

Kaarina Mäkinen

Topic and Comment
Development in
EFL Compositions

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

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Kaarina Mäkinen

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Compositions

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ABSTRACT

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Summary

Diss.

This study explores the way in which Finnish upper secondary school students convey information in their short compositions written in English. It focuses on how the students developed both topics and comments in their compositions, and the way in which it affects coherence in them. The compositions were written on the title *Does watching television make it difficult to think independently?*. The compositions were divided into three quality groups on the basis of the means and standard deviations as follows: High (one standard deviation above the mean, N=4), Mid (in between the High and the Low, N=9), and Low (one standard deviation below the mean, N=11). Consequently, the data consisted of 24 compositions in all.

The present study set out to find answers to three research tasks. The first task was to find out how topics and comments representing three quality categories are developed in EFL compositions. The second task was to determine whether there is a relationship between topic development and rated essay quality in compositions representing the three quality categories: High, Mid, and Low. The third research task was to discover what kind of topic/comment development patterns occur in compositions representing three quality categories.

To answer the first and third research questions, a descriptive topic/comment analysis was performed. In addition to that, Daneš's (1974) two patterns of thematic progression were traced in the same compositions. As regards the first pattern of topical progression, the mid-quality writers favoured this strategy more than the better and the poorer writers. With regard to the second pattern of topical progression, the poorer writers used a constant topic more often than the writers in the other two categories. Thirdly, the poorer writers picked up propositions mentioned earlier in the text more often than the writers in the other two categories.

Topical structure analysis (e.g. Lautamatti 1978, 1987; Noh 1985) was applied to the compositions to find out what kinds of patterns EFL writers in the three quality categories employ when developing topics in their compositions. The aspects of topical development that were explored in the essays were topical depth and topic shifts, and their relationship to writing quality was investigated.

The χ^2 test showed that there was a correlation between writing quality and topical depth. The coefficient of determination (r^2) indicated that approximately 23 per cent of the variation in writing quality was explained by variation in topical depth.

Further studies of other indicators potentially contributing to writing quality could address interaction between coherence and writing quality in terms of models such as the Toulmin (1958) model of informal logic, which has been found to be successful in the teaching of argumentative/persuasive writing (e.g. Connor and Lauer 1988), and the model of meaning relations suggested by Laurinen and Kauppinen (1986).

Keywords: EFL writing, coherence, information structure, topic/comment development.

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Writing grows out of oral speech, which can never be quite the same after writing is interiorized in the psyche. Writing leads verbalization out of the agora into a world of imagined audiences — a fascinating and demanding and exquisitely productive world.

Walter J. Ong, S.J. 1977:339

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation to writing and various research strands

Written language has always played a dominant role in formal education. The acquisition of literacy is regarded as one of the most important tasks of the school. It is not only a means of learning, but also a prerequisite for achieving other goals (Olson 1976; Olson 1977a; 1977b; Olson and Torrance 1991; Vähäpassi 1988). Since writing is one of the most visible products of education, any incorrect use and spelling have been considered signs of a personal scholastic failure, and a widespread deterioration in writing ability as an indication of ineffectiveness in a school system. A growing awareness of literacy, and more specifically of writing, is probably concomitant with the growing importance of schooling and education (Takala 1988).

In an increasingly internationalizing world spoken language cannot handle all communication needs. Writing and written text have several features which make it an effective mode of communication in a number of situations but teachers of writing also need to be aware of the rather complex relationship between oral and written language (Perera 1984; Takala 1982; 1988; Vachek 1973).

During the last two decades, research on writing has focused on several educationally relevant research areas. These are mainly separate fields with only slightly overlapping groups of researchers working in them (Scardamalia and Bereiter 1986).

At the centre of the first research strand is Vygotsky's (1978) claim that the child's discovery of written symbolism is a crucial step in the development of thinking. The main interest has been in how children from the very beginning construct meaning. The practical outcome of this research has been to encourage children to write at an earlier age than has previously been thought feasible (Graves 1983). According to Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986), this opens up the

possibility of unifying the acquisition of writing and reading skills. Several researchers have focused their attention on the relationships between reading and writing (e.g. Perera 1984; Takala 1982; Tannen 1982). Another related research strand is interested in the functional relationships between speech and writing (e.g. Chafe 1980; Kress 1994; Perera 1984; Tannen 1982; Tiittula 1992).

While earlier linguistic research on writing focused on the sentence and its constituents (e.g. Hunt 1965), recent research has started to investigate the principles that tie sentences to each other. The conceptual roots of the third strand are in systemic grammar, especially the concept of cohesion (Halliday and Hasan 1976), and in the theory of speech acts (Grice 1975). Current research has been devoted to exploring developmental trends in the achievement of discourse competence (Bracewell et al. 1982; Britton et al. 1975).

The third line of research on writing focuses on story grammar. The apparent universality of children's grasp of the structure of narratives has generated widespread research interest (Mandler and Johnson 1977). Much of the research has investigated story comprehension and recall (Bracewell et al. 1982) and knowledge about stories (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1982). Different text structures (genres) are explored to see how discourse is organized.

The focus of the preceding three research strands is on young children, whereas that of the fourth research line is on 'basic writers' (Shaughnessy 1977; see also the *Journal of Basic Writing*), adult students displaying a lack of writing ability.

One of the most interesting developments in the 1970s was the emergence of a new vein of rhetorical research, the 'new' rhetoric. With its links to the classical idea of 'invention', this research strand has investigated teachable techniques for elaborating composition content (Corbett 1971; Kinneavy 1980; Winterowd 1975; Young et al. 1970).

Contrastive rhetoric, the comparison of the writing of students and accomplished writers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, has focused on expository writing. Particularly abundant is research on cross-cultural differences in expository writing (Kaplan 1966; Connor and McCagg 1983; Carrell 1984a; 1984b; Connor 1984; Eggington 1987; Grabe 1987; Hinds 1987; Ostler 1987; Scarcella 1984; Bickner and Peyasantiwong 1988). (For a review of the early work, see Kaplan 1987.)

In addition to this wealth of research on cross-cultural differences in expository writing, research has been carried out into other genres, as the following examples show: Söter's (1985) study of the narrative writing of students of English as a second language in Australia; Tannen's (1980) research on oral narrative retellings by Greek and American adults; Connor and Lauer's studies (1985; 1988) of persuasive student writing; Connor's (1987a) study of argumentative patterns in persuasive writing of English, German, Finnish, and U.S. high school students; and Isaksson-Wikberg's (1992) cross-cultural study of American and Finland-Swedish rhetoric and argumentative composition.

Some research has been carried out on second language writing: Ingberg (1987) and Lindeberg (1988) have worked on the English of Swedish-speaking Finns. These studies have explored undergraduate compositions. A certain implicitness was a common characteristic of the compositions written by Finnish writers. This feature is probably cultural in origin as Swedish-speaking Finns have

also been observed to display this tendency (cf. Mauranen 1992). Mauranen's (1992) contrastive study investigated rhetoric in academic written discourse and cultural differences between Finnish and native-English research writers. The findings of her study indicate that Finnish and Anglo-American writers differ in their textual rhetoric. Finnish writers show a more implicit rhetorical strategy than Anglo-American writers. They also prefer end-weight argumentation strategies, starting from a distance and presenting the main point relatively late, whereas Anglo-American writers prefer starting with the most important point.

Laurén (1994) has studied the written products of 86 bilingual and 86 monolingual pupils in grades 3, 6 and 9 in the comprehensive school. She focused on syntactic and semantic features. No major differences were found, except for some errors where a certain degree of interference from Finnish with respect to word order and vocabulary was discovered.

A recent research interest has been in highly interactive kinds of response to student writing. Conferencing (Graves 1975), a procedure using brief individual consultations at various points of the composing process, and interactive journal writing, in which the teacher responds to students' journal entries (Staton 1980), are more recent ways of responding to student writing.

Another prominent area of research has borrowed methods and concepts from cognitive science to focus its attention on the question of what goes on in the mind as people compose. This composing process orientation has included basic theoretical studies (e.g. Hayes and Flower 1980; Scardamalia et al. 1982), developmental studies (e.g. Burtis et al. 1983), and studies comparing the composing of experts and novices (e.g. Flower and Hayes 1980; Perl 1979; Sommers 1980).

One research direction concerns problems related to the reliability and validity of different procedures used in the rating of compositions (e.g. Cooper and Odell 1977; Cohen (in press); Hamp-Lyons 1991). Related to the preceding areas of writing research, an interest in assessing actual student performance in writing has emerged. In the United States the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has carried out assessments of writing since 1969. The Assessment Performance Unit (APU) has surveyed writing performance in England and Wales. Some other countries such as Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and New Zealand have conducted assessments of writing performance as well (Takala 1988).

However, large-scale assessment of writing performance became an area of research interest in the late 1970s. The International Study of Written Composition was planned and carried out under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The writing study examines the teaching and learning of written composition in the schools of 14 countries. (For large-scale projects providing cross-cultural information about student writing in different countries, see section 3.3.1.)

With regard to the research areas mentioned above, the present study represents the third strand, viz. analysing written discourse. It also aligns itself with the line of writing research that focuses on the assessment of student writing. In addition to contributing to these two main research areas, the present study also provides implications for the pedagogical study of writing. The choice of this

research area is motivated by the fact that the present writer has for a long time been teaching English as a foreign language in the upper secondary school and has simultaneously also worked as a teacher educator. The impetus for this study has thus arisen from her own observations and experiences. The study represents an approach of the action research type in the sense that, as regards the researcher, it combines the roles of a foreign language teacher and a teacher educator together with that of a researcher.

1.2 Composition and foreign language testing in the matriculation examination

The primary goal of writing in English, similarly to that of English as the first foreign language in the comprehensive school (starting in the third grade at the age of 9+), is to develop students' communicative competence, i.e. to understand and to be understood, in the most common communicative situations (LKOO 1981:2). Thus, writing is basically regarded as a communicative activity, which, according to the curriculum, is practised throughout the upper secondary school. But besides its own communicative function, writing also has a strong supportive function as regards the acquisition of the other language skills, particularly that of structures (for writing as a tool for learning and thinking, see section 8.2).

Writing in English should also be a preparation for other kinds of writing done as a member of society. The more the writing tasks at school resemble writing situations in which students are likely to find themselves in their later lives, the better they will prepare them for their further needs, and motivate them while at school.

Every foreign language teacher is faced with teaching and evaluating student compositions. At the end of the upper secondary school the writing skills are officially tested in the Finnish Matriculation Examination through a written composition consisting of 150-200 words. The composition task has been a compulsory component of the foreign language test since 1977, along with listening comprehension, reading comprehension and structures. It is to be expected that a summary written in the mother tongue or the target language will be included in the reading comprehension section of the examination in the first foreign language in the near future. It was used to test reading comprehension in the second foreign language (starting in the seventh grade of the comprehensive school) test in the autumn of 1994, but the test was written in their mother tongue.

Several studies have been concerned with compositions written as part of the foreign language test in the matriculation examination. Perho's (1994) study explored compositions written in Russian by Finnish school-leavers as part of their first foreign language test. These students had studied Russian for ten years as their first foreign language. The aim of Perho's study was to determine the level of their writing ability and their proficiency in Russian. Railas's (1984) study concentrated on differences in school-leavers' EFL compositions and their ways of learning vocabulary.

Meriläinen's (1982; 1984; 1989) studies have focused on student compositions written as part of the Swedish test in the matriculation examination. Meriläinen (1982) explored lexical differences between good and poor writers' compositions. Meriläinen's (1984) error analysis of Swedish compositions contained the following categories: syntactic, lexical, semantic-stylistic errors, spelling, and morphological errors. Even good writers' compositions contained both semantic-stylistic and morphological errors. Meriläinen's (1989) study of syntax indicated that good writers, particularly girls, used longer clauses and sentences, and also produced longer compositions. Jaakkola's (1976) study of syntax in the EFL compositions in the matriculation examination showed statistically significant differences between sentence length and grade. Better writers' compositions were longer than poorer writers' compositions. They also employed a larger diversity of conjunctions.

The present study investigates the information structure of EFL compositions. The compositions studied here were not written in the matriculation examination but six months before the examination as part of normal school work. The writers of the compositions were in the third (last) grade of the upper secondary school (high school). At the point of the data collection they were studying English as their first foreign language (A-language) for the tenth year. The students had mostly received traditional instruction in writing because at the time of data collection (1988) the process-oriented approach to teaching writing was only beginning to emerge among foreign language teachers in Finland.

Evaluating student writing objectively is a demanding task because of the complexity of the notion of writing ability. There seems to be no strong agreement as to what good writing involves either. The task is also aggravated by the fact that every evaluator may conceive the challenges and constraints of the surrounding world differently.

1.3 The aim of the present study

According to the curriculum of the upper secondary school¹ in Finland (LKKO:12), when they leave school, students should be able to produce logical and coherent text. As the notion of coherence is quite vaguely expressed in the curriculum, it leaves room for teachers' own interpretations of the concept. Teachers with experience in teaching and evaluating EFL composition will intuitively be able to detect major deficiencies in coherence, but novice teachers of composition may find it a hard task to evaluate compositions. To help teachers and students analyse how coherence is manifested in student compositions and what text-structuring difficulties they face, the present study turned to text linguistics. It is assumed that one of the most important goals of text linguistics is to produce a theory of

¹ In the present study *upper secondary school* refers to the three-year educational system comprising grades 10-12, which accommodate students between the ages of 16 and 19.

discourse that distinguishes a sequence of sentences randomly put together from a product that the reader would intuitively call 'a text' (Prince 1981).

The 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s saw major changes in emphasis in linguistics which have greatly contributed to the study of discourse, both spoken and written. The 1980s, especially, saw an explosion of such studies. The shift of pedagogical emphasis on student writing from language correctness to communicative effectiveness has changed the focus from sentence level to text level.

The general aim of the present study is to develop a linguistically oriented and pedagogically useful method for describing coherence and lack of coherence in expository student compositions. The pilot study (Mäkinen 1991) was based on the assumption that if a text coheres both globally and locally, then the sentence topics are the 'vehicles' by which the discourse topic is distributed throughout the text (Noh 1985). Several other studies have investigated topical development in student writing (Lautamatti 1978; 1987; Witte 1983a, 1983b; Noh 1985; Connor and Farmer 1990; Cerniglia et al. 1990; and Wikborg 1990), but the present study focuses not only on topical development but also on topic/comment development in EFL compositions and their effect on writing quality. In other words, the study attempts to find out whether Finnish student writers use specific patterns when distributing information in their compositions written in English.

The present study attempts to fulfill the following research tasks:

- (1) How are topics and comments developed in compositions representing three quality categories, High, Mid, and Low?
- 2) Is there a relationship between rated essay quality and topical development?
- (3) What patterns of topic/comment development occur in compositions representing three quality categories, High, Mid, and Low?

The empirical analyses are based on a relatively small sample, which means that the results are tentative and cannot be generalized. Though student compositions may be a special, and perhaps even artificial, genre, many of the textual features found in them must, however, be true of writing in general, and thus applicable in the field of foreign language composition instruction. Questions related to cross-cultural aspects of student writing, essential though they might be for a foreign language composition teacher, will be left for later research.

Although the present study analyses written products, it also attempts to integrate the product and process perspectives. In other words, it aims at examining the processes that EFL writers undergo when structuring texts in a foreign language by focusing on product. Raimes's (1985) analyses of 'think-aloud' protocols of unskilled ESL writers composing essays discovered that ESL writers "concentrate on the challenge of finding the right words and sentences to express the meaning" (Raimes 1985:247). Raimes (1985) recommends that we also consider the need to attend to product as well as process. In addition to teaching heuristic devices to focus on meaning, student writers should also be taught heuristic devices to focus on rhetorical and linguistic features (Raimes 1985:247-248).

By exploring the information structure in student compositions the present study attempts to contribute to our understanding of the writing process.

Hopefully, this integration improves the tools with which teachers and students can talk about student writing (cf. Connor 1987b).

1.4 Data and methods of analysis

The material for the present study consists of a total of 89 expository compositions, ranging in length from approximately 150 to 200 words, written by Finnish learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). The expository essay was selected as the material for the present study because of its appropriateness to the pre-university level of the Finnish upper secondary school. Moreover, purely descriptive or narrative essays are rarely required of students in universities in Finland. The essays were written by third-year students at the University Training School and at another upper secondary school called Jyväskylän Lyseo. English had been the students' first foreign language (the A-language) since the third form of the comprehensive school. At the time of the data collection (autumn 1988), the students were studying English for their tenth year (2-3 lessons per week a year throughout their school careers).

The essay titles and instructions were chosen from among those of the International Study of Written Composition carried out under the auspices of the comprehensive International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement project (IEA; see Purves and Takala 1982). The essay title chosen for this study was *Does watching television make it difficult to think independently?*

The essays were evaluated analytically by two raters: first by the students' own teachers of English, and then by another rater. The rating scale ranged from one to five, five being the highest score. The compositions were then divided into three quality categories on the basis of the quality ratings assigned to them by the two experienced teachers. This was done to highlight the differences between the characteristics of good, mid-quality, and poor essays. In the course of the study, to remove a possible topic effect, a total of 49 compositions written under the title mentioned above were chosen for the detailed analysis. Out of these 49 compositions, 24 empirically selected essays formed the final data of the study. They represent three different quality categories in the following way: High (N=4), Mid (N=9), and Low (N=11). (For the details of the data collection, see section 6.1.)

The present study is concerned with two aspects of text: coherence and information structure. Coherence is understood in the light of the topic/comment development in a given composition. The notion of information structure is derived from research in functional linguistics (e.g. Daneš 1974; Halliday 1985). The concept of information structure refers to how the writer distributes information within clauses and sentences in the process of conveying ideas for certain communicative purposes. The key terms and concepts used in the classification and analysis of information structure (e.g. theme/rheme, topic/comment, given/new) are defined in chapter 5.

The model applied to the analysis of topical development and writing quality in student EFL compositions was taken from Noh's (1985) study. (For topical structure analysis, see chapter 6.) It is important to pay attention to the fact that Noh used topical structure analysis to investigate short passages of academic writing. To analyse how EFL students convey information in terms of topic/comment development in their compositions, the same compositions were explored using Daneš's (1974) patterns of thematic progression.

The present study attempts to strengthen the link between L1 writing and writing in a second and foreign language in several ways. This is not an artificial link since writing in a second or foreign language has followed the development of writing in L1. First of all, the functions of written language and the notion of genre have come from the L1 writing context (see chapter 2). Secondly, the development of ESL composition theory and composition instruction have mainly followed the trends of L1 composition theory and instruction (see chapter 3). Thirdly, assessing second and foreign language writing has greatly benefited from that of L1 writing (see chapter 4). Fourthly, the methods and analyses also bear witness to this link (see chapters 5 and 6). The question of how felicitous it is to use methods and analyses employed in the domain of L1 writing research to study phenomena in a second or foreign language writing will be discussed in the last chapter (chapter 8).

The present study focuses on the information structure in EFL compositions. The information structure in compositions is explored in terms of the topic/comment progression in them. Topic/comment development is thought to contribute to the coherence of compositions. The lack of previous studies in this area of EFL gave the impetus to delve further into the area of topic/comment development. The lack of analytical theory-driven research on expository student writing may be due to the inherent difficulty of operationalizing and quantifying new theoretical concepts. The development and application of any analytical method is complicated because student essays do not easily fit into patterns suggested by text models based on more accomplished texts.

1.5 The plan of the study

The present study is structured in the following manner. Chapter 2 addresses some general aspects of writing. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 focus on functions of language and various text types. Section 2.3 explores the composing process and also discusses two process models of writing. Section 2.4 investigates Nystrand's social-interactive model of writing and reading. Section 2.5 studies the major differences between spoken and written discourse. The purpose of section 2.6 is to illuminate the notion of communicative competence. Finally, section 2.7 sums up the discussion.

Chapter 3 gives a general overview of the most important aspects of the complex and intricate nature of writing. It also focuses on the development of writing instruction. Chapter 4 concentrates on the assessment of writing. Since the

concept of coherence is one of the key concepts in this study, chapter 5 looks at various ways of defining the notion of coherence. Since in this study coherence is considered in the light of the information structure in a specific composition, its key terms of theme/rheme, topic/comment, and given/new need to be discussed.

Chapter 6 introduces the methods and the analyses used in this study. Chapter 7 presents the findings. Chapter 8 is concerned with the findings of the present study in the light of recent trends in writing instruction, discusses some implications for the teaching of writing in a second and foreign language and, finally, suggests future research orientations.

2 GENERAL ASPECTS OF WRITING

To be able to develop writing instruction and writing assessment as effectively as possible the researcher needs to know a great deal about various aspects of writing. Thus section 2.1 focuses on the functions of language in written discourse. Section 2.2 discusses a much-used way of classifying text types developed by Werlich as well as some other definitions of a variety of text types. Section 2.3 addresses writing as a cognitive process. In addition to that, it also presents two famous process models.

Section 2.4 discusses Nystrand's social-interactive model of writing and reading. The purpose of section 2.5 is to focus on major differences between speech and writing. The aim of section 2.6 is to look at two models of communicative competence. Finally, section 2.6 examines the model of student writing as developed for the IEA Written Study.

2.1 The functions of language and the written discourse

This study adopts the concept of 'discourse' as it is derived from modern linguistics, meaning any utterance larger than the sentence. In the present context, it also refers to the full written text. A theory of discourse will then constitute a framework of the different types of discourse with a treatment of the characteristic features, the underlying logic, the organizational structure, and the stylistic features of each type.

According to the rhetorician James Kinneavy (1971), the communication arts are speaking, listening, writing and reading. In addition to the arts of

discourse, there are various discourse media. In other words, the arts of discourse are signals that are transmitted through the various media of discourse. With regard to the number of encoders, monological situations like lectures or radio speeches from small group situations like telephone calls, panels, and dramas can be distinguished from large group situations like conventions.

Kinneavy's (1971) classifications of the kinds of realities referred to by full texts constitute the 'modes' of discourse. In other words, the meaning of the discourse is viewed as a reference to reality. The formulations such as a narrative, a series of classifications, a criticism or evaluation, and a description constitute the modes of discourse. These four modes are grounded in specific concepts of the nature of reality. According to Kinneavy (1971:36), the ultimate aim of discourse in referring to reality should be based on the character of reality, not the nature of language. As each of the modes corresponds to a principle of thought which allows reality to be viewed in this fashion, each of them has its own characteristic logic. Each of them also has its organizational patterns and, to a certain degree, its own stylistic features.

The aims of language are the reason for the existence of all the previous aspects of language (Kinneavy 1971). Sounds, morphemes, syntactic patterns, skills in the arts of discourse, and narratives together with the other modes of discourse all exist so that human beings may achieve certain purposes in their use of language with each other. Both a theory of language and a theory of discourse should offer a viable framework for the uses of discourse.

