather than breaking them down into sub-factors. These factors are evaluated as *either* an opportunity *or* a risk in terms of their impact on investment potential. This *promoting* of a one-sided position thus necessitates the staging of the writer's arguments through exposition genres. Since there are only two contrasting voices within the whole discussion genre that realises the China Report, one pro-investment (**PERSPECTIVE 1**) and one anti-investment voice (**PERSPECTIVE 2**), the China Report only needs two **PERSPECTIVES**: one concerned with promoting factors as opportunities only and the other concerned with promoting factors as risks only. Because there are only two **PERSPECTIVES**, the text needs to build more depth through three layers of embedded genres.

In comparison to the three layers found in the China Report, the Canada Report (the other exemplar text used in the intervention mentioned above) construes its depth through two layers of embedded genres, as shown in Table 12, mostly realised by [[analytical discussion]] genres in four **PERSPECTIVES**.<sup>9</sup>

This section was concerned with particulate realisation, i.e. a constituency-based perspective on text structuring principles (Martin 1994; 1995). More specifically, it focused on constituency representation for experiential meanings realised by multivariate part/whole structures. The following section seeks to answer some questions about the superstructures of the student business reports realised by analytical discussion genre simplexes. What elements of structure are obligatory in order for these texts to be considered complete in their social and cultural context? In what order do they occur? And what elements are optional and where would they occur? In order

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<sup>9</sup> Except for **PERSPECTIVE 1**, which is an [[analytical exposition]] but still embeds primarily analytical discussions as second-order genres to achieve this social purpose.

**Table 11.** Synoptic view of the generic structure of the analytical discussion realising the China Report

<b>GENRE STAGES</b>	<b>[[embedding]]</b>	<b>[[ [[embedding]] ]]</b>	<b>[[ [[ [[embedding]] ] ] ]]</b>
<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>[[challenge]]</b>		
<b>PERSPECTIVE 1</b>	<b>[[analytical exposition]]</b>		
	<b>Thesis</b>		
	<b>Argument 1</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
	<b>Argument 2</b>		
	<b>Argument 3</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
<b>PERSPECTIVE 2</b>	<b>[[analytical exposition]]</b>		
	<b>Thesis</b>		
	<b>Argument 1</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
		Argument 2	[[ [[ [[analytical exposition]] ] ] ]]
		Argument 3	[[ [[ [[consequential explanation]] ] ] ]]
	<b>Argument 2</b>		
	<b>Argument 3</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
		Argument 3	[[ [[ [[challenge]] ] ] ]]
	<b>Argument 4</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
		Argument 2	[[ [[ [[analytical exposition]] ] ] ]]
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>[[analytical exposition]]</b>		
	<b>Thesis</b>	[[ [[challenge]] ]]	
	<b>Argument 1</b>	[[ [[challenge]] ]]	
	<b>Argument 2</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]	
	<b>Reiteration</b>		

**Table 12.** Synoptic view of the generic structure of the analytical discussion realising the Canada Report

<b>GENRE STAGES</b>	<b>[[embedded genre stages]]</b>	<b>[[ [[embedded genre stages]] ]]</b>
<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>[[challenge]]</b>	
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>[[report]]</b>	
<b>PERSPECTIVE 1</b>	<b>[[analytical exposition]]</b>	
	<b>Thesis</b>	
	<b>Argument 1</b>	[[ [[analytical discussion]] ]]
	<b>Argument 2</b>	[[ [[analytical discussion]] ]]
	<b>Argument 3</b>	[[ [[analytical discussion]] ]]
	<b>Argument 4</b>	[[ [[challenge]] ]]
<b>PERSPECTIVE 2</b>	<b>[[analytical discussion]]</b>	
	<b>Issue</b>	
	<b>Perspective 1</b>	
	<b>Perspective 2</b>	
	<b>Perspective 3</b>	[[ [[challenge]] ]]
	<b>Resolution</b>	
<b>PERSPECTIVE 3</b>	<b>[[analytical discussion]]</b>	
	<b>Issue</b>	
	<b>Perspective 1</b>	
	<b>Perspective 2</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]
	<b>Perspective 3</b>	
	<b>Perspective 4</b>	
<b>PERSPECTIVE 4</b>	<b>[[analytical discussion]]</b>	
	<b>Issue</b>	
	<b>Perspective 1</b>	[[ [[challenge]] ]]
	<b>Perspective 2</b>	[[ [[analytical exposition]] ]]
	<b>Perspective 3</b>	
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>[[challenge]]</b>	

to answer these questions, it is necessary to examine the generic structure of all ten high-scoring texts analysed for the purposes of this research.