The main components of the process of language are an encoder, a language signal, the ability of the signal to refer to reality, and a decoder. Person discourse can stress either encoder or decoder. If language is used as the simple vehicle of expression of some aspect of the personality of the encoder, such use is called an *expressive* use of language. Diaries, journals, political credos, myths of primitive societies are often expressive uses of language, whereby an individual or a group expresses its intuitions and aspirations.

The primary focus of the discourse may be on the decoder. In this use, the encoder may purposely distort the picture of reality. What is vital is that encoder, reality, and language itself all become instrumental to the achievement of a specific effect in the decoder. Such a use of language is what Kinneavy (1971) calls *persuasion or rhetoric*.

The reference use of language emphasizes the ability of language to reproduce reality. If the reality is conceived as known, the use of language is *informative*. Such uses of language include weather reports, news stories, telephone directories, and so on. If information is systematized and if its validity is proved, the use of language is *scientific*. This type of language use includes history, descriptive analyses of anatomy in medicine, some literary criticism, and so on. *Exploratory* uses of language include questionnaires, interviews, panel discussions, and so on.

All the above examples represent *reference* discourse, which is frequently classified under what is called expository writing or speaking. It is often the discourse as whole, rather than individual propositions, which is regarded as referential (Kinneavy 1971:77). The last use of language is labelled *literature*. It includes such varied forms as the sonnet, the novel, the TV drama, and the epic.

The above brief introduction to Kinneavy's (1971) modes and aims of discourse owes much to Jakobson's (1960) and Bühler's (1934) ways of grouping text types according to their functions. Jakobson's (1960:353-356) division of the functions of language is based on Bühler's (1934) semiotic model, in which the relationship of the linguistic expression focuses on *referent*, *addresser*, and *addressee*. The message, however, needs a *context* which is common to the addresser and the addressee. The *code* must also be either completely or partially common to the two parties. Communication between the addresser and the addressee is, finally, enabled by a *contact*. Jakobson (1960) distinguishes six different functional categories: the *referential function*, in which the context plays a central role; the *phatic function*, when language is used for the sake of communication; the *conative function*, in which the purpose of language is to change the addressee's behaviour or thinking; the *metalingual function*, where language focuses on the code; the *emotive function*, which focuses on the addresser and his feelings and experiences; and the *poetic function*, which focuses on the message itself.

Some of the functions may operate simultaneously, e.g. the writer's purpose may be emotive, referential, or conative, or all of them at the same time. One of the great merits of Jakobson's semiotic approach is that it lends itself also for the purposes and functions of school writing (Vähäpassi 1983:69). Such models as those presented by Moffett (1968), Britton et al. (1975), D'Angelo (1975) and Kinneavy (1980) are also based on the semiotic structure, in which the relationships between the writer, the reader and the message are all taken into consideration. These later models draw on Bühler's and Jakobson's views on the functions of language. Moffett defines the forms of discourse as *drama*, *narrative*, *exposition*, and *argumentation*. Kinneavy distinguishes between the *referential*, *persuasive*, *literary* and *expressive* aims of discourse. D'Angelo's categories comprise the discourse modes which he calls *expressive*, *persuasive*, *literary*, and *referential*. Britton et al. distinguish the *expressive*, *poetic*, and *transactional* (with subdivisions into *informative* and *conative*) functions.

As stated above, these rhetorical models are all based on Bühler's and Jakobson's ideas, although the terms that the researchers use to denote different functions vary. Vähäpassi (1983) claims that the functional perspective is not, however, fully worked out in the models. In real life persuasion is one of the most dominant functions of language, but in school writing the persuasive functions appear to be a neglected area.

In the German-speaking research community, the functions of language are divided into three categories by Schmidt et al. (1981:23): *informing* (Informieren), *activating the addressee* (Aktivieren), and *explaining phenomena* (Klären). In their classification, argumentation is placed in the second category. The addressee can be activated by convincing, i.e. mobilizing the person into action, creating norms, and arousing interest and emotions. The aim of argumentation is to convince the addressee of the truthfulness of the views presented to him or her, and of the usefulness of proposed suggestions and recommendations. At the same time, the writer tries to convince the addressee of the faults, inadequacy and questionable usefulness of the opinions presented by the others. To achieve these goals, various methods are used: facts, opinions and

evaluations are presented; experts are appealed to; and stereotyped views are strengthened (Schmidt et al. 1981:183).

Argumentation falls into four different categories: (1) explanatory argumentation, through which the writer or the speaker attempts to convince the addressee by providing factual reasoning; (2) explaining and contrasting argumentation, with which the writer or the speaker wants to prove that the addressee's views are faulty, questionable, or detrimental; (3) refuting and contrasting argumentation, in which the writer or the speaker does not explain his or her views but uses emotional reasoning to reveal and refute the addressee's views; and finally (4) particularizing and contrasting argumentation, in which the writer or the speaker tends to indicate that the addressee's views are false by particularizing them in many ways (Schmidt et al. 1981:184-189).

The third category (Klären) in the above classification concentrates on explaining phenomena or examining problems. It corresponds to the ability to reflect reality in ideal forms and to discover the unknown (Schmidt et al. 1981:23-27).

The generally accepted social communicative function lies behind Saukkonen's (1982) categorization. He divides texts into three main categories: *artistic*, *informative*, and *factual*. The rich variety of texts can be regarded as modifications of basic functional and abstract models accepted in various cultures.

2.2 Text types

A much used classification of texts is the one presented by Werlich (1976). He classifies texts into five text types: *description*, *narration*, *exposition*, *argumentation*, and *instruction*. The five different text types are idealized norms which correlate with 'forms and ranges of human cognition' (1976:21). Thus, they are claimed to reflect the basic cognitive processes involved in contextual categorization. These basic cognitive processes are the differentiation and interrelation of perceptions in *space* (in the descriptive text type), the differentiation and interrelation of perceptions in *time* (in the narrative text type), the *comprehension* of general concepts (in the expository text type), *judging*, i.e. the establishment of relations between and among concepts through the extraction of similarities, contrasts and transformations from them (in the argumentative text type), and the *planning* of future behaviour (in the instructive text type).

Werlich (1976:39-42) makes the distinction mentioned above on the basis of linguistic features such as sentence type, sequencing type, type of text structuring, and tense. In the *descriptive* text type, the dominant sentence type is a phenomenon-registering sentence with *be* or another verb of non-change (e.g. *seem*, *contain*, *consist of*) in the present or past tense and an adverbial of place. The dominant sequence type is spatial. The typical features of the *narrative* text type contain, for instance, action-recording sentences with verbs of change (e.g. *call*, *grow*, *run*) in the past tense and adverbials of place and time. In the *expository* text type the sentence types are phenomenon-identifying and phenomenon-linking

sentences: the simple phenomenon-identifying sentence with the non-change verb *be* in the present tense and a nominal group, which is used to initiate synthetic exposition, and the simple phenomenon-linking sentence with the non-change verb *have* in the present tense and a nominal group, which is used to initiate analytic exposition.

Argumentative passages consist of quality-attributing sentences with the negated non-change verb *be* in the present tense and an adjective, and contrastive sequences. The *instructive* text type comprises simple action-demanding sentences with the infinitive of a verb.

Text forms and *text form variants* are, according to Werlich (1976:46), the conventional manifestations of a text type. He uses the term 'text form' to refer to the manifestations of a text type conventionally regarded as the dominant manifestations of a particular type (e.g. a comment is the dominant manifestation of subjective argumentation). The term 'text form variant' is used to refer to the manifestations of a text form that are composed in accordance with a fixed compositional plan (e.g. a leading article is a text form variant of the comment). Werlich's terms 'text form' and 'text form variant' could be considered synonymous with the term 'tekstilaji' mentioned by Saukkonen (1984:30). These notions are usually employed when texts are classified according to their characteristics and purposes.

Text forms and text form variants are connected with culture and conventions. Tirkkonen-Condit (1985:14-16) points out that the linguistic markers referred to above help to identify passages from texts as descriptive, narrative, expository, and so on, but they are not meant for the typological definition of entire texts.

The descriptions of the expository text type in much-quoted American textbooks on composition are fairly general in nature, as is the one by Brooks and Warren (1979:40):

We want to explain or inform about something.

or Bander's (1978:94) way of describing this text type:

. . . the purpose of expository writing is to present facts or ideas by using various techniques of development . . . by examples, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, definition, logical division.

Tirkkonen-Condit (1982:15) admits that

. . . in some textual genres discourse conventions can be relatively narrowly defined. There are guides to writing business letters, legal documents, dissertations, and so on. Even in these relatively fossilized textual territories, however, the discourse norms are seldom stated in explicit linguistic terms. Students are expected to learn by way of samples, by intuition that develops with experience.

The expository text type and the argumentative one both appeal to understanding (Brooks and Warren 1979:44). An expository text explains an object, mechanism, process, or idea, whereas the purpose of an argumentative text is to convince the reader of the truth or desirability of something. In exposition the

writer's primary intention is to set forth the order and structure of the situation, whereas in argumentation it is setting forth facts or opinions and drawing conclusions from them. Brooks and Warren (1979:109) differentiate argumentation from persuasion, the end of an argument being truth, and that of persuasion assent to the will of the persuader.

The studies by Peters (1986:171) and by Grabe (1987:115) claim that expository prose has not been exhaustively defined. Grabe remarks that the term 'expository' itself is rather crude. As the definitions of the terms are not clear, it is no wonder that weaker student writers in particular may sometimes choose a text type or genre that is not the one expected in the writing situation (Lindeberg 1988).

One possible reason for this might be that genre recognition has not been part of the foreign language teachers' professional training. Lindeberg (1988:9) points out that the student's failure to meet the requirements of more demanding text types (exposition and argumentation) could be ascribed to the teacher's inability to teach the conventional features of genres to their students. An awareness of genre recognition should be raised among foreign language composition teachers possibly within their in-service training or at least in the form of articles written on genre in their journals. The use of ample reading material as models and integrating writing tasks with reading would certainly raise students' genre awareness (cf. Krashen 1984). Of course this activity requires language teachers' knowledge of these matters, otherwise it will not work. Another probable explanation may be that, as Perera (1984) notes, exposition as a text type is difficult to master even in a child's L1. Besides, Bereiter (1980), commenting on the data he collected, reports that narrative writing was established by age eight or nine but that expository writing developed much later.

Aston (1977:478f.) defines argumentative discourse by contrasting it with description. Modal verbs, tense, and evaluative expressions are characteristic linguistic features of argumentative prose. He further illustrates speech acts in the argumentative text, although the sequences he describes do not comprise whole texts.

Tirkkonen-Condit (1982; 1985) regards argumentative texts as being mainly built around the rhetorical structure of problem-solution, consisting of recursive patterns of *situation, problem, solution, result, and evaluation*. Some of these elements may, however, be optional. Tirkkonen-Condit's studies are based on articles written in EL1 by professionals, and their translations into Finnish.

2.3 Writing as a cognitive process

The 1970s has been said to be the decade that discovered the writing process. The impetus for research on the writing process is frequently traced to the publication of Janet Emig's (1971) pioneering study, *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. Contrary to the prevailing practice, Emig focused attention on the process rather than the product. In her research, Emig adopted a case study approach using audiotaped think-aloud protocols as data. She analysed the writing processes of

eight high school seniors, audiotaping their composing aloud, observing her students while they wrote, and interviewing them afterwards.

The shift in emphasis from product to process represented an important change in research for the field. The growing interest in research on writing and reading is evidenced by the attention that has been paid to them in such volumes as *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (1982; 1992), *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (1986), *Curriculum Research in Writing and Reading* (1992), and *Handbook of Research on Curriculum* (1992). Researchers have become increasingly interested in writing processes and the kinds of thinking writers do as they produce text. Among the major objectives of the new writing researchers was, as Nystrand puts it, "their dissociation from a prescriptiveness focused on good texts . . . and, alternatively, their commitment to an objective and systematic description of composing" (Nystrand 1989:67). As research evidence of the new shift of focus are the characterizations of the process (Perl 1979), and of the writer (Graves 1975). Like Emig, most of the researchers into process have chosen case study as their primary mode of inquiry.

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s, composing has primarily been viewed as a problem solving task. Composing processes are best seen as cognitive processes, and it is thanks to cognitive science that teachers and researchers have the tools required for constructing a process theory of writing (e.g. Collins and Gentner 1980).

Several researchers have developed cognitive models of composing in attempts to understand the specific processes that an individual engages in while producing a written text. The purpose of the next two sections is to examine two much applied models of the writing process. Section 2.3.1 focuses on one of the most significant models, the model developed by Flower and Hayes (1981). The Flower and Hayes model of composing is based on their studies of think-aloud protocols collected from mature, college-level writers while in the act of composing. Section 2.3.2 explores the model based on the work of Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), who maintain that there are essentially two models of the composing process that writers may follow: one is referred to as the knowledge-telling model, and the other as the knowledge-transforming model. The Bereiter and Scardamalia model is included in the present study for two reasons. Firstly, because some of the weaker EFL students in the present study were discovered to follow the former pattern in their topic development (see section 8.1), and secondly, because many of the more sophisticated models of the writing process are built on their work (Hildyard 1992:1529).

2.3.1 The Flower and Hayes model

One of the most powerful and undoubtedly one of the most frequently applied cognitive models of composing is that developed by Flower and Hayes (1981). Flower and Hayes extracted the basic moves or strategies that competent writers use in writing expository compositions from the writers' think-aloud protocols. The protocols were collected when the writers were in the act of composing. The Flower and Hayes model not only identifies subprocesses of the composing process, but also indicates how these subprocesses are organized. In order to

facilitate the analysis of writing, the writer's world is divided into interacting components: the task environment, the writer's long-term memory (LTM), and the writing processes themselves (see Figure 2.1.). The task environment and the writer's long-term memory are the context in which the model operates.

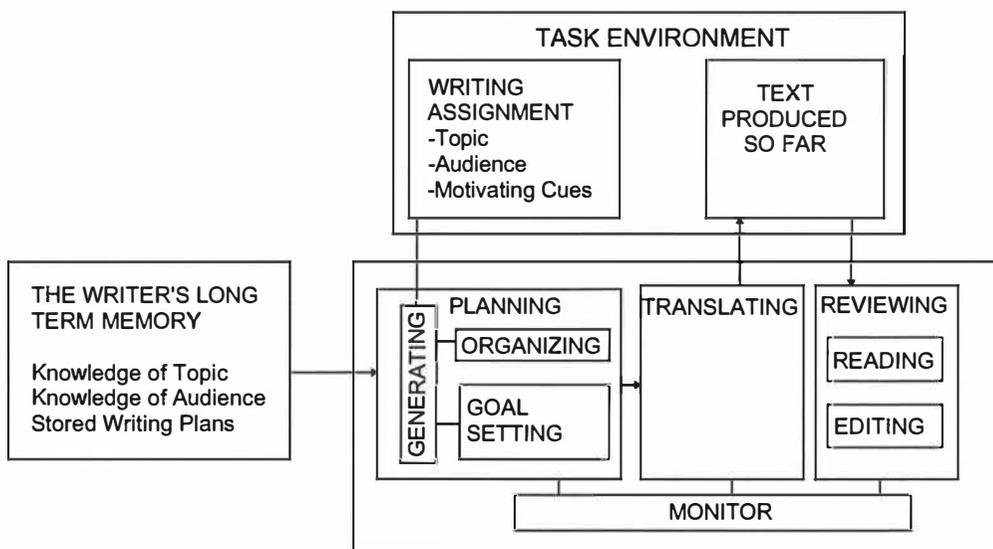


Figure 2.1 The Flower and Hayes model of writing (1981)

The task environment includes "everything outside the writer's skin that influences the performance of the task" (Hayes and Flower 1980:12). It includes the writing assignment, and information that is relevant to the writer's motivation. The writing assignment involves a description of the topic and the intended audience, that is, the rhetorical problem. The task environment may also include information that is relevant to the writers' motivation. A stern expression on the teacher's face when he/she presents the task may tell writers that the assignment must be taken seriously (for the importance of such motivational factors, see also Britton et al. 1975). The problem also includes the degree of urgency of the task, that is, the goals that writers set for themselves. However, there are differences between writers in understanding the rhetorical problem. Good writers will be able to take them into consideration but generally writers understand the task only to the extent that they simply produce a composition. Once writers have started their written assignments, the task environment in this model also includes the text that they have produced thus far. This piece of text has an important role in the task environment because writers repeatedly refer to it during the process of composition.

The writers' LTM consists of their knowledge of topic, audience, and generalized writing plans, in the form of a story grammar (Rumelhart 1977) or formulae in the form of wh-questions. The writer's long-term memory also includes the vocabulary and the grammar of the foreign language.

The task environment and the writer's LTM affect and are affected by the writing processes themselves. There are three major writing processes: planning, translating, and reviewing. The planning process consists of the subprocesses of generating, organizing, and goal-setting. In the planning process the writer takes information from the task environment and from long-term memory and uses it to set goals and to establish a writing plan to guide the production of text, which will meet those goals. These goals resemble metacognition (for an early discussion on metacognition, see Flavell 1976). Translating involves expressing ideas and goals in verbal forms. It acts under the guidance of the writing plan to produce language corresponding to information in the writer's memory. Reviewing consists of the subprocesses of reading and editing. The function of the reviewing process is to improve the quality of the text produced by the translating process. The focus can be either plans or text. With the help of the monitor the writer is able to switch back and forth in the processes and to embed one process or a subprocess within another such that, for instance, reviewing can become a subprocess during planning. The function of the monitor is to regulate the processes of planning, translating, and reviewing.

Using this theoretical model to explain data from different empirical studies, Flower and Hayes have identified composing as an exceedingly complex problem-solving task invoked in response to a rhetorical situation that requires a communicative activity in the form of an extended written text. Their research has shown that writing is not a linear process in which a writer moves from planning to translating and to reviewing in an orderly sequence. Instead, most writers have been observed to write recursively, not knowing what the written outcome will be when they begin composing. This research on the composing process contradicts the assumptions of traditional pedagogy, which required students to find a topic, produce an outline, and then write in a linear order. It has also discovered differences between the strategies of skilled and novice writers. Skilled writers pay more attention to content and organization, whereas novice writers are preoccupied with mechanics. (For a detailed and comprehensive account of L1 writing process research, see Hillocks 1986.)

2.3.2 Bereiter and Scardamalia's model of writing

In their book, *The Psychology of Written Composition* (1987), Bereiter and Scardamalia explain two basically different models of composing that writers may follow: the knowledge-telling model and the knowledge-transforming model. As regards the present study, some of the writers in the low group seemed to follow the knowledge-telling model in their topic development (see section 7.6). But since the view of writing that emerges from the Bereiter and Scardamalia model based on research on writing among schoolchildren seems to be very similar to what they outline in their article 'Does learning to write have to be so difficult?', a brief look at the earlier views expressed in the article will be taken first.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983:20-33) point out that difficulties in writing depend on the road which the child is following towards competence. For children on the high road to writing, learning to write is difficult, because for them writing means pursuing goals that are unattainable. The low road also leads to

competence, although to a different kind of competence. For children on the low road writing is not necessarily hard. There are difficulties but the obstacles can be reduced. For children on the high road, the problems are in the nature of what writing means to them.

Writers on the high road, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983) note, see a relationship between what they write and what they mean. Writing for them becomes an assignment of representing meaning rather than of transcribing language, which immediately makes writing a much more demanding task. Cultivating this relationship makes writing a communication task. In addition to that, to focus on this relationship, writing is used to advance the writer's own thinking. Children on the high road incorporate new relationships into their writing, and consequently reconstitute their writing task at a higher, and more complex level. Regardless of what the school writing task might call for, they incorporate its requirements into a more comprehensive piece of writing. Although all writers who travel on the high road probably incorporate the same major dimensions into their writing task, differences in emphasis must be vast.

Transcription is one of the major obstacles for low road writers. After it ceases to be an obstacle, these children shift most of their attention to the next obstacle, content generation. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983) call this the next sentence problem. They have observed that students seize on any device (sentence openers, word lists, formats for analysing audience characteristics, running jump strategy) that might help them think of more to write. The running jump strategy consists of fast rereading the text produced so far and using the acquired momentum to launch themselves into the next sentence.

Overcoming the content generation problem often gives rise to a new problem, rambling (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1983:28). The writing of those low road writers who tend to ramble lacks an overall rhetorical purpose and plan. As the creation of such a plan would require an investment of mental capacity, students on the low road turn to a handier way, the topic outline. It does not solve the rambling problem, but it creates an impression of a system that nonetheless hides incoherence at deeper levels. Both of these low-road strategies are recommended by school and college composition textbooks.

The work of Graves (1975), and primarily his use of 'conferencing', aims at getting children onto the high road (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1983:32-33). It involves the teacher as an active collaborator in the writing process. The teacher's primary task is to help the child with the conceptualization of the assignment. Some negotiation will go on at this point between the writer, the teacher, and the text. The child is involved in problem reformulation, which is the sign of high-road mental activity. The progression from do-it-with-help to do-it-alone is a demanding task requiring considerable sensitivity on the part of the teacher. The demand that this method places on teachers is that the teachers are on the high road themselves.

The knowledge-telling strategy (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1983:29; Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987) is a common low-road strategy. Products of a knowledge-telling strategy consist basically of a string of items drawn from the writer's memory. Very often a low-road writer using this strategy fails to maintain a selection criterion when executing a writing task. Then the product is an

indiscriminately reported piece of writing. For beginning writers this strategy is easy enough to handle, but it also lends itself to gradual refinement. Instead of indiscriminate knowledge reporting, the low-road writer may hold on to a criterion of relevance to the point, or add an interest criterion. With these kinds of refinements the low-road writers can achieve writing comparable to that produced by writers on the high road.

Most children are on the low road to writing competence. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983) claim that writing instruction is geared to them. Besides, teachers support the knowledge-telling strategy, trying through suggestions, criticisms, and examples, to make students refine the strategy. With prewriting activities, conference, topic outlining, they ease the mental burden of taking too many aspects of the writing assignment into consideration simultaneously. If one takes a purely pragmatic view of writing, seeing writing as a pure communication skill, then the low road might even be a preferred path. The objection of Bereiter and Scardamalia to the low road, however, is that low-road writing is used to communicate thought and knowledge. High-road writing plays a crucial role in mental life. As a great integrative process, writing becomes the 'organizing force in people's mental development.' Bereiter and Scardamalia (1983:31) regard writing as the prime medium for deliberating one's own thoughts and experiences. Thus, they regard the development of a mental life in which mental efforts are continuously directed toward the construction of meanings as the principal responsibility of modern education.

The knowledge-telling model with its problems makes writing a fairly natural task. The model makes maximum use of existing cognitive structures and minimizes the number of new problems that must be solved. Young writers often have difficulty in differentiating between speaking and writing (for the major differences between speech and writing, see section 2.5). In oral discourse, generating content is seldom a problem because of the support provided by conversational partners.² In writing, children have problems in thinking of what to say, in sticking to the topic, in producing an intelligible whole, and in taking an audience not immediately present into account. Beginning writers have to find alternative sources for retrieving content from memory. Once they have got started, the text already produced can help them provide cues for related content.³

The knowledge-transforming model, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987:5) maintain, implies that writing is a task that grows in complexity to match the expanding competence of the writer. As the child's writing skill increases, old difficulties will be replaced by novel ones of a higher order. For those who choose the latter model, it provides them with a promise of higher levels of literary

² One suggested reason for younger students' poor performance on persuasive writing tasks is that their schema is derived from an oral context and that the lack of an interlocutor prohibits production (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1982).

³ In order to meet the demands of written communication, young writers must extend their oral language competencies in the following ways: (1) they must invent subject matter without the scaffolding that is presumed in dialogue; (2) they must be able to address remote and indeterminate audiences; (3) they must engage in cooperative discourse; and (4) they must monitor the message and engage in ongoing and recursive revision (Rubin and Dodd 1988). (For *instructional scaffolding*, see Langer and Applebee 1986.)

quality, and ultimately, the chance to achieve greater cognitive benefits from the writing process itself.

The thinking-aloud protocols of school-age writers provide a means of access to how the writing process proceeds. The knowledge-telling model suggests that what goes on mentally in the novice writer's mind fairly closely resembles what appears on the page. The knowledge-transforming model, on the other hand, implies that among more expert writers there is a great deal of activity revealed in the thinking-aloud protocols that bears no direct resemblance to the text (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987:18).

In the knowledge-transforming model the writer seems to have conscious access to linguistic resources, which entails having it coded in a hierarchical way. This model also suggests that the writer has alternative ways of expressing and organizing the ideas at his/her disposal, and employing rhetorical strategies (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987:88).

These models could be compared with 'toteava' ('stating') and 'kehittelevä' ('developing') (Mikkonen and Lonka 1985) and with 'registering' and 'transforming' (Biggs 1973). The differences between the models suggested by Bereiter and Scardamalia bear some resemblance to the differences between inexperienced and expert writers described by Flower and Hayes (1981).⁴ Hildyard (1992:1530) claims that the model being developed by J.R. Hayes clearly builds on the work of Bereiter and Scardamalia, as well as on the previous work of Hayes and Flower (1980). According to Hildyard (1992:1530), this new model not only indicates a greater emphasis on the task environment and the effect of the knowledge that the writer brings to every writing assignment, but also includes an explicit motivational element — a factor which has been missing in most cognitive-based theories. But the exact role of motivation with regard to writing is unclear. She further points out the necessity to link the cognitive, motivational, social, and contextual factors when explicating the writing process.

Other cognitive models of composing have been presented, for instance, by Bracewell et al. (1982), by Bruce et al. (1982), and a multilevel model that gives prominence to the different kinds of mental units suggested by de Beaugrande (1984).

2.3.3 Research note

Second-language composition specialists have found guidance in first language composition research (Krapels 1990). Connor (in press) illustrates this by taking Raimes's (1987) case study as an example. Raimes's research, like a great deal of first language work involves only one writing assignment, and data are collected from process- and product-oriented sources. Think-alouds are analysed and charted with regard to the various components of the process model: planning, translating, and reviewing. Strategies for addressing the audience are assessed; and procedures for addressing the writing task are explained. With regard to product-oriented data, students' compositions are analysed and evaluated

⁴ For differences across writers discovered by just focusing on the initial phase, see e.g. Arndt (1987).

according to their length, use of different syntactic measures, coherence, development, and other features contributing to essay quality.

In her review of ESL writing process research, Krapels (1990) points out that studies have examined the composing processes of roughly 100 subjects. Despite the limited number of subjects and tasks in the studies, and inconsistencies in some of the research reports, the results tend to reveal several recurrent motifs concerning research findings (Krapels 1990:49):

- (1) A lack of competence in writing in English results more from the lack of composing competence than from the lack of linguistic competence.
- (2) The composing processes of expert L2 writers are similar to those of expert L1 writers; likewise the composing processes of novice L2 writers resemble those of novice L1 writers. Thus, differences between L1 and L2 writers relate to composing proficiency rather than to their first languages.
- (3) A finding closely related to (2) is that one's first language writing process transfers to one's second language writing process.
- (4) Composing processes in L2 writers are somewhat different from those in L1 (a finding that contradicts item 2).

At this stage, it seems premature to generalize about L2 writing processes because of the limitations in the few studies that have been done, for example, concerning the number of subjects and settings. Krapels (1990:53) concludes that "although much has already been learned about second language writing processes, so much more lies undiscovered". Early L2 studies showed similarities between L1 and L2 composing. More recent studies have questioned these similarities. The details of these differences remain unclear. Even so, every study provokes new questions and new research areas.

Research has focused on one aspect, composing processes, and has not controlled for other variables such as knowledge of the audience, the context, and the purpose which, according to the communicative model, are involved in a writing situation. Connor (in press) regards the influence of process-oriented composition research on contrastive rhetoric as significant. She claims that "applied linguists working on contrastive rhetoric have learned that studying written products without analyzing the context, situation, audience knowledge, and purpose of the writing task is not enough".

In Cumming's (1988; 1989) study, the second-language performance of 23 young adults on three composition tasks was assessed in relation to their writing expertise and second-language proficiency. The major finding emerging from this study was that writing expertise and second-language proficiency accounted for distinctly separate portions of the variance in qualities of the compositions the participants produced in their second language and in the problem-solving strategies the participants used to control their composing.

Three features of writing expertise were verified empirically in second-language writing performance: (1) extensive use of heuristic search strategies for evaluating and solving problems, (2) attention to complex aspects of writing while making decisions, and (3) the production of effective content and discourse in compositions. The findings of Cumming's (1988) study will be referred to in chapter 8.

2.4 Nystrand's model of writing and reading

As was mentioned in section 2.3, the 1970s was the decade when the composing process was discovered. During the following decade, there was a shift of interest from things cognitive to things social (see e.g. Nystrand 1989:66-67). Researchers working in the fields of writing and reading became increasingly interested in the ways in which writers and readers interact, or more distinctly, what reciprocal and respective roles they play in written discourse.

Nystrand's model of writing centers on the idea that both writing and reading are social, interactive and reciprocal processes. In his model, the writer and the reader actively interact and negotiate the meaning of a text. This interaction involves an exchange of meaning, or transformation of shared knowledge. In other words, Nystrand gives a picture of a writer and a reader interacting every time the reader understands a written text. This is how Nystrand (1989:74) views the interaction:

when the respective purposes of the writer and the reader intersect as they must when the reader comprehends the writer's text, the meaning that the reader gives to the text is a unique result — a distinctive convergence or interaction — of writer and reader purposes.

Thus, written communication is "a fiduciary act for both writers and readers in which they continuously seek to orient themselves to a projected state of convergence between them". Nystrand regards the process of writing as a matter of elaborating text in accordance with what the writer can reasonably assume that the reader knows or expects, and the process of reading is as a matter of predicting text in accordance with what the reader assumes about the writer's purpose. Consequently, texts do not take the shape they do only because the writer wants to say something. It is the communicative needs of writers to balance their purposes and intentions with the expectations and needs of readers.

If writing is conceptualized as the writers' negotiation of meaning between themselves and their readers, text is not only the result of the process whereby the writer's purpose is translated into text, but also a medium of communication mediating the writer's and the reader's purposes. Besides, in terms of the social-interactive model, texts have meaning to the degree that "their potential for meaning is realized by the reader" (Nystrand 1989:76). In other words, text meaning is not conceptualized in terms of the writer alone but in terms of interaction between writer and reader purposes. It is also important to notice that, in Nystrand's model, text meaning is not conceptualized in terms of the text's semantic content but rather in terms of its semantic potential (1989:76).

Following Bakhtin and Medvedev (1985), Nystrand (1989:77-78) accepts the proposition that meaning is "a social construct negotiated by writer and reader through the medium of text, which uniquely configures their respective purposes". Despite the fact that readers, like writers, can bring their own purposes to the text, they are however constrained by the limits of text meaning, which, according to Nystrand (1989:78), are determined not only by objective text properties, and not merely by the reader's cognition,

but also by reciprocity between writers and their readers that binds the writer's intention, the reader's cognition, and properties of text all together in the enterprise of text meaning. In other words, meaning is between writer and reader.

The text is not just black marks on paper, but it has a special objective character of its own (Nystrand's "objective properties of text"). The text also functions as a mediator between writer and reader purposes.

According to Leppänen (1993:100-101), the obligation for the reader that can be seen in the quotation above indicates that Nystrand is "firmly attached to the mainstream tradition in reading research in claiming that in reading there is a meaning which can, or must, be shared by the writer and his/her readers". His claim that readers have to read with the assumed writer's purposes in mind, rules out the possibility of subjective, idiosyncratic or resistant readings (Leppänen 1993:101). In real life, there may be cases where writers may deliberately produce texts that are difficult or ambiguous, and there may also be cases where readers intentionally read divergently and unconventionally. Leppänen (1993:101) points out that Nystrand may have forgotten that "real writers and readers may have multiple and even conflicting purposes and intentions".

As examples of different reader types, Widdowson (1984:226) mentions submissive and resistant readers.⁵ Scholes (1985) stresses that in the reading of texts the eventual goal must be critical reading. The worst thing that EFL reading teachers can do, Scholes (1985) argues, is to foster in students "an attitude of reverence before text" (1985:16). An over-reverential attitude to texts may be a particular temptation for second language learners who may find foreign language texts intimidating because of the lack of their linguistic or schematic knowledge.⁶

Nystrand (1989:79,81) seems to insist on communicative homeostasis and convergence of writer and reader purposes as a fundamental axiom guiding written communication by claiming that

the skilled writer reasonably assumes that her text will almost certainly be read by someone who comes to the text already sharing or at least open to her interest in the topic and, to some extent, her purpose in writing, for why else would someone read it?

Nystrand continues that, in real life, readers come looking for texts ready to meet halfway the writers whose texts they choose. Only in the case of school writing, he argues, may writers question whether or not their readers will share their

⁵ According to Widdowson (1984), submissive readers' interpretation is likely to be the one intended by the writer. Assertive readers, in their part, can derive remote interpretations. If the reader is too submissive, Widdowson claims, he/she may accumulate information without accommodating it into the schematic structure of existing knowledge. A problem with too assertive readers is that they may distort the writer's intentions by denying access to new information.

⁶ Kress (1985), among others, has questioned how much choice readers can have in the stance they take up in relation to a particular text. There are factors which might work against the personal freedom of the reader to accommodate the text to his/her purposes. According to Kress, some readers may be socially in a weak position to resist particular discourses in particular genres. For instance, children in school are not generally enabled to assert themselves against the prevailing discourses in school texts. Some genres may also differ strikingly in the amount of freedom they allow for alternative readings.

interests and purposes. On this point he observes that teachers are exceptional readers in this respect. In the case of school writing, the present writer would suggest that it is particularly important for the reader to be interested in, and open to, the texts that students produce. Otherwise, the reader would violate the current views on the importance of affective factors in learning, teaching and evaluating.

In terms of writing processes, skilled writing is continuously constrained by the writer's sense of reciprocity with his/her readers just as reading is continuously constrained by the reader's sense of the writer's purpose. In practice, this means that a skilled writer has to craft the beginning of his/her text so that it will initiate a mutual frame of reference with his/her reader. When the writer introduces new information that might threaten reciprocity, he/she will contextualize this new information with an elaboration, an example or a definition. Thus, the writer treats as a possible trouble source all the points in his/her text where the writer senses reciprocity might be threatened, in other words, where he/she suspects his/her convergence with his/her readers may fail.

In Nystrand's social-interactive model of writing, skilled writers are assumed to do three essential things (Nystrand 1989:79-80). Firstly, they initiate written discourse. The beginning of any text is unique in the sense that it must function to establish a mutual frame of reference between writer and reader. Most obviously, the text must establish a clear topic. Moreover, it must also clarify the genre of the text so that the reader can determine from context, title, and tone what kind of text he/she is confronting. Secondly, skilled writers sustain written discourse. Once the writer has established a mutual frame of reference, he/she proceeds by elaborating the text, which, by the introducing of new information, either expands or modifies the temporarily shared social reality (TSSR).⁷ Thirdly, writers' options consist of three kinds of elaborations. Genre elaborations clarify the nature of the communication. Topical elaborations clarify discourse topics, and finally local elaborations (or commentary) clarify discourse comments.

To summarize, Nystrand claims that the social-interactive writing model as described above could elucidate the recursive and complex character of the composing process by bringing order to complexity in a parsimonious and simple way. Flower and Hayes, among others, have demonstrated the central role of the monitor in the composing process, "metaphorically the central processing unit or chief executive officer of the system", as Nystrand (1989:82) expresses it. The workings of the monitor could be submitted to scrutiny through the perspectives provided by social-interactive models of discourse. This approach to discourse helps us to understand the social and reciprocal relationship between the writer and the reader, and how the text serves as a mediator of writer and reader purposes. As Nystrand himself puts it, "texts are not just the result of writing but also the medium of communication whose features are best understood for their capacity to bridge writer and reader interests and purposes" (Nystrand 1989:82). Most fundamentally, by emphasizing the quintessential mutuality of written communication, the social-interactive view of writing forces writers and readers to attempt to join each other's discourse community.

⁷

A *temporarily shared social reality* (or TSSR) means an initial calibration of conversants' intentions and expectations vis-à-vis the topic and genre of the text (Nystrand 1989:73-74).

2.5 Spoken and written discourse

Section 2.4 discussed Nystrand's model of writing and reading in which the writer and the reader actively interact and negotiate the meaning of a text. The purpose of this section is to study the differences between speech and writing.⁸ Several researchers (e.g. Chafe 1980; Kress 1994; Linell 1982; Perera 1984; Tannen 1982; and Tiittula 1992) have focused their attention on the difference between speech and writing. The present exploration limits itself to the most prominent differences between these two modes of language, the major focus being on the implications of the structure of speech for student writing (see section 8.2).

As speech is learned before writing, the grammatical and textual rules of speech form the basis of the child's knowledge and use of language. Speech is characterized by the immediate presence of an addressee, which means that the most frequent type of spoken language is face-to-face conversation. This kind of language is a cooperative product: a question is followed by an answer, and so on. Accordingly, spoken texts are typically created in interaction and a single speaker's contribution to the text is not a complete text in itself (Kress 1994). Very often the text is generated more by one speaker than the other, usually, as Kress (1994:35) points out, by the more powerful participant in the interaction. This does not only mean that the powerful speaker may speak more but that he/she directs the speech of both participants. Children are frequently the less powerful participants in spoken interactions, in situations where they speak, for example, to parents or teachers (Kress 1994).

Language is only one aspect of the total act of communication. People communicate non-verbally by means of noises such as sighs, laughter, and by body posture, gestures, and facial expressions. When the participants in a conversation know each other well, they can take for granted shared knowledge, ideas and attitudes. Hence much knowledge can be left implicit, that is, unsaid. This aspect has an influence on the structure of speech. The dominant and characteristic unit of speech is the information unit. It is marked by co-ordination and adjunction. The known-unknown structure of the succession of information units is closely related to the implicitness of speech. The speaker decides what to offer as known and unknown information to the addressee. It is the shared knowledge that, according to Kress (1994:36), provides a bridge between speaker and hearer.

Topic development and structuring in speech is predominantly handled by intonation. It structures the topic/nontopic distinction within an information unit, and it also structures larger textual units. Topic development and structuring are also handled by the sequential ordering of clauses, by repetition, elaboration, restatement (Kress 1994). Spontaneous speech is generally a co-operative product, with different people contributing in turn. This, together with the lack of opportunity for planning and the impossibility of revision, means that people may

⁸ Zellermayer et al. (1991) emphasize both the integrative character of speech and writing as well as the collaborative nature of the interaction that leads to the acquisition of dialogic skills which enhance communicative competence in speech as well as in writing.

wander freely over a wide range of topics that are not necessarily related in any way. In speech it is possible for people to change the subject without being inappropriate, whereas in most writing an overall theme is needed (Perera 1984).

What are the effects and implications of these features for children's writing? As noted above, the fact that the child learns the grammatical and textual rules of speech first means that these are the rules of language that the child draws on when he/she learns to write. Thus, as Kress (1994:36-37) maintains, the child's (early) writing shows many of the features typical of spoken language. Unlike in speech, the addressee in writing is, in most cases, absent. This may cause difficulties for the writer. He/she will have to imagine the absent addressee in some form; or perhaps the child has no addressee in mind when writing. What is most significant, the stimulation of an interlocutor in writing is missing. Most often, the writer receives no prompting about what to write, no encouragement to continue and no indication of any ambiguity or lack of clarity in his/her writing (Perera 1984:163). Whereas, in speech the child creates a text in interaction, in writing he/she is forced to produce a self-sufficient text by him/herself. Writing demands the development of the habit of explicitness. Of course, being alone, writers can take their time to search for the exact expression of their meaning without the fear of interruption. Writers can correct, alter and polish their work, finally presenting a fair copy without any trace of earlier, rejected versions. Such effort is often necessary because there are no gestures or other non-verbal signals to support the words. Consequently, in writing, the language has to bear the entire burden of communication (Perera 1984).

Since the structure of writing is fundamentally different from speech, the child is faced with the difficulty of learning a new syntactic, semantic and textual unit, the sentence (Kress 1994). In speech, one clause follows another in a chain. In such a sequence of clauses each clause adds to the topic and to the development of the text in general. For the child used to the expression of one thought over a series of syntactically loosely connected clauses, the notion of the sentence may cause problems, since sentences typically comprise a number of clauses which are in a hierarchical relation to each other, with one main clause to which others are subordinated in various syntactic ways. Thus, the development of the adult concept of the sentence demands the development of planning, deciding the main clause and how subsidiary ideas are to be integrated with the main clause. Conceptual and syntactic complexity are intertwined here.

Textual structures in spoken language are mainly developed by intonation. Punctuation in writing, to some degree, reflects the intonational and informational structures of spoken language. Commas usually occur at the end of an information unit. However, written language has its own structures and conventions, deriving from the syntax of writing rather than that of speech (Kress 1994). As Perera (1984:200) notes, a great deal of writing skill is also needed to express the liveliness and commitment that are non-linguistically evident in speech. Therefore it may not be surprising that children's writing often seems either inappropriately exaggerated or flat and dull. Furthermore, larger textual structures, such as paragraphs, do not exist in speech, and thus, they have to be learned from the start. As some of the difficulties that children experience in composing effective written language and in understanding written texts derive

from the differences between speech and writing, an explicit awareness of these differences may provide tools for helping EFL students become more efficient writers.

2.6 Communicative competence

This section focuses on the concept of communicative competence by studying it mainly from the point of view of writing. Since the term "communicative competence" was introduced by Hymes in the mid-1960s, it has been very popular among teachers, researchers and others interested in language. In the field of second and foreign language pedagogy, an emphasis on language for communication offered a promising departure from the narrower and still popular focus on language as grammar (Canale 1983:2). This section discusses two models of communicative competence: one suggested by Canale (1983) and the other by Bachman (1990). The discussion below shows that communicative competence is a complex cognitive skill consisting of various competencies. Finally, section 2.7.3 focuses on the model of student writing, indicating those elements that contribute to the complexity of student writing. This model of student writing was used in the IEA writing project.

2.6.1 Canale's model of communicative competence

In Canale and Swain (1980)⁹ communicative competence was understood as the underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication (e.g. knowledge of vocabulary and skill in using the sociolinguistic conventions of a given language). In addition, a further distinction was made between communicative competence and actual competence. Actual competence meant the realization of knowledge and skill under such limiting psychological and environmental circumstances as fatigue, nervousness, and interfering background noises. According to Canale (1983:5), communicative competence is an essential part of actual communication. Canale and Swain (1980), exploring the theoretical bases of language teaching and language testing, distinguish 'grammatical competence', which includes lexis, morphology, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology, from 'sociolinguistic competence', which consists of sociocultural rules and rules of discourse.

⁹ Matthiessen et al. (1992) regard the model suggested by Canale and Swain (1980) as an influential model of communicative competence, but they criticize the Canale and Swain model and other such models of language testing for partialness. By partialness Matthiessen et al. (1992) mean the fact that these models tend to suggest lists of areas to be covered, but that they do not explicitly show *how* the components listed are related. In the same article, Matthiessen et al. (1992) introduce their holistic model of language in context, "where it is absolutely clear how the features being assessed are systematically related" (Matthiessen et al. 1992:183).

The theoretical framework for communicative competence proposed by Canale (1983:6-11; see also Canale and Swain 1980) includes four areas of knowledge and skill: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Thus, compared to the Canale and Swain model, Canale (1983) makes a further distinction between 'sociolinguistic competence' and 'discourse competence'.

In Canale's (1983) model, grammatical competence includes features and rules of the language such as vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation, spelling and linguistic semantics. According to Canale (1983:7), such competence "focusses directly on the knowledge and skill required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances". Canale (1983:7) claims that although grammatical competence is an important issue in second language teaching, it is not clear that any current theory could be chosen over others to describe this competence nor in what way a theory of grammar would be directly relevant for second language pedagogy.

Sociolinguistic competence addresses the degree to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on such contextual factors as topic, status of participants and purposes of interaction. Appropriateness of utterances refers to both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form.

Discourse competence relates to the mastery of combining grammatical forms and meanings to produce a unified spoken or written text in various genres. Unity in a text is achieved through cohesion in form and coherence in meaning (Canale 1983:9). Halliday and Hasan (1976) try to identify the types of cohesion devices that serve different features of coherence and consequently contribute to the quality and unity of a text. This particular component of communicative competence is of major importance for the present study.

Canale (1983:10) refers to an example given in Widdowson (1978) to illustrate the fact that the notion of discourse knowledge and skill can be distinguished from grammatical competence and sociolinguistic competence.

Speaker A: What did the rain do?

Speaker B: The crops were destroyed by the rain. (Widdowson 1978:25)

B's answer is grammatically and sociolinguistically appropriate but the violation appears to occur at the discourse level and to involve the normal organization of written sentences in English in which topic precedes comment. Canale clarifies the distinction by claiming that the interaction of grammatical, sociolinguistic and discourse rules indicates the complexity of communicative competence and is consistent with the distinction between these three areas of communicative competence. However, he argues that it is not clear that all discourse rules should be distinguished from grammatical rules and sociolinguistic rules.