## 5 An axial perspective: proposed system network for business country reports

The genre analyses found that all undergraduate country reports are realised by analytical discussion genre simplexes from the genre family of arguing genres, summarised in Table 13. It shows that nine out of the ten texts contain an **ISSUE**, four **PERSPECTIVES** and a **RESOLUTION** stage. One of these texts, Text 1 or the Canada Report, contains an additional **BACKGROUND** stage sandwiched between the **ISSUE** and the first **PERSPECTIVE** stage. Only one text, Text 2 or the China Report, contains only two **PERSPECTIVE** stages following the **ISSUE** and preceding the **RESOLUTION**. Thus, we can identify the **ISSUE**, a minimum of two **PERSPECTIVE** stages and the final **RESOLUTION** stage as obligatory elements in the texts' structure. An additional optional **BACKGROUND** stage following the **ISSUE** and two optional **PERSPECTIVE** stages following the first two **PERSPECTIVES** may also occur, represented by the brackets signalling this optionality in the expected sequence of these stages:

**ISSUE ^ (BACKGROUND ^) PERSPECTIVE 1 ^ PERSPECTIVE 2 ^  
(PERSPECTIVE 3 ^ PERSPECTIVE 4 ^) RESOLUTION**

Each stage of this superstructure is realised by embedded genres. The obligatory **ISSUE** stage may be realised by three types of arguing genres: an embedded [[challenge]], an [[analytical discussion]] or an [[analytical exposition]]. The optional **BACKGROUND**, only present in the Canada Report, is realised by an embedded [[descriptive report]] genre. Furthermore, both the obligatory and the optional **PERSPECTIVE** stages in each text can instantiate either an [[analytical discussion]] or an [[analytical exposition]]. Finally, similarly to the opening **ISSUE** stage, the last obligatory stage, the **RESOLUTION**, can also be realised by the arguing [[challenge]], [[discussion]] or [[exposition]] genres. Table 14 illustrates what type of embedded genres stand in as multivariate stages of the analytical discussion genres realising the ten country reports analysed for this study.

**Table 13.** Undergraduate business country reports staged as analytical discussion genre simplexes

Texts	Staging of the analytical discussions realising undergraduate business reports
Text 1 (Canada)	ISSUE ^ BACKGROUND ^ PERSPECTIVE 1 ^ PERSPECTIVE 2 ^ PERSPECTIVE 3 ^ PERSPECTIVE 4 ^ RESOLUTION
Text 2 (China)	ISSUE ^ PERSPECTIVE 1 ^ PERSPECTIVE 2 ^ RESOLUTION
Text 3–10	ISSUE ^ PERSPECTIVE 1 ^ PERSPECTIVE 2 ^ PERSPECTIVE 3 ^ PERSPECTIVE 4 ^ RESOLUTION

These options can be formalised as a system network as shown in Figure 8. The modelling of undergraduate business country reports analysed in this study as a system network follows the labelling conventions presented in Martin (2013).<sup>10</sup> The system is read from left to right and its entry condition is ARGUING GENRES written in small caps. In this particular system three opposing choices, or features, are introduced: [challenge], [exposition] and [discussion]. In running text these options or features are indicated by square brackets, a logical “or” relation: a selection must be made from these features. This means that the option of a discussion genre must be chosen from the family of arguing genres. The realisation statements, i.e. particular linguistic configurations and their order, for structuring this discussion are indicated by the downward arrow next to the feature [discussion]. The function *+Issue; I: ch, exp, disc* means that the Issue stage of this discussion must be realised by an embedded challenge, exposition or discussion genre. As indicated by *+Perspectives; P: exp, disc* the Perspective stages must be realised by either exposition or discussion genres. Finally, inserting the function *+Resolution; R: ch, exp, disc* means that the Resolution must be realised by a challenge, an exposition or a discussion genre.

While both the Issue and Resolution stages of business country reports can be realised by the same structures, the obligatory Perspectives can be realised by two different structures and the Background is a non-obligatory choice. These choices are introduced into the system by the right facing curly

<sup>10</sup> Martin (2013) contains a detailed discussion of system networks and the most current labelling conventions.