Strategic competence consists of the mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to limiting conditions in actual communication or to inadequate competence in one or more of the other areas of communicative competence or to enhance the effectiveness of communication.

2.6.2 Bachman's model of communicative competence

Bachman's (1990:81) model is based on the notion that "the ability to use language communicatively involves both knowledge of or competence in the language, and the capacity for implementing, or using this competence." His model extends beyond earlier models for describing the measurement of language proficiency (e.g. Lado 1961). These models distinguished skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) from components of knowledge (grammar, vocabulary, phonology / graphology). What was missing in them, Bachman claims, was their inability to indicate how skills and knowledge are related. Besides, a more serious limitation was their failure to recognize the full context of language use, by which Bachman (1990:82) means the contexts of discourse and situation. Bachman (1990:83) suggests that recent formulations (see above) of communicative competence provide a more inclusive description of the knowledge needed to use language than the earlier skills and components models did. They include, in addition to the knowledge of grammatical rules, the knowledge of how language is used to achieve certain communicative goals, and the recognition of language use as a dynamic process.

From the point of view of the present study, the framework of communicative language ability (Bachman 1990:84-86) which includes both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use, is too broad. What will be described here is his description of what he calls language competence, which he divides into organizational competence and pragmatic competence. The former comprises the "abilities involved in controlling the formal structure of language for producing or recognizing grammatically correct sentences, comprehending their propositional content, and ordering them to form texts" (Bachman 1990:87). Bachman divides organizational competence into grammatical competence and textual competence.

Grammatical competence consists of the knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and phonology/graphology. These control word choice to express specific significations, their forms, their arrangement in utterances to express propositions, and their realizations, for instance, as written symbols.

Textual competence comprises the knowledge of the conventions for combining utterances that are structured according to rules of cohesion and rhetorical organization to form a text. Cohesion includes means of explicitly marking semantic relationships (Halliday and Hasan 1976), as well as conventions governing the ordering of old and new information in discourse.

Conventions of rhetorical organization include such methods of development as how to order information in, for instance, narration, description, comparison, and classification. In writing classes some of these conventions are taught, for instance, by way of the ordering of information in a paragraph of expository writing.

The notion of pragmatic competence includes illocutionary competence, or the "knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the

sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context" (Bachman 1990:90).

2.6.3 The IEA model of student writing

Drawing on the theories of cognitive psychology and discourse comprehension and production, Takala (1986:45-48) divides the overall construct of student writing into two subconstructs, which correlate with each other, but which can be conceptually separated from one another. These two subconstructs are writing competence and writing preference (Figure 2.2.).

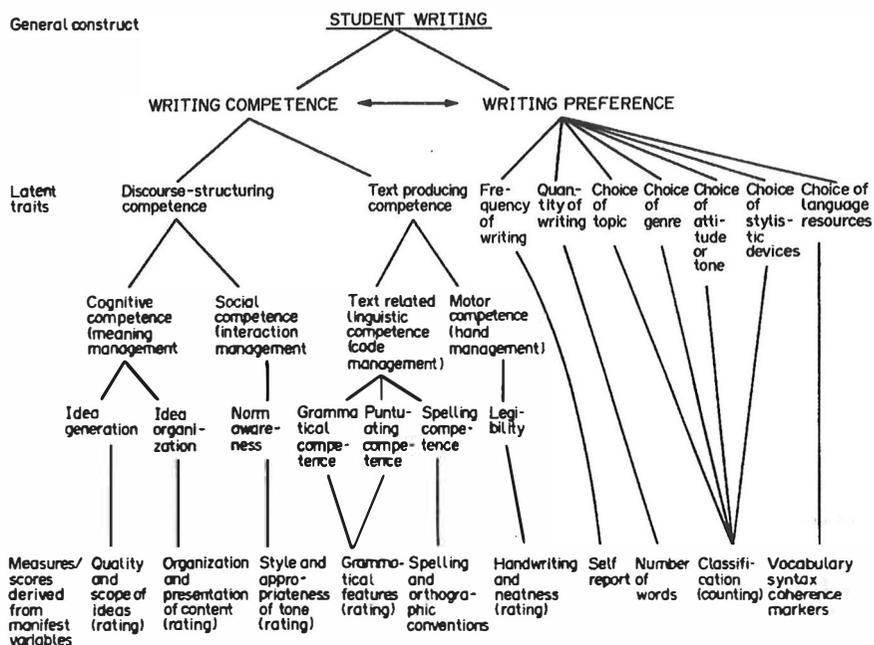


Figure 2.2 The general model of student writing (the IEA project)

In the above model (Figure 2.2.) writing competence consists of text-producing competence and discourse-structuring competence (or rhetorical competence) (cf. Bachman 1990.) The former comprises the writer's ability to generate cognitive and linguistic units organized to produce an appropriate meaning structure. How well the writer succeeds in doing this is always dependent on his/her purposes and the addressee. It is important that the thoughts are relevant and clear to the addressee. As the addressee is generally some other person than the writer, discourse-structuring competence also presupposes social competence. The writer needs to be aware of the reader's expectations, attitudes, etc. The appropriate style and tone must also be used.

Below the relevance of the general model of student writing for the present study will be discussed in detail.

Text-producing competence requires text/linguistic competence or code management and motor competence. Text/linguistic competence or code management refers to the ability to produce text with appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation. As Purves et al. (1988:43) point out, surface features like these are important in composition writing, because they need to be adequately under control by the writer so that the reader is able to decipher what the writer wants to inscribe. Motor competence enables the writer to form legible letters and sentences. This is a basic concern during the early years of schooling, a concern which may be obviated as word-processing becomes more common (Purves et al. 1988:43). A great deal of instructional time is spent on developing this competence in composition.

Discourse-structuring competence is as important to writing as text-producing competence. Discourse-structuring or meaning-making includes the cognitive competence to transcribe or report or explore a given topic or issue (Purves et al. 1988:43). The writer must be able to handle the available topic material and to organize that material in an intellectually appropriate manner. Furthermore, the notion of social competence suggests that he/she needs to use language which is appropriate to the audience and the situation.

Purves et al. (1988:44) point out that this threefold character of the production of competent discourse may be seen in the definition of a text type or a genre. A text type is first defined by its content. For instance, a business letter is a request or a complaint about some action or article. In an argumentative task writers are to engage themselves in the argument on the assigned topic, providing adequate evidence and considering alternatives or counter-arguments.

Secondly, Purves et al. (1988:44) suggest, a particular genre is determined by the general scope of its organization or structure. Different kinds of discourse are organized in a certain conventional manner to meet the criteria by which they are judged. For example, a business letter must have a salutation and a close, although with the increasing use of E-mail messages, this may be less valid than before. However, in most types of school writing the limits are set by convention. An argument, for instance, can be made employing a conventional debater's procedure with thesis and support, using examples of logical reasoning.

Thirdly, along with the content and organization, there are conventional limits to the style and tone of genres. For instance, the tone of a business letter must be serious. The argument again is generally serious, although the writer could also make the point by using satire (Purves et al. 1988:44).

As to the relevance of these two competencies, that is, text/linguistic competence and discourse-structuring competence, they are the major concerns in determining issues of task selection and scoring (see chapter 6). Discourse-structuring competence is highly significant in determining the issues of information structure and topic/comment development in EFL compositions. For the theoretical examination of information structure and the concepts of topic and comment, see chapter 5.

Writing preferences might include several traits such as selecting culturally preferred topics; if students have the opportunity to choose between

various writing tasks, the frequency with which a particular task is chosen is the clearest indicator of writing preferences. The quantity of writing is another: how much students write and the choice of topics can be seen to reflect individual preferences. The choice of genre, for instance, whether they prefer narration instead of exposition, is another indicator of writing preferences. The choice of tone, for example, whether students clearly express their views and give their arguments for or against them, also indicates their preferences. Particulars of grammar, vocabulary, and syntax are important indices of writing preferences. Finally, tones of address add interesting personal touches to writing (Takala 1986; see also Purves et al. 1988). Although many of these choices are often culturally determined, they are also determined by the particular subject one is writing about.

All the above interpretations must be made on the basis of the linguistic realization of compositions. The choice of stylistic devices requires the use of comparisons, metaphors, rhetorical questions, etc. Finally, the choice of language resources can be studied, for example, the quantity and variability of the vocabulary that students use, or the means that they employ to make their texts cohesive and coherent (Takala 1986:93-100). Writing preferences are not, however, as central in this study as writing competence.

2.7 Summary

Section 2.1 provided the definition of the notion of discourse used in this study. Its purpose was also to look at the various functions of language. The survey indicated the diversity of terms used for various but basically similarly conceived functions of language. Section 2.2 addressed a much-used text type classification suggested by Werlich (1975) and various ways of defining especially expository and argumentative text types, which have relevance for the present study.

Section 2.3 looked at writing as a cognitive process. The impetus for research on the writing process was Emig's pioneering study in which she focused her attention on the process rather than the product. In her research, Emig employed a case study approach using audiotaped think-aloud protocols as data. Protocols thus obtained from skilled writers make it evident that such procedures as collecting material, organizing it, writing it out, and revising it occur, but not in a linear way as in the traditional way of looking at writing.

Several general models of the composing process have been put forward, each highlighting certain aspects of the process. The Flower and Hayes model (1981) is probably the most widely cited model. The strength of their model lies in its claim to account for the diversity of mental events during composition on the basis of a relatively small number of subprocesses. This is achieved by a control structure that allows virtually any subprocess to incorporate any other subprocess.

In their model, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) make a distinction between two fundamental cognitive models of writing: knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming. The products of the writer who follows the former

model consist basically of a string of items drawn from the writer's memory. The latter model implies that writing is a task that grows in complexity to match the expanding competence of the writer.

Section 2.4 explored one of the current models of writing and reading, that suggested by Nystrand. His model centers on the idea that both writing and reading are social, interactive and reciprocal processes. In his model, the writer and the reader actively interact and negotiate the meaning of a text. In terms of writing processes, skilled writing is constrained by the writer's sense of reciprocity with his/her readers just as reading is constrained by the reader's sense of the writer's purpose. In practice, this means that writers are assumed to do three things. Firstly, they are assumed to initiate written discourse. Secondly, they are assumed to sustain it, and thirdly, they are assumed to provide various kinds of elaborations such as topical elaborations to clarify discourse topics, and local elaborations to satisfy discourse comments. Nystrand's model, however, claims that in reading there is a meaning which is shared by the writer and the reader. This assumption seems to ignore various reader dispositions.

Section 2.5 addressed the differences between speaking and writing. As one of the most fundamental differences between writing and speech is the structure of writing, the child is faced with the difficulty of learning a new syntactic, semantic and textual unit, the sentence. Since larger textual structures, such as paragraphs do not exist in speech, the child has to learn them from scratch. In the same vein, textual structures in spoken language are normally developed by intonation, which, in written language, are partly reflected in punctuation.

Section 2.6 looked at two models of communicative competence: the models of Canale (1983) and Bachman (1990). Approximately the same components, which are considered to form the basic elements of actual communication, are described in both models. The extent to which the various components of communicative competence are separate units in psychological terms is, as Huhta (1994:38) notes, a completely different thing. Huhta cites the study by Bachman and Palmer (1981), which provides research evidence to support the claim that certain models can be based on psychological evidence, at least as far as specific types of language learners are concerned. The IEA model of student writing, which is of definite relevance for this study, is a synthesis that has a solid basis in research literature.

3 WRITING IN A SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Chapter 3 consists of four major sections, the contents of which are closely related to each other, in fact, inseparable, for anybody actively involved in research on composition and on composition instruction as well as composition instruction itself.

Section 3.1 investigates the development of ESL composition theory by concentrating on three approaches: the process approach, the interactive views, and the social constructionist view. The general focus in this section is on four different aspects of composition instruction, that is, the writer, the audience, reality and truth, and the source of language in written texts.

Section 3.2 addresses teaching writing in a second or a foreign language. First, it gives a diachronic view of composition instruction comprising the controlled composition model, current-traditional rhetoric, the process approach, and English for academic purposes. Then, despite some obvious overlap, it looks at the categorization of various approaches to teaching writing suggested by Raimes (1991a). Raimes categorizes approaches to teaching writing in terms of four elements that can be valued or overvalued in instruction: the form, which refers to the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the text; the writer and the writer's ideas, experiences, feelings, and composing processes; the content or subject matter; and the reader, especially the expectations of the academic audience. She divides the approaches into four groups: a form-focused approach, a writer-focused approach, a content-focused approach, and a reader-focused approach. A balanced stance, according to Raimes (1991a), results from taking all the above elements into consideration. An unbalanced stance values one of the four components at the expense of the others, which may warp instruction and even lead to unsound contentiousness. To illustrate what she means by instructional balance she contrasts it with four unbalanced stances that emerge

from uncritical dedication to one approach or from an extreme reaction to a previous approach.

The focus of section 3.3 is on responding to student writing. Although students, to a varying degree, may write responses to their peers' papers, this section is limited to responses written by teachers. The investigation of how best to respond to student writing is an important stage at which teachers have to look at their students' texts. Thus, this phase of writing instruction forms a crucial node where process and product meet.

3.1 The development of ESL composition theory

This section studies the development of ESL composition theory. The motivation for this effort derives from the belief that awareness of ESL writing theories and the assumptions that underlie them is an asset for researchers and teachers of composition. Johns (1990:24-36) suggests four aspects that should be taken into consideration when teaching composition. These four facets of composition instruction Johns owes to the rhetorician Berlin (1982; 1987; 1988; see also Connor in press), who suggests that all rhetorical theories and, thus, all approaches to teaching composition must account for the following: (1) the writer, (2) the audience (or reader), (3) reality and truth, and (4) the source of language in written texts. These four components are the organizing principles for the three categories of approach to composition theory: the process approach, the interactive approach, and the social constructionist view.

3.1.1 The process approach

The two key words in the "writing as a problem-solving" approach or process approach are thinking and process. The first identifies higher-order thinking skills with problem-solving, and is the theme of Flower's textbook *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing* (1989). Students are required to plan extensively. Planning comprises defining the rhetorical problem, putting it into a larger context, exploring its elements, generating alternative solutions, and arriving at a well-supported conclusion. Once the problem has been identified and the paper has been planned, students continue with the writing process by translating their plans into words, and finally by revising and editing their texts. The writer's mental processes are of great importance to the process orientation and, as Johns (1990:25) claims, the role of the writer is seen as that of a creator.

Since the focus of the process approach is on the writer's cognitive structures and on the writing process which the writer undergoes to produce text, this approach has close links with cognitive psychology in general. Understanding the role of the reader is important. In her discussion of the inability of college writers to succeed in their classes, Flower (1979) attributes college writers' difficulties to their failure to move cognitively from "writer-based" to "reader-based" prose. It is, however, useful for student writers to attempt to produce

writer-based prose first, ignoring the reader at the initial stage (Flower 1979; 1981). The process approach permits the writer "freedom to generate a breadth of information and a variety of alternative relationships before locking himself or herself into a premature formulation" (Flower 1979:36). Beginning with writer-based prose also lowers the student's cognitive load, postponing editing at the stage when the writer is busy generating ideas.

This stage is followed by the transformation of writer-based prose into reader-based prose, prose that takes the reader into account. According to Flower, this means moving from facts and details into concepts, and changing the writer's style from a narrative or episodic into an expository style organized around the writer's purpose (Flower 1979:37). Krashen (1984:32) maintains that writers who have read have subconsciously acquired the basic features of reader-based prose. Consequently, for those writers, the transformation does not cause any major problems; it "involves simply switching from one subconsciously acquired dialect to another" (Krashen 1984:32). The present researcher regards Krashen's claim as an exaggeration. If only things were that easy (cf. Perera 1984).

The ability to consider one's 'writer-based' prose from the potential readers' perspective and transform it into 'reader-based' prose is an act of social cognition that depends on the writer's internalization of the concept of audience (cf. Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987).

Teacher-student conferences held regularly between drafts will inform the students what areas need to be worked on (cf. Krashen 1984). Sharing one's writing with other students will reinforce the fact that the teacher is not the only reader, and also convince students of the audience considerations that need to be paid attention to. To mature as writers students need to learn to appeal to their readers' needs and interests.

In addition to discussing the character of the writer, and the role of the audience, L1 composition theories and research frequently bring up the question of reality and truth. Berlin (1982:766) considers this feature important to composition pedagogy, because "in teaching writing, we are tacitly teaching a version of reality and the student's place and mode of operation within it". In the process approaches, reality and truth lie in the writer's mind.

In the process approaches, language is influenced by, or influences, the other components of a theory, i.e. the nature of the writer, the audience, and reality and truth. Form and language are determined by content, and consequently they are the outcome of the writer's intentions, prior experiences, and his/her creative urge (Johns 1990:32).

3.1.2 The interactive approach

In interactive approaches, the writer is viewed as a person involved in a dialogue with his or her reader (Bakhtin 1973; 1981). Texts are created through a dialogue between the writer and another conversant. The writer and the reader take responsibility for creating coherent text. Thus, the writer is an interactant who engages in dialogue with the reader (Johns 1990:27).

Teachers who adhere to the interactive view will certainly advise their students to clarify their topics, their arguments, their organization, and transitions

to the reader. Those producing expository texts should, according to Meyer (1977), reveal the form of the text (e.g. "The problem to be discussed in the paper . . .") and the content (e.g. ". . . is pollution".) right in the first paragraph of their compositions, and maintain and develop topics in a manner which is accessible to the reader (Cerniglia et al. 1990; Connor and Farmer 1990; Mäkinen 1991). Other features of "writer-responsible" text include discourse organization in a way which is familiar to the reader, appropriate use of cohesion, and direct explication of information.

In the interactivity between writer and text, the writer attempts to appeal to the reader through a reality on which both can agree. The writer also attempts to convince the reader of a particular argument, but if this appeal does not succeed, the reader will reject the truth value of the text. In such a case, Johns (1990:32) claims, coherence between writer and reader will not be established.

If writers use language which is new to their readers, they will need to lead the latter through the text by allowing for gradual revision of the schemas that the readers have previously held. Thus, the writers assist their readers' comprehension (Johns 1990:32-33).

The reader is seen to possess formal and content schemas, which are activated by the text when the reading process begins (Carrell 1983; Carrell et al. 1988). Schemas have been described as 'cognitive constructs which allow for the organization of information in long-term memory' (Widdowson 1983:34). Cook (1989:69), also emphasizing the cognitive characteristics of schemas which allow readers to relate incoming information to already known information, puts it thus: "The mind, stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by the context, activates a knowledge schema". What is suggested by these definitions of schemas is that they cover the whole range of the world. Coherence of text is thus achieved through the fit between the organization, content, and argument of the text and the schemas of the reader (Johns 1990:30). As well as allowing readers to organize knowledge economically, schemas also allow them to predict the continuation of written discourse (Wallace 1992:33).

3.1.3 The social constructionist approach

If the 1970s was the decade that discovered the composing process, the 1980s was the decade that discovered the role of social context in composing (Nystrand 1986; 1989). In the 1980s, researchers started examining writers and writing in different social settings. Some of the pioneering work contributing to this movement were Fish's (1976/1980) "interpretive communities", Nystrand's (1982) essay on "speech community", Bizzell's essays on "discourse community", Odell and Goswami's (1985) study of nonacademic writing, and Heath's (1983) ethnographic study of two communities and their literacy practices. These studies showed that writers' plans, goals, and other process-based strategies depend on the purpose, setting, and audience of writing.

The assumption that underlies a constructivist theory of learning is that knowledge is actively constructed by the learner as he/she acts within a social

context. Consequently the focus is on learning in context.¹⁰ This view presents a challenge to teachers, because it calls for a rethinking of the teacher-student relationship. Harste (1985:15) points out that "to view language learning as collaboration is to see language learning as a socio-psycholinguistic process". Under a socio-psycholinguistic view of language learning, learners are seen as active participants who, according to Harste (1985:15), not only make "language their own but . . . endow language with their own birthmarks". Harste claims that there are always two kinds of forces at work in language. One is towards meaning maintenance; the other towards meaning generation.

According to Hildyard (1992:1533), understanding and negotiating the social context requires that writers belong to a discourse community. She further explains that writers must reach a consensus about what is worth communicating, how it may be communicated, what other members of the community are likely to know and believe to be true about certain subjects. Thus, claiming that writing is socially constructed implicitly acknowledges the larger cultural context within which any written communication is embedded. The writer does not write for a 'mythical audience' in isolation; rather, he/she belongs to and writes for a community with specialized conventions. The constructionist view of the writing process requires reexamination of the nature of classroom discourse communities. Teachers need to provide opportunities for students to express emotion, form interpersonal relationships, and explore knowledge in contexts where their written products are not subjected to formal evaluation.

For adherents of this view, the 'discourse community' for whom the writer is composing text determines the nature of discourse for the writer.¹¹ Swales (1990) gives a six-part definition of a discourse community:

1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed upon set of common public goals.
2. A discourse community has mechanisms for intercommunication among its members.
3. A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
4. A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
5. The discourse community has some specific vocabulary.
6. A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursual expertise.

Swales's carefully constructed definition of a discourse community is inspired by his work with advanced ESL students.

¹⁰ For children's acquisition of oral language, see Bruner 1972; Vygotsky 1962.

¹¹ In Fish's (1980:14) definition of an interpretative community "the meanings and texts produced by an interpretative community are not subjective because they do not proceed from an isolated individual but from a public and conventional point of view". Takala (1983:23) regards the concept of the interpretative communities as a useful notion, which on its part contributes to "the exploration of the problem of meaning in linguistic philosophy, cognitive psychology and cognitive science".

In the social constructionist view,¹² the reader is an expert, omniscient member of the discourse community. The reader has the power to accept or reject the writer's text as coherent and consistent with the conventions of the target discourse community (for the concept of 'audience addressed', see Ede and Lundsford 1984).

The view of reality and truth held by social constructionists involves the notion that the character of a text is determined by the discourse community for which it is written. Genre studies and discussion of discourse communities will help to understand the dimension of reality. Swales (1990:53) emphasizes the socially determined nature of genres, describing them as 'communicative events which are socioculturally recognizable'. Genres are social events not only in terms of the social roles and purposes of those who create them as writer but because the communicative function of the resulting written text is recognizable to a particular community of readers. (For the use of linguistic and discursual features of different genres, see Martin and Rothery 1986.)

The social constructionists see language as an outgrowth of the discourse community for which the text has been produced. For ESL students this may cause problems because they do not fully understand the context for language use and the audience addressed.

Raimes (1991b:415) raises the issue whether we should put our trust in an academic discourse community, or whether we should rather attempt to influence and change that community for the benefit of our students. A related question is whether we see the academic discourse community as open, and beneficial to our students or whether we see discourse communities as powerful and controlling. She concludes that "teaching writing is inherently political, and how we perceive the purposes of writing vis-à-vis the academic community will reflect our political stance" (Raimes 1991b:416).

ESL teachers' views of reality and truth will undoubtedly influence their emphases in classroom activities and tasks:

If, for example, the teacher believes that reality resides in the individual, then he or she will encourage students to be creative and to find their own topics and organization for their texts. If the teacher believes that reality is negotiated between reader and writer, he or she will assist students in developing arguments that are sensitive to another reader's views and counterarguments. If, on the other hand, the teacher takes a social constructionist stand, he or she will begin with the rules of discourse in the community for which the student writers are producing text. These rules, not the students' own, will become the standards for teaching and evaluating writing for the class. (Johns 1990:32)

The mixture of theories of rhetoric, theories of composition, and theories of teaching composition is intentional here, since as composition teachers "we mix the

¹² Bruner (1990), in his book *Acts of Meaning*, discusses the powerful role of culturally shaped narrative thinking in people's conception of themselves and of the social world in which they live. After elaborating on his account of meaning-making as a mediator between mind and culture, he (1990:114) examines the distributive picture of Self in the following manner: "just as one's knowledge gets caught in the net of culture, so too Self becomes enmeshed in a net of others". According to Bruner (1990), it is this distributive picture of Self that became prevalent among social constructionists.

three frequently in our thinking and planning" (Johns 1990:24, footnote). Being cognizant of the prevailing theories clarifies language teachers' work and enables them to craft more coherent and unified composition courses, and thus aids their students in achieving more coherent and effective writing.

Composition theory also reflects ideologies. Berlin (1988) sees ideologies as providing "the language to define the self, other subjects, the material world and the relation of all these to each other. Ideology is thus inscribed in language practices, entering all features of our experience" (1988:479). Johns (1990:34) claims that composition teachers and the whole profession would benefit from a more thorough exploration of the theories and the ideologies they mediate, because of their impact on classroom practices that result from this process. This is something that has not been discussed in Finland so far. Such an exploration would surely help teachers to clarify their professional images, and to recognize their theoretical positions. Only after becoming aware of the alternatives and what they contain will they be able to see where they stand.

3.2 Teaching writing in a second or foreign language

This section focuses on the history of second language writing instruction in terms of how writing has been viewed within the English-as-a-second- language (ESL) curriculum from the 1940s up to the present, focusing primarily on how the teaching of writing has changed over that time. The succession of orientations to L2 writing forms a cycle in which certain approaches emerge as more dominant than others and then fade, but never totally disappear. These swings of the pendulum have been largely affected by developments in the teaching of writing to native speakers of English (cf. Berlin 1987).

The discussion in section 3.2 will cover the period of ESL composition from about 1945, the beginning of the development of second language teaching in the United States, to the present day. The diachronic view of composition teaching will focus on the origins, methods, and implications of the four most influential approaches: controlled composition, current-traditional rhetoric, the process approaches, and English for academic purposes (Silva 1990:11-21).

The diachronic view suggested by Silva (1990) will then be supplemented by a categorization of various approaches to teaching writing used by Raimes (1991a): a form-focused approach, a writer-focused approach, a content-focused approach, and a reader-focused approach. As the titles indicate, there will inevitably be some overlap in these surveys. After introducing the four approaches, the discussion moves on to what Raimes calls balanced and unbalanced stances, which interestingly provide an important contribution to the investigation of the field (sections 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.3.3, and 3.3.4). A discussion based on Silva's categorization will serve as a starting point.

3.2.1 Controlled composition

Controlled composition, which is sometimes also referred to as guided composition, is derived from Fries's (1945) oral approach, the precursor of the audiolingual method of second language teaching. The notions that language is speech (from structural linguistics) and that learning is habit formation (from behaviorist psychology) underlie the view of controlled composition. Seen from that angle, it is no wonder that writing was considered a secondary concern. Rivers (1968:241), for example, saw the function of writing in the controlled composition model as "the handmaid of the other skills", which must be "considered as a service activity rather than as an end in itself" (Rivers 1968:258). Almost a decade later Paulston and Bruder (1976:203) gave the rationale for teaching ESL writing that 'writing is one way of providing variety in classroom procedures'. They (Paulston and Bruder 1976:230) regarded free writing, i.e. writer-originated discourse, as a useful form of written exercise because it would 'give vent to their feelings'. However, such free writing was soundly rejected by others, like Rivers and Temperley (1978), because 'not all students have the gift of imagination' (Rivers and Temperley 1978:317). Finocchiaro (1974:88) recommended checklists to cover errors in spelling, punctuation, structure and vocabulary, with the conclusion: "You may prefer, if ideas are important, to give two points for ideas", and finally: "If you think four ideas are necessary, give half a point for each". This kind of approach is clearly atomistic in character, a device for finding out whether the writer can control a single feature necessary for acquiring skill in writing.

Learning to write was seen as practice in habit formation. The writer was a manipulator of earlier learned language structures. Imitation and manipulation of model texts dominated L2 writing instruction and theory. The writing teacher's job, according to Raimes (1991a:239), was to make sure that students did not make errors as they transformed or imitated model texts. The reader was the ESL teacher whose task was to edit and proofread the student's product, and whose main interest lay in formal linguistic features, not so much in the quality of the writer's ideas or expressions. The text was a mere collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items, 'a vehicle for language practice' (Silva 1990:13). Agreeing with Silva (1990:13), the writer of the present study would claim that the controlled composition approach is 'still alive and well' in many composition classrooms and textbooks, although that model is no longer so prominently addressed in the professional literature.

3.2.2 Current-traditional rhetoric

The mid-sixties aroused an increased awareness of ESL students' needs to produce extended written discourse. As a result of educational reforms in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, increased numbers of young people went to college, and writing became a required subject at most colleges (Connor in press). Controlled composition was not enough. A bridge was needed between controlled composition and free writing. The gap was filled by the ESL version of current-

traditional rhetoric¹³, an approach combining the principles of the current-traditional paradigm from L1 composition teaching with Kaplan's (1966) theory of contrastive rhetoric.

The logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms, and particularly the paragraph, were of primary interest. Attention was given both to the elements of the paragraph (topic sentences, support sentences, concluding sentences, and transitions) and to different options of development (illustration, exemplification, comparison, contrast, partition, classification, definition, causal analysis, etc.).¹⁴ Another significant focus was essay development, i.e. how to proceed from the paragraph to larger stretches of discourse. Larger structural entities (introduction, body, and conclusion) and organizational patterns (narration, description, exposition, and argumentation) were addressed.¹⁵

In classroom procedures, the main focus was on form. Writing was basically a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences and paragraphs into patterns. Learning to write involved becoming good at identifying, internalizing, and executing these patterns. The writer was supposed to conform to fixed model with given or self-generated content items. The resultant text was often a collection of complex discourse structures. Silva (1990:14-15) makes a strong case for the notion that the current-traditional approach remains prevalent in ESL writing materials and classroom practices.

3.2.3 The process approach

The process approach was introduced in ESL composition because of the dissatisfaction that was felt towards controlled composition and the current-traditional approach.¹⁶ Research into first-language composition (Flower 1989; Taylor 1981; Zamel 1982) offered what the previous two approaches seemed to lack: relevance to thought and expression, and the combining of creative thinking with writing.

¹³ Richard Young (1978:31) mentions the following overt features when characterizing the current-traditional paradigm: . . . "the emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process; the analysis of discourse into words, sentences and paragraphs, the classification of discourse into description, narration, exposition, and argument; the strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis); the preoccupation with the informal essay and the research paper; and so on".

¹⁴ However, Weissberg (1984) claims that the kinds of traditional rhetorical categories presented above do not accurately describe the majority of paragraphs actually written in and published in English. Instead, he gives an alternative, a set of descriptive models for teaching paragraph development in ESL writing classes based on the *given/new contract*. (For Weissberg's 1984 study, see section 5.1.3.)

¹⁵ Isaksson-Wikberg (1992:29; see also Kinneavy 1971) notes that, more than any of his contemporaries, Bain (1916:vi) contributed to the formalization of the different kinds of composition, namely, description, narration, exposition, and oratory, and to the formalization of the paragraph and the topic sentence.

¹⁶ The notion of a process-based orientation in writing is not new; for example, in the 1920s Ostwald gave an interesting account of his need to revise his ideas once again.

In recent years, the process approach has begun to replace the more traditional product-oriented approach in second and foreign language writing programs. Writing is seen as a process whereby the finished product emerges after a series of drafts. The emphasis on the process is not meant to imply a repudiation of interest in the product (i.e. the final draft). On the contrary, the main goal is to achieve the best possible product. What differentiates a process-oriented approach from a product-centered approach is that the outcome of writing — that is, the product — is not preconceived. In a process approach writing is divergent, with as many different outcomes as there are writers, whereas in a product-centered approach writing tends to converge towards a predefined goal. What is strikingly different from the traditional evaluation methods is that the student writer's work usually comes to appraisal by the teacher after it has gone through several rounds of peer evaluation and student self-assessment.

The overall writing process can be divided into several subprocesses. White and Arndt (1991:6), for instance, divide it into six subprocesses: generating ideas, focusing, structuring, drafting, evaluating and re-viewing. According to White and Arndt, these procedures apply to the creation of any piece of writing, irrespective of text type or subject matter. The procedures that they suggest can be used with any text that teachers or students decide to produce.

Since writing is a recursive process, the activities do not occur in any fixed sequence in the act of producing a text. In most cases, however, there will be more generating and focusing activities at the outset, and more evaluating and reviewing as the drafting progresses. Thus, no particular sequence of activities is rigidly observed. Moreover, at school, within the practical time constraints of one to two hours, very often only limited processing can take place. Since, in real life, time is often restricted, one may be forced to produce compositions of varying length. Consequently, sometimes, within limited time spans, it will be practical to produce shorter compositions with limited processing. When more time is available, more processing may occur, resulting in longer pieces of writing.

With the increased focus on the writing process, there has been a de-emphasis on grammar and mechanics. Although grammar and mechanics have significance for certain types of writing, teachers and evaluators of written work need to take a broader communicative perspective in teaching and in assessment. Teachers' untimely focus on surface issues of form (e.g. grammatical matters, spelling, and punctuation) may negatively affect the writer's motivation. It is true, however, that errors easily distract readers and may also begin to irritate them. Therefore, it would be useful to raise writers' ability to distinguish between those errors that impede written communication from those that do not hinder it so much. The goal of the process approach to writing includes involving writers increasingly in the assessment process by engaging them in self-assessment of their own writing.

3.2.4 English for academic purposes

English for academic purposes is an alternative orientation advocated by those who do not see the process approach prepare students for academic work. Horowitz (1986:143-144), one of the main proponents of this view, argues that the

process approach ignores certain significant academic writing tasks such as the examination essay, and that it also gives students a false impression of how writing tasks at the university level will be evaluated. The emphasis is on academic discourse genres and the variety of academic writing assignments, which are aimed at helping to familiarize students with the academic context. Thus, learning to write involves becoming socialized in the academic community. An attempt is made to ensure that student writing follows acceptable writing behaviours dictated by the academic community (Horowitz 1986:789).

In the English-for-academic-purposes orientation, the writer is primarily oriented towards academic success. The reader is a member of the academic community with stable and distinct views of what is appropriate in an academic writing context. The text is a conventional response to a particular task that falls into a clearly recognizable genre. In brief, the context is the academic community and the tasks are representative of the community. (Silva 1990:16-17.) This approach also has its critics who see its emphases as questionable.¹⁷

To sum up, controlled composition emphasizes the lexical and syntactic features of a text, whereas ESL current-traditional rhetoric focuses on discourse level text structures. In the process approach the main interest lies in the composing behaviour of the writer. Finally, the English-for-academic-purposes orientation concentrates primarily on the reader, as a member of the academic discourse community.

3.3 Raimes's categorization of the approaches to teaching writing

Each new approach to writing pedagogy can be seen to reflect its own set of assumptions about language, literacy, and the roles of writer, reader, subject matter, and textual form (Raimes 1991a:238). In her article 'Instructional balance: From theories to practices in the teaching of writing', Raimes (1991a:238) discusses trends and movements in the teaching of writing, limiting her survey to the last twenty years. According to her, the trends and movements in writing instruction during this period have contained "more controversy than commonality" (Raimes 1991a:238). The plural form of her subtitle — theories and practices — implies that there is diversity in the field and, simultaneously, it shows the current state of the art in writing pedagogy.

To categorize the various approaches to teaching writing, Raimes uses a framework which she borrows from Wayne Booth, who suggests that the main goal of writers is to maintain 'a proper balance' among the elements involved in

¹⁷ The process approach has been taught to first year students at the University of Gothenburg. Teaching process-oriented writing was also started in the English Department of the University of Jyväskylä in the autumn term of 1994. Courses on academic writing, for instance, in the Department of Education, and an experiment on process writing as part of post-graduate education at the University of Jyväskylä have also been arranged. These examples demonstrate both the existence of a need for as well as the applicability of process-oriented writing instruction in an academic context.

communication (Booth 1963:141, as quoted in Raimes 1991a:238). These four elements are: the form, that is, the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the text; the writer and the writer's ideas, experiences, and composing processes; the content or subject matter; and the reader. Where one of these four elements is extremely dominant the result, according to Raimes (1991a), is an unbalanced stance emerging "from uncritical dedication to one approach or from an extreme reaction to a previous approach" (Raimes 1991a:239). What she, like Booth (1963), regards as 'a balanced stance' results from a proper emphasis on each of these four elements.

The four approaches suggested by Raimes (1991a) are a form-focused approach, a writer-focused approach, a content-focused approach, and a reader-focused approach. In Raimes (1991b), she refers to these approaches by using the word "dominated" (e.g. form-dominated, writer-dominated). These approaches will now be briefly characterized — to avoid overlap with the discussion in the previous sections — by emphasizing the concept of stance in the characterization.

3.3.1 The form-focused approach

What Raimes (1991a:239) calls the form-focused approach bears a resemblance to the first two of Silva's approaches described above (see sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). The form-focused approach is the one that looks at text as an element independent of writer and reader. Raimes (1991b:413-414) considers the choice of topics a particularly "thorny" issue. In the form-focused approach, topics are assigned by the teacher. Since the interest is in how sentences and paragraphs are written, each piece of writing serves "as a vehicle for practising and displaying grammatical, syntactic, and rhetorical forms" (Raimes 1991b:413). To serve this purpose, nearly any topic will do.

Despite the concern for formal features of a text, that is, grammatical accuracy, this approach to writing instruction pays attention to rhetorical form as well. Kaplan's 1966 article introduced the concept of 'contrastive rhetoric', which generated pedagogic prescriptions intended to prescribe clear formats for writing a 'linear' composition in English (Kaplan 1966:4). As Raimes points out, "instructional approaches rarely exist in a vacuum. They are supported by research" (Raimes 1991a:240). Twenty-five years later, contrastive rhetoric has given useful information about the structure of other languages (e.g. Eggington 1987; Hinds 1987; Ostler 1987; Tsao 1983), and knowledge about how the links between culture and writing are reflected in written products. The nature of transfer in L2 remains under debate (cf. Mohan and Lo 1985), and transfer has not been found to be significant in certain types of assignments, such as paraphrase (Connor and McCagg 1983). Contrastive rhetoric has not, however, been sufficiently directed towards teaching writing and thus it has not provided "innovative approaches to instruction" (Raimes 1991a:239).

Among the large-scale research enterprises yielding results in relation to the form-focused approach, the IEA Study of Written Composition (Purves 1988) is particularly noteworthy. The Study of Written Composition, started in 1980, examined the teaching and learning of written composition in schools in 14 countries: Chile, England, Finland, The Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary,

Indonesia, Italy, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Sweden, Thailand, the United States, and Wales. The IEA International Study of Written Composition was designed to accomplish the following tasks, as explained by Takala (1988): (1) to contribute to the conceptualization of the domain of school-based written composition, (2) to develop an internationally appropriate set of writing tasks and a system for assessing composition, (3) to describe recent developments and the current state of instruction in the participating countries, and (4) to identify factors that explain differences and patterns in the performance of written composition with special attention to cultural background, curriculum, and teaching practices. Thousands of 12-, 16-, and 18-year-old students in the participating countries wrote compositions in their mother tongues on a variety of topics ranging from reflective to persuasive.

There are two recent volumes illustrating the various procedures of the written study. The first of them, *The IEA Study of Written Composition I: The international writing tasks and scoring scales* (Gorman et al. eds.) describes the development of the topics and the scoring scales and includes copies of benchmark essays. The other volume (Purves [ed.] 1992), reports on discourse analyses of various kinds applied to sample essays from the participating countries. Employing data from the IEA study, Connor and Lauer (1985) describe patterns in persuasive writing of students from England, the United States, and New Zealand, and Bickner and Peyasantiwong (1988) investigate students' reflective writing in Thailand and the United States. Additional volumes based on the rich data set of the IEA study have been planned. As Connor (1991) points out, the data of this large project should offer interesting cross-cultural research possibilities for discourse analysts "because of the uniformity and cultural sensitivity of the topics used" (Connor 1991:166).

The NORDTEXT and the NORDWRITE projects have also provided valuable information about discourse-level properties such as cohesion, coherence, and sentence functions in student texts. The NORDWRITE project concentrates on the development of written EFL skills in the Nordic countries with a special focus on such discourse-level features in writing as lexical cohesion, theme dynamics, and superstructure markers. Papers by Linnarud and Lindeberg describe specific studies in the overview of the project provided by Evensen (1986). Other important contributions connected with the NORDWRITE project include Evensen's (1990) study on superstructure markers, Lautamatti's (1987; 1987) work on topical structure analysis and coherence, Wikborg's (1990) study on coherence breaks in Swedish EFL students' compositions, and Enkvist's (1987; 1990) writing on discourse theory and theories of coherence.

The metaphor that Raimes (1991a:240) applies to an unbalanced stance that can develop with a large body of empirical research and with many years of tradition to support the form-focused approach is the copyeditor's¹⁸ stance. Most teachers of L2 writing will pay attention to rhetorical form and linguistic accuracy. When their attention to rhetorical form and linguistic accuracy is not balanced as one part of the whole complex process of producing a text for a reader, and when there is an overreliance on linguistic correctness and rhetorical conventions, then

¹⁸ The spelling comes from the original (Raimes 1991a).

they are adopting what Raimes (1991a) calls the copyeditor's stance. This approach will easily lead to downplaying the relationship between reader and writer and the truth value of the information in the text in favour of concentrating on formal features. Teachers who favour this stance "prescribe an organizational pattern, provide a model, and correct errors" (Raimes 1991a:240). Students taught by a teacher with a copyeditor's stance will primarily be concerned with formal expectations. Raimes (1991a:240) explains this as follows:

They edit prematurely; the interest or logic of their ideas is not something they spend time on. They end up producing a five-paragraph theme, often organized and grammatically accurate, but empty of life, voice, and originality.

Raimes (1991a:240) notes that those of the composition teachers who have stayed in the field long enough will have read products written by students who have suffered from such an imbalance.

3.3.2 The writer-focused approach

Secondly, the writer-focused approach which was influenced by L1 writing research in the 1970s, focuses on the writing process, that is, what writers actually do when they write. This approach is commonly called the process approach to writing (see section 3.2.3). Students themselves select the topics, using personal experiences to write about, or responding to a shared classroom experience. Students are given time and opportunity for drafts, revisions, and feedback not only from the teacher but from peers as well. As Raimes (1991a:241) points out, the processes of reading, writing, and learning become significant in the classroom. Teachers request their students to think through issues by means of writing about them, to practise generating and revising ideas by writing, and to read, discuss, and interpret texts, including those written by other students in the group.

Research on the cognitive processes of writers who write in both L1 and L2 has yielded information for the writer-focused approach (cf. Zamel 1983; Raimes 1985; 1987; Cumming 1989; for a summary, see Krapels 1990). Since such studies are mostly case studies, the small number of subjects restricts generalizations.

An overemphasis on the writer's role at the expense of the other elements of writing has given rise to an unbalanced stance, which Raimes calls the therapist's stance. This is how Raimes (1991a:241) characterizes this second unbalanced stance:

This consists of the extreme position of valuing the writer's voice, openness, sincerity, and originality in a framework of personal writing above any notions of audience, context, content, or accuracy.

When, for example, an individual teacher's syllabus mandates personal experience topics, three drafts for every piece of writing, and no grammatical corrections, a therapist's stance is, according to Raimes (1991a:242), clearly at work.

3.3.3 The content-focused approach

The process approach, in which the focus on the writer and the writer's processes meant a great shift in the approach to writing instruction, was so enthusiastically received that it was regarded by some as excluding any major attention to content, form, and reader. The reaction was swift, and new emphases on content and/or on the reader's demands were proposed in the form of the content-focused approach. In this approach, language is developed as students communicate about the subject matter of a content course that they are taking (Raimes 1991a). In this approach, topics will be drawn from the subject matter of a particular discipline or a certain course, and provided by the content area teacher or by the language teacher.

When ESL/EFL teachers value the subject matter of other disciplines (that is, what students read and write) at the expense of content in the ESL/EFL field and at the expense of writer, reader, and linguistic form, they adopt what Raimes (1991a:243) calls a butler's stance. Such teachers see language courses as courses in the service of a larger academic community. This pedagogical approach has its own body of research that informs the theoretical base. Studies include the examination of student writing in content areas (cf. Horowitz 1986; Jenkins and Hinds 1987).

3.3.4 The reader-focused approach

The reader-focused approach, and the content-focused approach, are apparently in opposition to the process approach (Raimes 1991a:243). The reader-based approach focuses on the audience or reader. It was, in fact, the process approach that brought the emphasis on the audience to the fore (see section 3.1.1). Group work extended the concept of the audience from the teacher to peers. As regards the topics for writing in a reader-focused approach, language teachers examine the assignments set by other disciplines and train students to respond to those tasks, for example, by "deconstructing" (Johns 1986:253) the essay prompt and by following an appropriate form of academic writing.

The unbalanced stance which overemphasizes the audience and the conventions of a discourse community is what Raimes (1991a:244) calls the sergeant major's stance. Since the reader's expectations are emphasized, the reader is not a real reader, but as Raimes (1991a:244) puts it, "one reified from an examination of academic assignments and texts". This, along with the butler's stance, she claims, represents "a return to the autonomous model of literacy, in which academic tasks and texts are seen as fixed, stable, and determinate" (Raimes 1991a:244). Thus, it does not represent a new or newly principled approach to teaching writing.