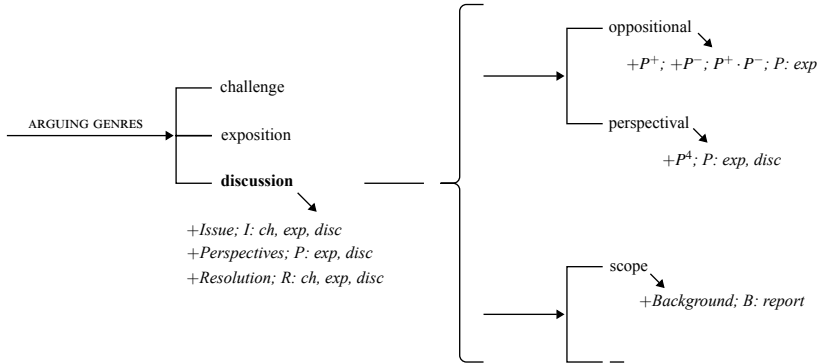


**Table 14.** Embedded arguing genres as multivariate stages of the superstructure of the analytical discussion realising undergraduate business reports (**BG** = **BACKGROUND**, **P** = **PERSPECTIVE**, **RES** = **RESOLUTION**, [[ch]] = challenge, [[a/exp]] = analytical exposition, [[a/disc]] = analytical discussion)

Texts	stages of a/disc						
	ISSUE	BG	P1	P2	P3	P4	RES
Text 1 Canada	[[ch]]	[[report]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[ch]]
Text 2 China	[[ch]]		[[a/exp]]	[[a/exp]]			[[a/exp]]
Text 3 Brazil	[[ch]]		[[a/disc]]	[[a/exp]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/exp]]	[[a/exp]]
Text 4 India	[[ch]]		[[a/exp]]	[[a/exp]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]
Text 5 India	[[a/disc]]		[[a/disc]]	[[a/exp]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/exp]]	[[a/disc]]
Text 6 Hungary	[[a/exp]]		[[a/exp]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/exp]]	[[a/disc]]	[[ch]]
Text 7 Spain	[[ch]]		[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/exp]]	[[a/disc]]
Text 8 Brazil	[[a/disc]]		[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/exp]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/exp]]
Text 9 Poland	[[a/disc]]		[[a/exp]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[ch]]
Text 10 U.K.	[[a/disc]]		[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/disc]]	[[a/exp]]

bracket as simultaneous systems that have the feature [discussion] as their entry condition. These systems represent the different choices writers have when structuring the obligatory Perspective stages and the non-obligatory Background stage.

The system network at the top formalises the options available to organise the Perspectives. Its two features are [oppositional] and [perspectival]. Choosing the feature [oppositional] means that the discussion realising the country report has to include two Perspective stages. That one of these Perspectives must promote a *pro*-investment rhetoric and the other an *anti*-investment rhetoric is indicated by the functions  $+P^+$ ;  $+P^-$ . The realisation statement  $P^+ \cdot P^-$  means that these Perspectives can be sequenced



**Figure 8.** The system network for the superstructure of undergraduate business country reports

or presented in any order. Finally, both these Perspectives must be realised by exposition genres as indicated by  $P: exp$ . In this data set, structuring the Perspectives based on these choices was taken up only in the China Report. The second feature in this system, [perspectival], refers to the option available to structure the country report with four Perspective stages. This choice is indicated by inserting the function  $+P^4$ . The following realisation statement  $P: exp, disc$  means that each of the four Perspectives can be realised by either exposition or discussion genres. Apart from the China Report, all texts in this data set, i.e. nine out of ten, took up the option of including four Perspective stages.<sup>11</sup>

The system network at the bottom shows that writers have the option of including a non-obligatory stage that presents the scope of the market analysis. This choice is indicated by drawing it as an optional system with the feature [scope] and the dash (–) to show that this option may or may not be taken up. If the writer includes a Background stage, it must be realised by a descriptive report as per the realisation rule  $+Background; B: report$ . In this data set, this non-obligatory Background stage was only found in the Canada Report.