The sergeant major's stance makes three assumptions: (1) that a clearly defined, stable academic discourse community exists, with fixed linguistic and rhetorical constructs; (2) that its requirements are fixed and are not to be negotiated or challenged; and (3) that academic writing is what students need to learn and what English teachers know how to teach (Raimes 1991a:245). Instead, the relationship between a discourse community and its individual members

ought to be viewed as "a two-way street", in which both the student and the discourse community are willing to participate in a process of negotiation. If a reader-focused approach gives way to what Raimes calls the sergeant major's stance, the view of the discourse community is one-sided, "stressing a clear and unified community with unquestioned standards" (Raimes 1991a:246).

These four approaches are widely used, discrete, and sequential. Raimes notes that "the last three appear to operate more on a principle of critical reaction to a previous approach than on cumulative development" (Raimes 1991b:412). In her article of 1991, Raimes maintains that writing instruction is less clearly defined in 1991 than it was in 1966 where there is one, clearly-defined approach, the form-focused approach, to follow. It may be easier for some practitioners to work when there is one clearly-defined approach to follow, but for some it may be a straitjacket.

To sum up the previous discussion, a balanced approach recognizes that the four elements — the form of the text, the writer, the content, and the reader — are "fluid, interdependent, and interactive" (Raimes 1991:246). Consequently, when we teach writing we have to balance the four elements since they are not discrete entities. Raimes (1991a:246) crystallizes the importance of the balance between these four elements in the following way:

Writers are readers as they read their own texts. Readers are writers as they make responses on a written text. Content and subject matter do not exist without language. The form of a text is determined by the interaction of writer, reader, and content. Language inevitably reflects subject matter, the writer, and the writer's view of the reader's background knowledge and expectations.

Recognition of the above principles and their application in practice will help teachers find what Raimes (1991a:246) calls "instructional balance".

Recognizing the complexity of the writing process and the writing context may mean that no single theory of writing can be developed (Johns 1990) or that a variety of theories need to be developed to support and inform various approaches to teaching writing (Silva 1990). In either case, Raimes (1991b:421) points out, recognition of complexity is necessary for principled model construction.

3.4 Responding to student writing

As the previous sections indicate, there is a number of approaches to teaching writing to choose from. Teachers are faced with a similar variety of ways in which to respond to student writing. Each writing class, irrespective of its underlying philosophy and teaching practices, will invariably result in the production of student texts that teachers will have to respond to. It is the job of composition teachers not only to evaluate their students' writing but to be able to justify their evaluations (Leki 1990:58). As the teacher's response to a student's paper is

potentially one of the most influential texts in a writing class (Raimes 1991b:418), teachers are concerned about the best approach.

Since studies of teachers' responses in L2 settings are almost nonexistent, what guidelines are there then for L2 composition teachers to follow when responding to student writing? The fact that L2 writers have "a smaller backlog of experience with English grammatical or rhetorical structure to fall back on, not having had the same exposure to those structures as native speakers have had" (Leki 1990:59) may also affect the feedback that is given to L2 students. It is also important that "the goals we set for our writing classes go a long way toward determining how we will respond to our students' writing" (Leki 1990:59).

The question of how best to respond to student writing in order to help students improve their compositions is a particularly problematic issue in teaching composition writing in a second or a foreign language. (It is hardly without problems in L1 writing classes either.) One of the crucial issues is the role of the writing teacher. Another problematic point is whether to focus on form (e.g. grammar, mechanics) or on content (e.g. organization, amount of detail). Whether teachers should focus on the writing process or emphasize the significance of a correct final product in their students' writing is another difficult question.

Let us first discuss the role of the writing teacher. His/her role can be split at least into three incompatible personas: the teacher as a real reader (i.e., audience), the teacher as a coach, and the teacher as an evaluator. This may give rise to a schizophrenic situation for a writing teacher (Leki 1990:59). The unequal power relation inherent in the roles of teacher and student may be even worse in the process-oriented writing approach where the teacher is simultaneously assumed to be the coach and the evaluator of student writing. After having collaborated with his/her students as a facilitator, supporter, and a coach, the teacher may, at the moment of evaluation, find the student's writing inadequate by the standards of the educational system. An important question may then arise as to whether the teacher should have intervened more heavily during the writing process (Leki 1990:60).

A change in the role of writing teachers is also called for; teachers of writing need to gradually dismantle their roles of presenting themselves as authorities who only provide judgmental commentary on student writing and instead collaborate with their students by posing probing questions, challenging them, offering alternatives, and suggesting possibilities (cf. Linnakylä et al. 1988). For teachers, this means creating a balanced teacher-student relationship where compositions can be produced in an environment in which students, rather than being intimidated and frustrated by the complexity of writing, are enthused.¹⁹ For affective reasons, it would be beneficial for students to get credit for every effort which goes into the writing process. Similarly, students would surely benefit more if writing were presented as a stimulating process.

Related to this controversy is the issue over where teachers' feedback should be focused (cf. Leki 1990; Fathman and Whalley 1990). The findings of most studies in L2 feedback (e.g. Taylor 1981; Krashen 1984) show that attention must be paid to both content and form. In the process approach to writing

¹⁹

For a balanced teacher-student relationship, see also Linnakylä et al. (1994).

instruction teachers focus on content during the drafting stages of the process and, only after ideas have been fully developed, on linguistic accuracy, at a later stage of editing. Writing teachers need to give priority to meaning, instead of reading primarily for error because if they make their students convinced that accuracy and correctness are of primary significance, genuine change even at a superficial level is unlikely (Zamel 1985):

To insist only on technical propriety is to underestimate (the) power ((of composing) as a heuristic . . . Conversely, to accentuate the role of composing in discovering new knowledge is to show students why their writing matters, therefore to increase their motivation to write, and therefore, ultimately, to increase the likelihood of improvement because they have become more aware of the purpose and value of making meaning (Knoblauch and Brannon 1984:468).

At its best, writing an essay at school provides a systematic opportunity for students to clarify their views, and to express this new view in a coherent piece of text. Thus engaging students in essay writing has a potential to be an educationally valuable experience (Lamb and Purves 1988:173-174).

What is true for language acquisition, as Krashen (1982) has put it, also applies to learning to write. Monitoring student output while that output is in the process of developing may inhibit further development (Zamel 1985). Zamel (1985) has discovered that the comments of ESL writing teachers show that they do not spot every mistake the students make. Sometimes minor errors are corrected but much more significant mistakes (e.g. those causing ambiguity in meaning) go uncorrected. This kind of marking does not provide the help that student writers would need.

Takala and Degenhart (1992:111-119; see also Takala 1987d) report a study undertaken as part of the IEA project of students' views on writing in nine countries. Students were asked to write a letter of advice to a younger student on how to write a composition that would be considered good by the standards of the teacher. The results showed that students in all countries, with the exception of Thailand, most frequently mentioned points related to the presentation of the composition: the general appearance, length/format, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Content appeared second in frequency. Content was further broken down into information, approach, details, and variety. Advice related to the information to be included in a composition featured especially prominently in Finland. Finnish students also found the organization of the composition important. Compared to the students of the other countries, Finnish student writers regarded the introduction and conclusion as especially important.

Fathman and Whalley (1990) focused on the nature of written feedback and its effect on revision. The 72 students in the study were enrolled in intermediate ESL college composition classes at two different colleges. The students were at similar proficiency levels and had been placed in classes according to holistic ratings of a composition written on a specific topic. Each of the groups received different kinds of feedback. The students in all the groups rewrote their essays, and then both sets of their essays were evaluated for grammatical accuracy and quality of the content. Their study showed that specific feedback on grammatical errors had a greater effect on the improvement of

grammatical accuracy than general feedback on content had on the improvement of content. Grammar and content feedback can be provided either separately or at the same time without burdening the student too much. Students whose errors were underlined and who received general comments on content improved in both grammar and content when they rewrote their compositions.

Zamel (1985), replicating the study of Sommers (1982), found that ESL teachers resemble L1 teachers in their way of providing feedback to their students. Their comments on content are frequently vague and even contradictory. Besides that, Zamel also noticed that students tended to respond to comments on form and ignored those on content.

Even though some research results may question the usefulness of feedback on writing, teachers feel obliged to provide it. As students want feedback on their writing and teachers feel obliged to provide it, the issue remains as to when during the writing process it should be given. Clearly, since research results in L2 are sparse, more research, particularly in L2 is needed.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has focused on three areas of writing: the development of ESL composition theory, writing instruction in second or a foreign language, and the effect of written responses given to students by their teachers.

The survey of the development of ESL composition in section 3.1 covered three different approaches: the process approach, the interactive view, and the social constructionist view. The general focus in the survey was on four different aspects of composition instruction, viz. the writer, the audience, reality and truth, and the source of language in written texts. The process approach has close links with cognitive psychology. The emphasis of the approach is on the writer's cognitive structures and on the writing process through which the writer goes to produce text. Understanding the role of the reader is also a major concern for the adherents of the process approach. According to the interactive view, texts are produced through a dialogue between the writer and a conversant. The writer is seen to engage in dialogue with the reader. The social constructionist view emphasizes the role of social context in composing. For proponents of this view it is the discourse community that determines the nature of discourse for the writer.

Section 3.2 provided a diachronic view of composition teaching since about 1945. Four influential approaches were explored: controlled composition, current-traditional rhetoric, the process approach, and English for academic purposes. According to the first view, learning to write was seen as a practice in habit formation. The writer was a manipulator of earlier learned structures. The text was a collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items. In the mid-sixties, an increased awareness of ESL students' needs to produce extended written discourse arose. Current-traditional rhetoric primarily focused on the logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms both at paragraph and discourse

levels. The main focus in classroom procedures was on form. Writing was a matter of fitting sentences and paragraphs into patterns.

The process approach offered what the previous approaches seemed to lack: relevance to thought and expression, and the combining of creative thinking with writing. Writing is seen as divergent, with as many various outcomes as there are writers. Thus, the finished product is viewed to emerge after a series of drafts. The emphasis of the writing-for-academic-purposes orientation is on academic discourse genres and academic writing assignments, which help socialize students into the academic discourse community.

Raimes's (1991a) way of categorizing various approaches to writing added the concept of 'instructional balance' to the discussion. A balanced approach recognizes that the four elements — the form of the text, the writer, the content, and the reader are dependent on each other, and interactive.

Finally, the last section explored teachers' written responses to student writing. One of the crucial issues is the role of the writing teacher. Another important issue concerns the question whether to focus on form or on content. Even though research results tend to question the usefulness of feedback on writing, teachers generally feel obliged to provide it. Since students want to have feedback on their writing, another major problem remains as to when during the writing process it needs to be given.

4 ASSESSING STUDENT WRITING

Assessing student writing is a complex task. It comprises a whole series of procedures, many of which precede the actual assessment of written pieces. As Takala (1987a; see also Huhta 1987) points out, these procedures are a prerequisite for successful assessment.

The discussion below is intended to highlight those aspects of assessing writing ability that are of greatest significance for the present study.²⁰ Thus section 4.1 focuses on various assessment methods. The method of assessment used in the present study was a combination of general impression marking and an analytic scale. Section 4.1.1 compares holistic methods with analytic ones to discover their strengths and weaknesses. Since the method of assessing writing quality adopted for this study was exceptional in an EFL context in Finland, the raters had to be trained for the task. Consequently, section 4.1.2 explores the most crucial issues concerning the training of raters. Section 4.1.3 deals with three types of tasks used in assessing writing quality: essay, controlled writing task, and summary. The first type of task, the essay, was used in this study. Section 4.1.4 addresses the choice of topics and prompts. The training of raters is more closely connected with the process of evaluation, while the choice of topics and prompts is linked with the process of test construction. (For the writing assignment, the instructions, the assessment method, and the training of raters, see sections 6.1, 6.1.1, 6.1.2, and 6.1.3.) Finally, section 4.2 sums up the topics discussed in this chapter.

²⁰ Matthiessen et al. (1992) discuss their language-in-context model for assessing student writing. Their model for evaluating student writing is based on the three aspects of context that have been identified in systemic theory (e.g. Halliday 1978; Halliday and Hasan 1985): the *field* (of discourse), the *tenor* (of the relationship between speaker and listener) and the *mode* (of the discourse). Their model constitutes a holistic model of language in context, where it is clear how the features being assessed are systematically related. The authors claim that by using such a model the kind of partialness which was mentioned in section 2.6.1 (footnote) can be avoided.

4.1 Methods of measuring writing ability

Section 3.2 dealt with various approaches to teaching writing. No matter what approach to teaching ESL writing is used, there still remains the question of how to assess student writing. Finding a reliable and valid method of measuring the writing ability of an individual student or a group is of practical importance for teachers, administrators, and researchers. Reliability and validity are the two crucial criteria for any measurement. A reliable method of assessing writing ability would yield a consistent judgment of a student's ability if it were reapplied, all other things being equal. A valid measurement assesses what it claims to assess (Charney 1984). In addition to these two fundamental criteria, reliability and validity, Weir (1988:1) cites a third criterion, efficiency, by which he refers to matters of practicality and cost in designing a test. Judgments about the quality of writing need to be related to aims, that is, whether a piece of writing fulfills its purpose. Judgments must also be informative: one must be able to describe a student's writing ability in terms of its features, for instance, the level of vocabulary.

Since the 1950s, the concept of validity has frequently been discussed in terms of three different types of validity, namely content validity, empirical validity and construct validity. Later on, this understanding was questioned and substituted by the view that construct validity could be looked at as comprising the other two types of validity. It was Cronbach (1971) who argued that validity never has to do with the instrument but with the use of the instrument. This view has later been underscored by, for example, Cronbach (1990) and Messick (1989). Cronbach (1990:145) stresses the aspect of interpretation in his definition of validation, which he views as "inquiry into the soundness of the interpretations proposed for scores from a test".

According to Messick (1989), the validity concept is only a single entity, but it includes different aspects which refer to the traditional way of looking at validity in terms of different types. On one hand, the validity concept includes an evidential basis and a consequential basis, and on the other hand test interpretation and test use. The concepts of validity also include value and social consequences. The interpretation and the use of tests do not occur in a vacuum. Messick (1989) makes an interesting interpretation concerning the crossing of the evidential basis and test use, which in the traditional way of dealing with validity is predictive validity.

Current methods of measuring writing ability can be characterized as either quantitative or qualitative (Charney 1984:65-66). According to Charney, quantitative methods have also been referred to as 'objective' or 'indirect' methods, which are often used with standardized tests. In a typical objective test question in the domain of writing, students are given a faulty sentence and asked to choose the best correction. By varying the test items and the types of faults, students' proficiency in a range of writing skills can be tested, including spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, sentence order, and aspects of style. Quantitative methods can also be used with essay tests, in counting, for example, the occurrences of grammatical errors or the number of uncommon vocabulary items in a writing

sample. Charney (1984:66) notes that the focus of the assessment is the student's maturity as a writer, as reflected in his/her mastery of writing conventions.

Teachers and administrators have rejected many quantitative methods as primary measures of writing ability on the grounds that they are invalid. Although the specific skills on which quantitative methods focus may be necessary in order to write well, proficiency in these skills does not reflect writing ability *per se* (Charney 1984:66; see also Cooper 1977 and Lloyd-Jones 1977). Thus qualitative methods of measuring writing are the most currently used methods in assessing writing quality. These are also known as subjective, direct, or holistic methods.

Tests of writing ability can also be divided into atomistic and holistic (Lloyd-Jones 1977:33). Atomistic tests assess particular features associated with skill in discourse, dealing with the smallest units of discourse (e.g. vocabulary, syntax), the type which can easily be adapted to machine grading. Atomistic tests are also used to assess such elements of discourse as concreteness, coherence, and liveliness, which require trained human raters, whereas holistic tests consider samples of discourse as whole entities (Lloyd-Jones 1974:36).

According to Cooper (1977:3), holistic evaluation is "a guided procedure for sorting or ranking pieces of writing". The rater takes a writing sample and either (1) matches a piece of writing with another piece in a graded series of pieces, (2) scores it for the prominence of specific features important for that kind of writing, or (3) assigns it a letter or number grade. The placing, scoring, or grading is done quickly and impressionistically. But, to be able to act quickly and impressionistically, the rater will have to practise this skill with other raters. Holistic evaluation is most often guided by a holistic scoring guide which describes each feature of a piece of writing. The scoring guide also identifies the high, middle, and low quality levels for a particular feature.

Cooper (1977:4-20) gives a description of seven types of holistic evaluation: general impression marking, primary trait scoring, analytic scale, feature analysis, essay scale, dichotomous scale, and center of gravity response. This section will be limited to the description of the first three types: general impression marking, primary trait scoring, and analytic scale, because they are the most relevant types of holistic evaluation for the present study. In addition to these three methods mentioned by Cooper, the main characteristics of a multiple trait method will be discussed. The method used for the measuring of student writing in this study was a combination of holistic and analytic methods. (For details of the assessment procedure employed in the present study, see section 6.1.)

General impression marking is the simplest of the procedures of holistic evaluation: it requires no detailed discussion of features and no summing up of scores given to separate features (Cooper 1977:11). What simply happens is that the rater scores the paper by deciding where it fits within the range of papers produced for a certain assignment or occasion. But, if the scores are to be used for ranking, for instance, then raters will have to use the full range of scores available to approximate a normal score distribution. Raters will have to train themselves carefully to become "calibrated" to reach a consensus. To become calibrated, raters need to read and discuss large numbers of papers similar to those that they will be scoring. Cooper (1977:12) points out that this procedure is a requirement for

reliable scores with any other holistic scheme. According to Takala (1987:50), this type of holistic evaluation is most often used in assessing pieces of writing.

General impression marking may, Cooper (1977:12) notes, be closer to analytic scale scoring, the third type of holistic evaluation, than it would seem at first. When scoring, raters may follow a rubric, which has been worked out in advance. Although the rubric is primarily concerned with the relevance of the answer to the essay question and with the content of the answer, rather than with general features of writing, it serves to focus the raters' reading of the essays in the manner an analytic scale does. Even though raters have no rubric or list of specific features at hand, they may have discussed writing samples at length. In that case, they can be assumed to use an implicit list of features to guide their judgment (Cooper 1977:12). General impression marking alone does not appear to be sufficient for the purposes of the present study.

Primary trait scoring is "the most sophisticated of the holistic evaluation schemes . . . and potentially the most useful" (Cooper 1977:11). The primary trait system as developed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is not concerned with such qualities of writing as syntactic fluency, which is assumed to be typical of all good writing. Rather, it makes the reader decide whether a piece of writing contains certain characteristics or primary traits that are crucial for the piece of writing to be successful as a given rhetorical task (Lloyd-Jones 1977:32).

Takala (1987a:53-54) considers the primary trait method an elaboration of general impression marking. The primary trait method, according to him, focuses the rater's attention on whether an essay is, for instance, a good argumentative essay or a good reflective essay. Thus, the rhetorical view behind primary trait scoring suggests that a text has a specific purpose and may only be judged in accordance with that purpose. According to this view, it would be improper to read a non-literary text, for instance, as though it were an aesthetic object. Supporters of this view would judge a text on the extent to which it fulfills its prescribed function (Purves et al. 1988:45). This view seems to stand in contrast to holistic evaluation, where the text type is implicitly taken for granted. What is important in holistic evaluation is whether a written product is a good essay (e.g. an argumentative essay or a reflective one depending on the rhetorical task). In addition to focusing the reader's attention on features of a piece of writing that are relevant to the kind of discourse it represents, primary trait scoring includes scoring guides constructed for a specific writing assignment set in a full rhetorical context.

In Hamp-Lyons's (in press) view, the best option for assessing ESL writing is a multiple trait form of writing assessment. Like primary trait scoring, a multiple trait procedure is an approach to the whole writing assessment and not only the scoring. A multiple trait procedure goes beyond reader training to include reader involvement in instrument development as an essential component. Like primary trait instruments, a multiple trait procedure is grounded in the context in which they are employed. Therefore they are developed on-site for a specific purpose with a specific group of writers, and with the involvement of the readers. Each instrument is developed as a response to actual writing on a single, carefully selected, topic type. However, because multiple trait instruments do not

contain any content specifications, they can be applied to a range of prompts, as long as the prompts fulfill the design criteria for prompts for which the instrument was developed.

As holistic scoring, according to Hamp-Lyons (in press), would obscure a pattern of consistent overemphasis or underemphasis on basic language control, a multiple trait instrument in which language control is a trait to be judged, together with other salient facets, is likelier to facilitate a balanced response to the strengths and weaknesses of the text. For the assessing of writing quality, Takala (1987a:54) maintains, there are two major ways: the general impression of a composition or the general impressions of the separate features in it. Besides, he notes, it is possible to combine these two, but most obviously in the manner that the general impression of the essay is rated first followed by the assessment of the separate features.

Cooper (1977:11) regards the close correspondence between the rhetorically explicit task and the holistic scoring guide as "a development almost certain to have great impact on the evaluation of writing". Scoring guides, which are specific for each situation, comprise (1) the exercise itself, (2) a statement of the primary rhetorical trait of the writing which ought to be elicited by the exercise, (3) an interpretation of the exercise showing how each element of the stimulus is presumed to affect the student's performance, (4) an interpretation of how the situation of the exercise is related to the posited primary trait, (5) the actual scoring guide, and (6) definitions of the score points (Lloyd-Jones 1977:45).

The third type of holistic evaluation in Cooper's (1977) categorization is the analytic scale, which comprises a list of the prominent features or characteristics of writing in a specific mode. The list of features may range from four to twelve, with a detailed description of each feature and with high-mid-low points identified and described for each feature. The scale, which was developed by Diederich (1974), consists of an analysis of academics' and nonacademics' judgments of the writing of college freshmen. Raters learn to use the scale by exploring the descriptions of high-mid-low values given to each feature and trying the scale on pieces of student writing, and finally discussing the results.

Quellmalz (1979; see also Takala 1987a) has developed an analytic scoring scale particularly for the purposes of a reflective essay. According to this evaluation scale, the general impression is rated first; it is followed by an assessment of how clearly the topic and the main idea are expressed. The next step is to evaluate how clearly the main idea is developed, and how well-grounded the arguments and generalizations are. Finally, the number of intrusive errors is explored.

Analytic marking, according to Weir (1988:69), is "a method whereby each separate criterion in the mark scheme is awarded a separate mark and the final mark is a composite of these individual estimates". As an example of carefully constructed analytic marking schemes for assessing samples of written performance, Weir (1988:75-77) presents the Test in English for Educational Purposes (TEEP), which is used in testing English as a foreign language. The data informing the choice of the criteria of assessment were obtained from 560 lecturers. The results indicated that relevance and adequacy, compositional organization,

cohesion, referential adequacy, grammatical accuracy, spelling and punctuation were regarded as the most appropriate criteria for the assessing of writing tasks.

The set of criteria developed for the TEEP and the behavioural descriptions of the levels represent the outcome of a long process of trial and revision. The behavioural descriptions of the levels within the criteria went through five major revisions (Weir 1988:78). The criteria have been applied to a four-level analytic scoring scale, in which level three indicates that there are almost no inaccuracies in the essay, level two involves some inaccuracies and inadequacies in the product, level one shows a low standard of accuracy or limited relevance to the task set and, finally, level zero indicates, for example, an answer which bears almost no relation to the task set, absence of cohesion, or inaccuracy in spelling (Weir 1988:76-77).

4.1.1 Comparison of holistic and analytic methods of measuring writing ability

Comparison of various methods of measuring writing ability has shown that each method has its strengths and weaknesses (e.g. Breland 1983). Below some of the advantages and disadvantages of holistic and analytic methods of writing ability will be discussed.

The most distinct advantage of holistic methods of measuring writing ability over analytic methods is speed. The latter generally contain a number of rating criteria, which make assessment costs higher. This practical dimension of assessment may sometimes be a crucial factor in deciding which type of assessment method to choose in a given situation. The choice of a holistic assessment method is appropriate in a situation in which the rater does not need detailed information about the testee's writing ability. In such a case a single, integrated score of writing behaviour will serve. Since holistic assessment requires a response to the writing as a whole, writers are unlikely to be penalized for poor performance on a lesser aspect, for example, on grammatical ability (Cohen, in press). According to White (1985), the approach generally puts the emphasis on what is done well, and not on deficiencies. Moreover, analytic methods may not cover all the essential elements of writing ability, whereas in holistic measurement all those aspects of writing ability can have the opportunity of affecting the grade (cf. Morrow 1979). There is research evidence indicating that holistic and analytic methods yield similar results (Yorozuya and Oller 1980), which, according to Huhta (1994:39), makes the choice of a faster and less expensive holistic method more enticing.

Besides the difficulty of defining writing ability, another problem related to holistic rating methods concerns the subjectivity of assessment. Huhta (1994:40) questions the extent to which holistic assessment basically is analytic. No matter how well raters are trained to avoid assessing separate features of students' writing ability, they may in practice, however, pay attention to them after all. This puts the question of training raters to the fore (for the choice of raters, see section 4.1.2).

There are a number of problems associated with holistic assessment (Cohen, in press). First of all, Cohen regards the focus on producing one single

score as unsuitable for informed decisions as to the writer's strengths and weaknesses because holistic scoring with its single score outcomes is not designed to offer correction or feedback for writers (see also Hirsch 1977). Diagnostic feedback and correction, while useful to every student, is especially valuable for ESL writers (Hamp-Lyons in press). Secondly, it is difficult to interpret and explain the meaning of holistic scores to the score users: writers, parents and teachers. Thirdly, Cohen claims that the approach lumps together in a single score "what for a given respondent may constitute the uneven development of abilities in individuals across subskills". As an example, he notes, a writer may be strong in content and organization but weak in grammar, and the score will reflect a combination of the three subskills.

Fourthly, it is difficult for raters to give equal weighting to all aspects of writing as they go from composition to composition. Fifthly, since raters are not forced to consider a series of different aspects of writing ability, they may overlook one or two aspects, to the detriment of some of the writers. Sixthly, longer compositions may receive higher ratings since length suggests greater effort, but, in reality, the length may mean that the writer is padding the composition unnecessarily. Finally, Cohen points out that in L2 writing the rating scale may confound writing ability and language proficiency because one of the basic weaknesses of holistic methods is that the concept of writing ability is not easy to define. It is not certain that students' language proficiency can be distinguished from their writing skills because both factors necessarily interact in the processes and products of composition writing in a second and foreign language.

Cumming (1989) found that both factors had significant, but separate, effects on analytic rating scores in three ESL composition tasks. According to Cumming (1990:31-32), this suggests that such evaluation procedures may contain (1) a hidden bias toward more literate learners, if they are used as language tests, or (2) a hidden bias against language learners, if used as composition tests in such settings where they have not mastered the majority language. Cumming (1990) claims that this view suggests that composition writing is a specialized expertise which students develop to varying extents (see Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987). However, this line of argument can be applied to practically any kind of activity. After all expertise is crucially dependent on the amount of time and effort spent on each particular area of expertise.

One of the advantages of using analytic methods in assessing writing ability is to avoid the problems related to holistic methods. The most important reason for using analytic methods is the fact that they enable a more detailed and precise description of writing ability. By using analytic methods writing ability can be investigated in terms of smaller and more easily defined units which, according to Huhta (1994:41), should aid the raters' task. Analytic scoring calls for the use of separate scales, each assessing a different aspect of writing, for instance, content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics (Cohen, in press). Huhta (1994:41) claims that, if detailed information about a language user's skills is needed, for example, for streaming purposes, analytic assessment should be employed. An analytic scoring scale is also a more useful tool for the training of raters and the standardization of their ratings than a holistic scale (Weir 1990).

Analytic rating methods are not without problems either. They seem to share the same basic difficulty with holistic methods, that is, the fact that writing ability has not been sufficiently defined for raters to write detailed enough level descriptions. Despite their seeming concreteness and succinctness, analytic criteria may cover larger entities than they intend.

The number of the criteria to be used poses another problem in analytic assessment. It is not easy to decide how many and which criteria to employ in assessing a student's writing ability. As Huhta (1994:42) notes, for practical reasons it would be wise to use a limited number of assessment criteria. One way, according to him, would be to use more extensive criteria, that is, to pack various features under the same heading. But then this method would have the same weakness as holistic assessment: the more features a particular criterion includes the more improbable it is that the level descriptions fit all the testees. An alternative means would be to do the opposite and add to the number of criteria in order to clarify and objectify them. This procedure would, however, make assessment more time-consuming and the test more expensive (Huhta 1994:42).

As mentioned above, holistic and analytic methods may give very similar results. One possible reason for this is the halo effect, that is, that various criteria affect each other. The halo effect is especially influential in assessing writing ability. It was found that in some participating countries in the IEA Written Study the raters tended to use either a more holistic or analytic approach. The halo effect means that the first feature assessed, for example the neatness of writing, or general impression, may affect how the other features will be assessed despite variability, for instance, in the testee's capacity to organize the content or choose the appropriate style. One clear reason for the halo effect, may, according to Huhta (1994:42), be the fact that the descriptions of the criteria lack precision and overlap, factors which are hard to distinguish at the moment of assessment.

The results of Cumming's study from 1990 confirm Cumming's earlier (1989) finding that analytic evaluations of ESL compositions assess students' language proficiency and writing expertise concurrently, implicitly attributing separate values to each factor. Though raters are not aware of this distinction while assessing, analyses of their rating scores reveal a significant tendency to produce ratings which conform to students' skills in both of these areas. In his study (1990), this tendency seems to have affected raters' assessments of diverse features of writing, not just language use, content, or rhetorical organization alone. It applied equally to student-teachers as to teachers with considerable expertise in the area. None of the raters appeared to be aware of these distinctions in their behaviours. It was revealed by *post-hoc* analyses of their performance.

Cumming (1990:42) claims that, for testing purposes, analytic ratings of different features of ESL compositions may not be necessary, if raters tend not to vary their ratings appreciably across various analytic categories. A single holistic rating of compositions might be less time-consuming and equally reliable. Analytic scales may, according to him, have the advantage of drawing raters' attention to specific features of students' writing, as well as appropriate assessment strategies and criteria. On the basis of his study (1990:42-43), he suggests that novices in this area probably need such explicit guidance to direct their decision-making while assessing compositions. Likewise, the decision-

making processes of expert teachers seem to vary substantially from teacher to teacher in the absence of pre-specified criteria and evaluation procedures.

In addition, the use of analytic scales may favour those written responses from which it is easy to extract information (Hamp-Lyons 1989). This, according to Cohen (in press), is a reason why comments about grammar abound on compositions; grammatical errors are easily accessible in a composition. Finally, analytic scales may not be informative enough to writers. For instance, writers may wish to receive feedback on the content and organization of their compositions, but actually may discover that their grammar and mechanics receive more attention by the rater (Cohen in press).

The primary trait scoring scale was developed to obtain more information than a single score and to define clearly the features of writing to be judged (Lloyd-Jones 1977). The primary trait is identified and defined by the test constructor who decides what will constitute efficient writing on each topic on the test. Thus, the detailed attention to specific aspects of writing allows for a whole task to concentrate on one aspect at a time (Cohen, in press).

As a disadvantage of this method, writers may have difficulties in focusing on a specified trait while writing. In addition, Cohen notes, who is to determine that an aspect of writing that is singled out to be assessed deserves to be labelled as *primary* in character?

In multitrait scoring a composition is generally scored for three or four facets or traits, but not in the manner of analytic scoring as in the 1960's and 1970's. The multiple traits are developed by a group of teachers, so that the prompts are in accordance with those traits. Test constructors attend to contextual needs and constraints, and make adaptations accordingly. They also need to be aware of the roles of the raters and those of the writers. With analytic scales, there has frequently been little focus on the processes that raters go through when producing their ratings (Cohen, in press). Since the ratings are task-specific, they can provide more diagnostic information than more generalized rating scales. One disadvantage of the use of multitrait scoring could be the test constructor's difficulty to identify and empirically validate traits that are appropriate for a given context. Even if the traits are specified, the raters may fall back on traditional concepts in their ratings (Cohen, in press).

Because of the weaknesses of holistic and analytic evaluation methods, several researchers (e.g. Mullis 1984; Quellmalz 1984) recommend a combination of various methods to be employed instead of a single method. The method of measuring writing ability in the present study consisted of the combination of general impression marking and an analytic scale, which was borrowed from the International Study of Written Composition (IEA). The features to be evaluated are derived from the conceptualization of writing, and they include the quality and scope of content, organization and presentation of content, style and tone, spelling and orthographic conventions, and handwriting and neatness. The analytic scoring scale based on the conceptualization of writing used in the present study and the one developed by Diederich (1974) on the basis of an empirical analysis are, in fact, parallel, according to (Takala (1987a:61).

The report *Constructing and evaluating narrative, persuasive and reflective writing tasks and texts* (Vähäpassi 1987a) presents the set of tasks used in the

International Study of Achievement in Written Composition of the IEA, their background and the rating instructions. The text types investigated in the report involve a personal story (Takala 1987b), a persuasive composition (Linnakylä 1987; Vähäpassi 1987b), a reflective composition (Takala 1987c) and an open writing task (Lonka 1987). The report also discusses the reliability of the rating methods and analyses the rating designs used. Parallel to this report, an international publication, *The IEA Study of Written Composition I: The International Writing Tasks and Scoring Scales* (Gorman et al. [eds.] 1988) offers a comprehensive analysis of the domain of writing and of the creation and validation of appropriate tasks to measure that domain. Another volume, *Constructing and Evaluating Pragmatic/Functional and Study-Skills Related Writing Tasks* (Vähäpassi 1987c), complements the report mentioned above.

4.1.2 The rater's role in assessing student writing

Besides the question of the method used for measuring writing ability, another crucial condition for valid and reliable ratings is the choice of raters. This is a difficult task because very little is known about what the skill of evaluating compositions written in a second or foreign language entails, or how it develops. This, according to (Cumming 1990:32), makes the training of raters for composition tests problematic. Nonetheless, it is important that the raters are qualified and come from similar backgrounds. McColly (1970) stresses that before they receive training in the holistic procedure, the raters who are selected must be competent. He defines competence in terms of scholarship and knowledgeability required for the rating procedure. A similar background refers to similar values and beliefs (Charney 1984). (For the application of the criteria regarding the choice and training of raters for the purposes of the present study, see section 6.1.3.)

In addition to the requirements mentioned above, raters must be trained to use the evaluation criteria chosen. Training procedures are designed to 'sensitize' the readers to employ the criteria agreed upon. According to Charney (1984:73), readers can be made to follow the criteria agreed upon by matching written samples to anchor papers. The other means used to insure that readers use the right criteria are peer pressure (readers are expected to adjust their ratings that differ from those of the other readers accordingly), monitoring, and rating speed. McColly (1970) emphasizes the importance of the speed with which raters rate papers, because increased speed is supposed to contribute to reliability. Although raters are sensitized to the criteria to be used to assess a piece of writing, it may be difficult for them to refrain from applying their idiosyncratic criteria.

Despite their training, raters' judgments may be strongly affected by salient, though superficial, features of the writing samples. Physical appearance is one of these superficial characteristics, which is strongly related to the holistic rating that the paper will receive. McColly (1970) reports that papers written in poor handwriting tend to receive lower holistic scores. If the effect of the quality of the handwriting is so strong, typing or word processors could solve the problem by enabling students to produce neat texts.

Other factors that correlate with holistic ratings are composition length, word choice, and spelling errors (Charney 1984). Essay length is often the most

powerful predictor indicating writing quality (Takala 1986). Maybe it is not essay length as such that makes the reader give it a higher grade but the fact that in a short composition it is impossible for the writer to develop the ideas to such an extent that it could be given a higher grade. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1982) have discovered that it is worth asking students to write more even after they have stopped writing. Their study showed that the compositions produced after the request were not only longer but better than they would have been before.

Holistic evaluation by two raters in each subject is used in the final examinations in Finland. If there is a major difference between the grades given by the teacher and the rater of the matriculation examination board (MEB), a third rater is employed. The final grade will, however, be given by the raters of the MEB. The compositions are evaluated impressionistically or holistically according to the descriptions provided by the MEB. The evaluation method used in the present study is an indication of an attempt to make the grade descriptions more analytical. More precise grade descriptions together with benchmark compositions (Saari 1987) and proper training of raters would make the evaluation by the foreign language teachers and the members of the MEB more consistent.

The high interrater reliability scores achieved in the International Study of Written Composition were the outcome of careful training to sensitize the raters to the evaluation criteria agreed upon and to ensure their adherence to them during the rating sessions. (See Törmäkangas 1987 for the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the ratings of some of the Finnish data for the tasks used in the above project.)

4.1.3 Essays, controlled writing tasks, and summaries

Weir (1988:63) focuses on two approaches to assessing writing ability. Firstly, writing can be divided into discrete features, e.g. grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation, which can be tested separately by means of objective tests. Secondly, more direct extended writing tasks of various types can be constructed, such as the ones discussed in this section. These types of tasks would, according to Weir (1988:63), have greater construct, content, and washback validity but would require a more subjective method of assessment.

Because of their relevance for the present study this section will be limited to the exploration of the above-mentioned three extended types of tasks used for assessing student writing. The main focus of the exploration will be on the advantages and disadvantages of the writing tasks.

According to Weir (1988), the essay is a traditional method of making students produce samples of connected writing. The stimulus is usually written and can vary from a limited number of words to several sentences. The topics are frequently very general and may rely heavily on the writer providing the content out of his/her head.

Using essays to test students' writing ability seems to have several advantages (Weir 1988:65). The topics are easy to set, and it is a testing technique familiar to both candidates and users of test results. It is a suitable vehicle for testing skills, such as the writer's ability to develop an extended argument in a

logical way, which cannot easily be tested in other ways. (For the discussion of the reflective essay used in the present study, see section 6.1.2.)

However, free, open-ended topics constitute one of the problematic issues in using essay tests because an ability to write on general, open-ended topics may depend on the person's background, cultural knowledge, imagination or creativity. The candidate may not have an interest in the topic he/she is given. If a choice of topics is provided, it may be difficult to compare performance, particularly if the topics require the production of different text types. Writers tend to approach an open-ended question in different ways. Raters have to assess the relative merits of these different approaches. This increases the difficulty of marking the essays in a reliable way. (For the choice of prompts and topics, see section 4.1.4.)

Time pressure is a constraint on extended writing. Writing timed essays is not usually done outside academic life. For most people the writing process is longer and may require several drafts before the final version is produced. The inclusion of an extended writing element in an examination is also time-consuming (Weir 1988:66).

In controlled writing tasks the media, the audience, the task, the purpose, and the situation are explicitly laid down. A more precisely determined task makes it easier to compare the performances of different writers and to obtain a greater degree of reliability in scoring (Weir 1988:67). The controlled writing task is at its most effective when the writer is asked to comment on particular trends shown in a graph or to compare or contrast one set of figures with another (see also Read 1991 on the various types of stimuli used in controlled writing tasks).

Problems may, however, arise when a test resorts to extremely specialized areas with, for instance, visual stimuli. Candidates may be unable to cope with the mental challenge of taking this kind of test. Problems are likely to occur when there is a need to understand a complex set of instructions together with visual stimuli to produce a description of a process or a classification of data. Educational or cultural differences may hinder the ability to interpret graphs or tables (Weir 1988:67).

The summary can be a valid test, for example, to assess student writing in terms of the tasks that students have to cope with in academic life. According to Weir (1988:67-68), writing a summary requires the ability to choose relevant facts from a mass of data and to recombine these in an acceptable form. In other words, a summary of the main points of a text involves the ability to write a controlled composition containing the essential ideas of the original text(s) and omitting irrelevant ideas.

Cohen (in press) regards tests of summarization as complex activities which involve the interaction of reading and writing. The reading part entails identifying topical information, distinguishing superordinate from subordinate material, and recognizing redundant and trivial information. The writing up of the summary entails selecting topical information, deleting trivial and redundant information, substituting superordinate material, and restating the text as coherent and polished writing (cf. Kintsch and van Dijk 1978).

Finding appropriate stimulus texts is often difficult because their subject specificity may create problems for non-specialists in the subject and thus decrease

test validity. As an alternative, Weir (1988:69) suggests choosing deliberately obscure texts which favour nobody. This, according to him, might bring out such underlying abilities as imagination.

Summarization tasks on reading comprehension tests attempt to simulate real-world tasks but real-world summaries are generally prepared for others who have not read the text and simply want to know what the text is about. Test summaries, on the other hand, Cohen (in press) notes, usually have restrictions as to length, format, and style, and are written for a rater who already knows what the text is about and who wants to see to what degree the students approximate these prior decisions. Consequently, the summary may result in a mismatch in which the writers use one set of criteria in producing their summaries whereas the raters employ another in assessing them.

The main difficulty with an integrated writing task like this is making the marking reliable and consistent. The main points of the extract need to be formulated, an adequate marking scheme needs to be constructed, and the markers need to be standardized. However, Weir (1988:68) claims that some subjectivity inevitably remains.

The use of a foreign language text as the basis for a summary as part of the matriculation examination is a current issue in Finland. It was recently employed to test pupils' reading comprehension skill as part of the final examination in the B-English test (starting in the seventh grade of the comprehensive school). The writing itself was done in the students' mother tongue. At present, with hardly any experience of it as a test, it is too early to evaluate a summary as a test. The present researcher would welcome it as a practical task in which the writer's reading and writing skills are *integrated*. Such skills are essential in subsequent academic contexts where students need to write summaries or synthesize information from several sources. Thus, using the summary as a test would also prepare young writers for the requirements that they will meet in their later lives. Assessing writing ability by using a summary as a test accords well with the idea of process writing (see section 3.2.3). Also, evaluating summaries can hardly prove more difficult than evaluating open-ended essays, which, as research and practical expertise indicate, can be quite unanimous provided that raters are properly trained.

4.1.4 Choice of topics and prompts

One of the major conditions of reliability and validity concerns the influence of the design of the test. A list of factors, including the number of writing samples evaluated per student, the writing topic, the size of the rating scale, the conditions under which the papers are read, may affect the statistical reliability of the ratings (Charney 1984:70). Some of these factors may have a crucial effect on the credibility of the test as a valid test of writing ability. One important issue is the selection of the topic. (For the issue of the topics concerning this study, see section 6.1.1.) Whether topics should be open or narrowly defined is a matter of controversy. An open topic allows writers to write about aspects of the topic that are familiar to them. But open topics may also be problematic because some writers may set themselves tasks that are too easy, others again tasks that are too

difficult. Then there is the problem with different discourse aims. Some discourse aims, such as persuasion and exposition, are more difficult to achieve than others, such as narration. This may result from the fact that even children tend to have quite a lot of experience with narratives, and are therefore more familiar with this genre than with other genres. Furthermore, it would seem obvious that writing samples with different aims should not be rated equally (Charney 1984). This notion may have given rise to the development of the primary trait method for the purposes of assessing writing ability.

The advantage of narrowly defined topics is that all writers can interpret the writing assignment similarly. However, narrowly defined topics discriminate against writers who lack familiarity with those topics. This raises the question of whether topics which hold the effect of knowledge constant should be chosen. The assessment of a student's writing ability should not depend on degree of familiarity with the topic. To meet the requirements, test questions limited to general knowledge (possibly field-tested and reviewed in advance) or tasks requiring students to make use of information provided in the exam could be useful (Charney 1984). It is interesting — and educationally sometimes essential — to vary the range of topics. Open topics, for instance, force students to decide how to approach the writing task. Although varying the approach might be good or acceptable, this policy may, however, make assessment problematic.

Another important factor affecting the evaluation of writing ability is that of prompts for writing. (For the choice of prompts concerning the present study, see section 6.1.) Within the last decade, particular attention has been paid to the nature of the prompts that are used to elicit a written composition.²¹ Discovering appropriate topics is, according to Ruth and Murphy (1988), a challenging task for the test maker. Respondents need to be provided with specific and supportive guidelines as to the nature of the writing task. Ruth and Murphy (1988:59-63) have listed the 'musts' for appropriate writing topics and prompts based on their research. They suggest the following:

1. Topics should not have too much information in them because it could lead to a simple rehashing of the information in the prompt.
2. The prompt should indicate the audience to be addressed — for example, self, teacher (pupil to teacher, pupil to examiner, pupil to trusted adult), wider audience, unknown audience.
3. The writing assignment should not be:
 - a. too large
 - b. too insignificant
 - c. too abstract.
4. The topic should be of potential interest to the writer and the rater.
5. Topics to be avoided:

²¹ Johns (1986) discusses a three-lesson unit that she had planned for improving coherence in academic writing. Understanding the prompt and developing a discourse theme in response to it are the goals of the first lesson, which results in the production of first drafts of an essay. Deconstructing the prompt and preparing the thesis are the major activities during this lesson. The goals of the second lesson are to analyse a thesis statement and the relationships between propositions in an essay, after which students revise their essays. The third lesson focuses on reader-based considerations in the information structure. Repeated with a variety of prompts and a number of student essays, this procedure becomes the organizational structure for a writing class with the objective of improving coherence in academic writing (Johns 1986:259).

- a. those with hidden bias
- b. those which are controversial
- c. those which will be difficult to assess.
6. The essays should be based on data that are provided.
7. The essays should be meaningful given the writer's experience.
8. It should not be too difficult or too easy to write the essay.
9. The essays should allow for assessment of all students according to their abilities.
10. Writing tasks could have limits on content or form or both.
11. Care must be taken in the wording of the topic.