The system network explained above illustrates the choices of genres available to structure the individual obligatory and non-obligatory stages of

<sup>11</sup> Based on the assignment brief, the students were given the PESTLE model to choose factors from but they did not choose factors from all six external business environments in any country reports: if the [perspectival] option was taken up from the system, four environments were analysed consistently (also not three and not five).

the superstructure that realises a business country report, i.e. a discussion genre. We can distinguish these options as choices from the *arguing* genre family for staging the obligatory stages of the country reports and from the family of *reporting* genres for the non-obligatory Background stage. From a theoretical point of view, the presentation in this paper has also shown in detail that the analyses of lower-order embedded genres in these texts should provide sufficient evidence that they play a fundamental role in expanding these undergraduate business reports into “big texts”.

## 6 Concluding remarks

This paper has argued that the stages of the ten country reports realised by analytical discussions are not in a part/part relationship in the univariate serial structure of a genre complex, but rather function as parts in a part/whole relationship in a multivariate structure of a genre simplex. As the presentation above has shown, in the grammar of the clause the grammatical resource that makes it possible for a whole to become a part is down-ranking or embedding. In this data set, lower-level embeddings beyond third-order embedded genres were not found but there is no theoretical reason why more layers could not occur. As noted in § 3, the meaning potential of long texts can be opened up by cyclical recursion (Halliday 1981), i.e. every layer of genre embedding construes a further layer of meaning potential. In terms of *representation*, for the purposes of this study the traditional constituency tree was found useful for modelling multivariate structures. Specifically, the tree lends itself to representing the several layers of downranked genres embedded as multivariate stages in a superstructure. For reasons of a more economical representation, this paper has also proposed a *synoptic* representation of the generic structure of long genre simplexes that contain several layers of embedded genres. In order to indicate their status among the layers of embedded genres, this paper proposed extending the bracketing convention used for first-order embedded genres based on the conventional representation of embedded clauses, i.e. enclosing embedded genres within square brackets ([[...]]). This means that second-order embedded genres will be indicated by double bracketing and third-order embedded genres by triple bracketing as shown below.

[[embedded genre]]

[[ [[second-order embedded genre]] ]]

[[[[[[third-order embedded genre]]]]]]

...

Thus, even though existing work on embedded genres has so far theorised that they are “a relatively rare phenomenon” (Martin 2012: 002), this paper has shown that if a clause can contain several embedded clauses, then an elemental genre can also embed within itself multiple elemental genres that have been down-ranked to the level of a genre stage. As this paper has demonstrated, these stages themselves could be realised by another down-ranked elemental genre, and this process will result in multiple layers of embedding that build the depth of genre simplexes such as the undergraduate business country reports studied in this research. In fact, the business country reports second-year undergraduate students are expected to write may include as many as 16 elemental genres (e.g. the China Report), which become embedded in the overall superstructure of these long texts. This paper has proposed a system network for the representation of these academically valued choices available for writing successful undergraduate business county reports whose complexity is better managed through embedding. By complementing and extending existing research on the analysis and representation of lengthy university assignments, this research provides the missing link in the theoretical conceptualisation of the “nature of big texts” (Martin 1994; 1995) in SFL.

The findings of this study point to future directions for research. There is a need for more work on phasal analysis. In current SFL research phases are defined as “smaller phases of meaning within each stage, that are more variable, and sensitive to register variations such as a text’s field” (Rose 2006: 185); in other words, they are the intermediate units between genre stages at the level of genre and messages at the level of lexicogrammar (Rose 2006: 187). It would be especially interesting to re-analyse the final Reiteration and Resolution stages of expositions and discussions in order to explore whether phasal analyses would reveal the phasing of “making a point” in undergraduate business reports, i.e. what Humphrey & Dreyfus (2012) refer to as the “nub” of an argument. Apart from studying their social purpose in more detail, another linguistic issue concerns the identification of phase boundaries within genre stages. The criteria for distinguishing phases need to be explicitly determined in order to understand their realisation within stages. Based on these issues, the study of these kinds of phases would open up an interesting future avenue for SFL genre research. As for modelling “big texts” in SFL, researching successful models of tertiary assignments remains

an important area. The review of genre research in higher education in § 3.3 above has shown that there is extra complexity involved when tertiary students are expected to build genres learnt in primary and secondary school into long university assignments. Future research could explore further whether long and complex tertiary assignments across a wider range of academic disciplines tend to be realised by macrogenres, elemental genres with several layers of embedding as a device to expand meaning potential, or a combination of both.

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