A couple of comments are necessary. Too much information in the prompt and too limited an amount of information in it will make the writer's task more difficult. In 5b, Ruth and Murphy ask test makers (and teachers) to avoid topics which are controversial. But, tasks of argumentative and persuasive nature are assumed to force writers to take a stand and give their reasons for doing so. Whether to use controversial topics or not can also be a cultural matter. Hamp-Lyons (in press) points out that good essay prompts are difficult to develop, especially for a diverse population, because cultural bias is such a problem in essay prompts. According to her, the most important component of cultural bias is assumed shared background knowledge. For example, the TOEFL Program's Test of Written English (TWE), which tests great numbers of international students annually, necessarily puts great emphasis on finding topics that will not assume certain kinds of world (or background) knowledge that will not be shared by some of the test-takers who come from hundreds of countries. The solution to this problem, as used by the TWE, is to employ "anodyne prompts that are of limited interest and stimulation to all students" (Hamp-Lyons, in press). Point 6 recommends the use of topics supplied with extra information. This aspect was partly touched upon above. As we have seen topics without extra information allow students to draw on their prior knowledge.

Hamp-Lyons and Prochnow (1990:67-70) hypothesized that public prompts (prompts calling for the writer to take a public orientation toward the subject matter) would be more difficult than personal prompts (prompts with a more private orientation), the very opposite of what they found. Their study showed that public prompts led to higher scores than personal ones. Perhaps public essays tend to receive a high evaluation — representing more sophisticated products — whereas personal stories do not necessarily inspire the writer or the reader.

Hamp-Lyons and Prochnow (1990) offer various explanations for their findings. First, the experts (trained judges) compensated for the difficulty of the prompts in their ratings (i.e., that the public ones were more demanding than the personal). The difficulty of the public prompt could also have made the writers work harder and thus get higher scores. Another explanation was that the writers selected prompts that matched their self-evaluated ability levels. So, if they evaluated themselves as weaker writers, they would choose the easier prompts, in this case, the personal ones, and would then perform better than if they had chosen the more difficult prompt. Self-evaluated strong writers would be more likely to choose difficult public prompts, whereas self-evaluated weaker students would select personal prompts, because they might feel that they would then be on a safer ground.

Foreign language tests in the compulsory languages in the Finnish matriculation examination provide four composition titles (three in the extra courses), three of which are usually guided to some extent, whereas the fourth is usually presented without any prompts. One of the titles has typically been more closely related to the content of one of the reading comprehension tasks than the other three.

In Finland there seems to be a rapidly growing interest in portfolio assessment in foreign and second language teaching (for the portfolio as a tool for evaluation and learning, see Linnakylä et al. 1994). One reason is the fact that portfolio assessment has been deliberately developed to be in line with current views on the importance of linking teaching and learning and also to pay serious attention to the affective aspects of learning and to the consequences of assessment in terms of students' self-esteem (for consequential validity, see Messick 1989). The encouragement of students' self-esteem is one of the major goals of using portfolios in the classroom. Self-assessment, which is closely related to portfolio work, is one tool for developing students' self-esteem and meta-cognitive skills.

Portfolio assessment attempts to attain a more extended assessment of students' writing ability than is possible by traditional means of evaluation. Portfolio assessment represents multiple measures of the student's writing ability. The process approach used to produce the writing samples for the portfolio encourages the cooperation of the whole class as a writing community. The application of portfolio assessment in an ESL writing evaluation context allows a more complex look at the many-faceted ability of writing. (For the applicability of the topic/comment development to the portfolio assessment procedure, see section 8.2.)

4.2 Summary

The above sections have discussed some of the most important factors affecting the evaluation of writing: the choice of various methods of assessing writing, the choice and training of readers, the choice of various types of writing tasks, and the choice of topics and prompts.

There are basically two ways of categorizing the methods of measuring writing ability: quantitative or qualitative (Charney 1984) or holistic and atomistic (Cooper 1977). The qualitative (holistic) methods are most widely used, and particularly wide-spread among them are general impression marking, primary trait scoring, and analytic scoring.

There is not enough evidence as to the supremacy of any holistic method. Besides, the choice of the method depends on the writing purpose to fulfill. Since each method is incomplete, combinations of various methods have proved most fruitful. In Hamp-Lyons's view, the best alternative for use in ESL writing assessment is a multiple trait form of writing assessment. A multiple trait instrument is an attempt to establish a scoring guide that allows readers to

respond to the salient features of the writing whether these are all at the same quality level or at different quality levels.

The rater's role in evaluating writing ability is another decisive factor. Choosing competent readers with a similar background and training them with the help of anchor essays, peer pressure, and monitoring are measures which go towards diminishing the effect of raters' inconsistency in evaluation. Despite training, raters may not adhere to the criteria agreed upon but slip into their idiosyncrasies by letting such superficial factors as essay length, neatness, and number of errors affect their evaluation.

The essay is a traditional testing method, which is good for testing the writer's ability to develop an extended argument in a logical manner. The issue of topics and prompts arises when using the essay as a test. Controlled writing tasks with various kinds of stimuli can be used to elicit written performance in the case of a number of language functions such as description of a process, comparison or contrast, or writing a set of instructions. Problems may occur if writers are unable to cope with the mental challenge of the stimuli that they have been given. The summary can be a valid test, for instance, in assessing a student's writing ability in terms of the tasks he/she has to manage in an academic context. The main challenge with an integrated writing component of this type is to make marking reliable and consistent.

The design of a test, and especially the choice of topics, has an important role in successful evaluation. Open topics will allow the writer to choose the most familiar and interesting topic. But different kinds of compositions produced on the basis of open topics may later complicate the comparison of the compositions. Narrowly defined topics yield compositions of the same genre that are easier to compare but they force writers to deal with a topic that may not interest them or that they may not be familiar with. Test questions can be limited to general knowledge, or extra information can be provided in the test. As regards prompts, writers should be provided with specific and supportive guidelines as to the nature of the writing task.

5 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND WRITING RESEARCH

More closely than the previous discussion, this chapter provides the theoretical framework for the empirical section of the present study. Since there exist several ways of analysing written discourse, any study needs to limit the discussion to the essentials of the most relevant approaches to that given study. As the purpose of the present study is to explore written discourse, that is, to trace coherence in EFL compositions, sections 5.1.1, 5.1.2, and 5.1.3 first focus on various ways of defining coherence, starting with the definition of text, and then moving on to look at the definitions of information structure and thematic structure. Since the theory of functional sentence perspective gives the most important theoretical contribution to the study, section 5.1.4 focuses on the conceptions of some of its most prominent adherents. The approach discussed in the first sections of chapter 5 could be labelled as the sentence-based approach.

Section 5.2 explores another major line of discourse analyses, the process-based approach. As an example of the process-based approach, section 5.2.1 surveys Kintsch's and van Dijk's (1978) model of text comprehension and production. Section 5.2.2 addresses a more recent approach to text patterning, the Rhetorical Structure Theory developed by Mann and Thompson (1987; 1988). Section 5.3 focuses on one of the most influential procedural approaches, the model suggested by Robert de Beaugrande (1980). Finally, section 5.4 sums up the major characteristics of these approaches. The sections also discuss the most representative studies conducted within the approach dealt with.

5.1 The sentence-based approach

5.1.1 Halliday and Hasan's conceptions of cohesion and coherence

What is typical of the *sentence-based* approach to text is that in them an existing text is seen as it is, and an attempt is made to describe the overt devices that link the sentences to each other. Such cohesive devices have been described at length by various researchers, notably by Halliday (1961; 1985), and Halliday and Hasan (1976).

Halliday and Hasan's treatment of cohesion is an attempt to view text mainly as a linguistic property contributing to coherence:

If a speaker of English hears or reads a passage of the language which is more than one sentence in length, he can normally decide without difficulty whether it forms a unified whole or is just a collection of unrelated sentences . . . The word TEXT is used in linguistics to refer to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole. (Halliday and Hasan 1976:1)

In their definition of text, Halliday and Hasan (1976:1) clearly contrast what they regard as text with a sequence of *disconnected* sentences.²² This notion of connectedness seems to be essential in the exploration of a well-formed piece of writing. Halliday and Hasan (1976) prefer the term *texture* for the kind of text property that is more commonly referred to as coherence:

The concept of texture is entirely appropriate to express the property of 'being a text'. A text has texture, and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text. It derives this texture from the fact that it functions as a unity with respect to its environment. (Halliday and Hasan 1976:2)

The concept of texture indicates the property of 'being a text'. Coherence, or texture, is created by "certain linguistic features present in that passage which can be identified as contributing to its total unity and giving it texture" (Halliday and Hasan 1976:2). Mere coherence of content is insufficient to make a text coherent. There must be some additional linguistic properties, such as cohesive ties, which create the coherence of a text. Text derives texture, i.e. coherence, from the ties that exist within the text:

The concept of a tie makes it possible to analyse a text in terms of its cohesive properties, and give a systematic account of its patterns of texture. (Halliday and Hasan 1976:4)

The category of the different kinds of cohesive ties includes reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion.

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) treatment of cohesion as a linguistic property contributing to coherence has been criticized in the light of schema-theoretical

²² Enkvist (1985:18) seems to share the same view when pointing out that "the sentences of a text are not autonomous. Their task is to contribute to the flow of information transmitted by the text, to link up with what went before and with what comes after".

views of text processing. (For a criticism of cohesion as the only explanation of textuality, see Morgan and Sellner 1980; de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981; Carrell 1982; 1983; 1984a; 1984b; Mosenthal and Tierney 1983.)

In her article 'Cohesion is not coherence', Carrell (1982) discusses some of the strongest criticisms of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesive theory of coherence. Carrell shares the criticism, and emphasizes that, according to schema theory, processing a text is an interactive effort between the text and the reader's prior background knowledge or memory schemas. Thus, the source of formal cohesion may lie outside the text, for instance, in the reader's knowledge of the world, and not in the words-on-the-page. The schema-theoretical view involves the idea that

. . . what is important is not only the text, its structure and content, but what the reader or listener does with the text. Unlike the textual analysis approaches — story grammar, text grammar, propositional analysis, cohesion theory, etc., which operate on text as though it occurred in a vacuum — schema theory takes the text processors into account. (Carrell 1982:482)

Surely story grammar is a form of event-related schema used by people in interpreting stories and in writing them. But Carrell seems to interpret story grammar in a limited way. Story grammar may be interpreted as a schematic frame which is instantiated as a particular story grammar depending on the particular story (story content) that a reader interprets. The schema-theoretical criticism of cohesion theory has shown that cohesion is not the cause of coherence; rather it is the effect of coherence. Carrell (1982) argues that:

A coherent text will likely be cohesive, not of necessity, but as a result of that coherence. Bonding an incoherent text together won't make it coherent, only cohesive. (Carrell 1982:486)

What Carrell has in mind is that to really learn about textual coherence, textual analysis theories such as cohesion theory must be supplemented with broader theories which take the reader into account, and which view "both reading and writing as interactive processes involving the writer and the reader, as well as the text" (Carrell 1982:487).²³ Consequently, on the basis of schema-theoretical models, a text cannot be considered separately from the reader. Perhaps one should say 'a read text', 'a received/processed text'. However, schema-theoretical models can hardly claim to be the only appropriate models of texts. They are models of texts-in-use or texts-in-operation.

A few linguists have attempted to describe coherence, using linguistic features from the text (Connor 1984; Evensen 1990; Lindeberg 1985; 1988; Wikborg 1985; 1990; and Witte and Faigley 1981). These studies will be discussed below as the most representative empirical studies dealing with cohesion.²⁴ Connor's (1984)

²³ In Nystrand's (1989) model of writing, the writer and the reader actively interact and negotiate the meaning of a text. The interaction involves an exchange of meaning, or transformation of shared knowledge. (For the discussion of Nystrand's social-interactive model of writing, see section 2.4.)

²⁴ For empirical studies of syntactic features, see e.g. Connor 1987b.

research on L2 writing and Witte and Faigley's (1981) research on L1 writing were prompted by questions regarding quality of writing. They sought a better understanding of evaluation criteria in student writing.

While exploring cohesion in high-rated and low-rated essays written in L1, Witte and Faigley (1981) found evidence that "strongly suggests that substantially less new information or semantic content is introduced during the course of a low-rated essay than during the course of a high-rated essay" (Witte and Faigley 1981:197). According to Witte and Faigley (1981:197), "the writers of the low-rated papers tend more toward reiteration of previously introduced information than do the writers of the high-rated papers". They also suggest that less skilled writers lack invention skills that would help them extend ideas. (For redundant and repetitive comments in the present data, see section 7.3.)

Evensen's (1990) small-scale study of two classes of pointers to superstructure, metatextual deixis and temporal pointers was carried out as part of the exploratory analyses within the NORDWRITE project. The data for the analyses consisted of nine narratives written by Swedish 11th-grade learners of EFL. The texts represented three quality categories: high, mid, and low. A picture story of six episodes was given as a stimulus for a writing session of 40 minutes. The most important findings will be reported below, but they need, however, to be interpreted carefully in light of the small sample size. The use of metatextual deixis (e.g. *above, below, this story*) was very rare in narratives produced by learners at the levels mentioned above. The few cases of appropriate metatextual deixis that occurred were all in the high group. Evensen (1990) concludes that at the upper secondary level of student development, metatextual deixis may be an indicator of multilevel, global discourse strategies.

In contrast to metatextual deixis, Evensen (1990:179-180) points out, temporal pointers (e.g. paragraph initial temporal adverbials) were quite frequent throughout the material with a slight tendency toward a more frequent use of temporal pointers with increase in skill. The use of temporal pointers was a particular characteristic of the mid group, suggesting a possible difference in productive strategies. The mid group clung to the chronological dimension as a major structuring principle in their narratives while the members of the high group had other coherence strategies at their disposal. The low group had the lowest score, indicating that they had not acquired the full resources of a temporal strategy in narrative production. Their use of the multifunctional additive strategy is common in child language of adding proposition to proposition in a sequential, semiassociative way (for 'knowledge-telling strategy', see Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987; see also section 2.3.2 in the present study). On the basis of his study Evensen claims that pointers do play a role in the writing of relatively advanced EFL learners.

Lindeberg's (1985) study of compositions by advanced EFL students suggests that the difference between essays impressionistically rated good and poor does not lie in the number of cohesive ties between sentences, but rather in the ways student writers link propositions into arguments. Consequently, essays providing a series of unsupported propositions provoke low grades, whereas compositions that back up their claims with supportive arguments achieve higher grades. (For the findings of the present study, see chapter 7.)

The purpose of Lindeberg's (1988) study was to identify those cohesive items that played a key role in the building up both of the content and the argumentation. In other words, its focus was on determining the functions of the clauses and clause equivalents in developing the subject(s), thus creating the rhetorical structure. Lindeberg's data consisted of 30 student essays, which were picked from a larger corpus of essays forming part of the final examination in English for first-year students at the Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration in Helsinki. The three essay titles were based on set reading. The text types were predominantly expository and argumentative.

The analyses undertaken for her study produced the following characteristics of good versus poor expository and argumentative writing: good writers showed a higher degree of development of topics. The reverse was true of the poor writers. Good writers showed a greater consistency of development strategies than did the poor writers. Good writers tended to use particular coherence patterns for different assignments and different text types. These patterns were missing or were less frequent in the essays of the poor writers.

What the findings of Lindeberg's (1988) study indicate is that there were more distinct coherence patterns, in other words, more regularity and consistency, in the development strategies of the good writers than in the strategies of the poor writers. Some of Lindeberg's findings are parallel to the author's earlier study (Mäkinen 1991), in which the good writers were able to develop the topics in their compositions more evenly across several topic levels than the mid-quality and especially the poor writers.

Wikborg (1990) carried out an extensive study of both the local and global effects of different types of topic structuring and cohesion errors in argumentative and expository essays in L1 (Swedish), including a subsample in EFL (English majors). The material investigated consisted of 144 essays taken from five departments (business administration, English, history of literature, journalism, and law). Wikborg developed a comprehensive system of coherence breaks including *topic-structuring* problems and *cohesion* problems. Under the former, she listed breaks related to unspecified topic, unjustified change of/drift in topic, misleading paragraph division, irrelevance (in the form of van Dijk's (1977:110) 'overcompleteness', as quoted in Wikborg 1985:360), misleading disposition (ordering of material), and misleading headings. Under the latter, she included uncertain inference ties, missing or misleading sentence connection, misleading distribution of given and new information within the sentence, too great a distance between the cohesive items in a cohesive chain, and the types of cohesive ties that do not actually hold (Wikborg 1985:361).

The term 'coherence break' Wikborg (1990) used for what happens when the reader loses the thread of the argument, which, according to her, can occur for several reasons. Firstly, it may be that the reader cannot figure out what the topic is or that there is a sudden and inexplicable change of topic. Secondly, the reader's smooth processing of the flow of information in a text may be interrupted because the logical relation between two sentences is deficiently connected.

Wikborg (1990), following Widdowson's (1978) definition of coherence, views a text as coherent when the reader understands the function of each succeeding unit of text in the development of its overall or global meaning. As an

example, she maintains that the writer should make it easy for the reader to distinguish between the elaboration of a point and the introduction of a contrasting one. Student writers' failure to make clear such functions of succeeding units of text is one of the sources of the breakdown of coherence.

The five most frequent types of coherence breaks were uncertain inference ties (214 instances out of a total of 801 coherence breaks), misleading paragraph division (172 instances), missing or misleading sentence connection (125 instances), unjustified change of/drift in topic (81 instances), and unspecified topic (63 instances).²⁵

Wikborg's (1990) system is data-based rather than theory-based. In other words, the researcher read through the compositions, registered each break in coherence, then described and classified it in terms of cohesion and/or coherence. Connor (1987:685) points out that although the categories can be explained by linguistic and rhetorical theories, Wikborg's system needs to be verified with other data before being applied to other ESL writing contexts.

The main contribution of this section for the present study is Halliday and Hasan's (1976:1) definition of text, according to which, any passage written or spoken can be regarded as a text if it forms 'a unified whole'. Thus a collection of disconnected or unrelated sentences will not meet the requirement of a text. Since the investigation of cohesive ties or cohesive devices falls beyond the scope of the present study, the next step concerns what components a text should comprise for it to be called a text. Therefore, the concepts of information structure and thematic structure need to be dealt with.

5.1.2 Information structure and thematic structure

The primary focus of this section is on the concept of information structure. Firstly, it studies the manner in which Halliday and Hasan (1976) define the concept. Then it focuses on Halliday's (1985) more recent notions of information structure. But since information structure and thematic structure are closely related to each other, this section also discusses the main components of thematic structure. Thirdly, it investigates Enkvist's (1987) view of the concept of information structure.

The serious study of information structure within texts was instituted by scholars of the Prague School before the Second World War. Many of the insights developed by the Prague scholars were first brought to the attention of Western scholars by Halliday in an extremely influential article published in 1967. Halliday elaborated and developed those aspects of the Prague scholars' work which related directly to his own interests in the structure of texts. According to Halliday, functional sentence perspective (FSP) lies within the textual component, which is a broad category specifying both intrasentence and intersentence relations. FSP is mainly employed to refer to structural relations within a sentence (Halliday 1974:52-53). Halliday adopted the Prague linguists' view of information as consisting of two categories: given information, which is information that the addressor believes is known to the addressee, and new information which the addressor believes is not known to the addressee (for various definitions of the

²⁵

Note 1-5 = 655 instances of a total of 801 coherence breaks (Wikborg 1990:135).

notions of theme/rheme, topic/comment, given/new, see Table 5.1. below). Later on, he and Hasan (1976) provided the following definition of information structure:

. . . the ordering of the text, independently of its construction in terms of sentences, clauses and the like, into units of information on the basis of the distinction into given and new: what the speaker is treating as information that is recoverable to the hearer (given) and what he or she is treating as non-recoverable (new). (Halliday and Hasan 1976:27)

The remaining part of the textual component concerns cohesion, which contributes to relating one element in the text to another by being part of the text-forming component in the linguistic system. The other two major functional-semantic components are the ideational and the interpersonal components (Halliday and Hasan 1976:26). In a subsequent book (1985:274-275) Halliday uses a slightly different terminology stating that information is "a process of interaction between what is already known or predictable and what is new or unpredictable" (see Table 5.1.).

In the idealized form every information unit consists of a given element accompanied by a new element. Structurally, an information unit comprises an optional given element and an obligatory new element. The way in which this structure is realized is non-arbitrary in two respects: (1) the new is marked by prominence, and (2) the given usually precedes the new. The element that is marked by a feature called tonic prominence is said to be carrying information focus. The typical sequence of informational elements is given followed by new, but in a marked position it is possible to have the given element following the new (Halliday 1985:275).

Halliday (1985:278) points out that "other things being equal, a speaker will choose the theme from within what is given and locate the focus, the climax of the new, somewhere within the rheme". Although given and new and theme and rheme are related, they are not the same thing. Given/new is listener-oriented, while theme/rheme is speaker-oriented. Both of them are speaker-selected because it is the speaker who assigns both structures, "mapping one on to the other to give a composite texture to the discourse and thereby relate it to its environment" (Halliday 1985:278). Since speakers may exploit the potential that the situation allows, they can produce an amazing variety of rhetorical effects by using thematic structure and information structure (Halliday 1985:279).

Theme and information constitute the resources for structuring the clause as a message, for giving it a special status as regards the surrounding discourse. But for a sequence of clauses, or clause complexes to constitute a text, non-structural resources for discourse are needed. These non-structural resources are what are referred to by the term cohesion, which in English is created in four ways: by reference, ellipsis (and substitution), conjunction, and lexical organization (Halliday 1985:288-289; see also section 5.1.1 above).

Table 5.1 Functional sentence perspective: the components of information structure

Halliday & Hasan (1976)	given	new	"What the hearer is treating as information that is recoverable to the hearer (given) and what he or she is treating as non-recoverable (new)" (Halliday & Hasan 1976:27)
Halliday (1985)	known theme	new rheme	"what is already known or predictable and what is new or unpredictable" (Halliday 1985:275) Theme: "the element that serves as the point of departure of the message" (1985:38); "the clause is going to be about" (1985:39) Rheme: "The remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed, is called in Prague school terminology the Rheme" (1985:38).
Clark & Haviland (1977)	given	new	Given: "information (the speaker) believes the listener already knows and accepts as true". New: "information (the speaker) believes the listener does not yet know" (Clark & Haviland 1977:4)
Enkvist (1987)	old/given	new	"Old or given information is a term for what a speaker or writer thinks the receptor already knows and has activated and foregrounded in his mind. . . . New information, . . . is thought to be new and unactivated to the receptor in his current state". (Enkvist 1987:29-30)
Mathesius (1975)	theme theme	enunciation rheme	"What the sentence is about"; and "what is said about" the theme "The element about which something is stated may be said to be the <i>basis</i> of the utterance or the <i>theme</i> , and what is stated about the basis is the <i>nucleus</i> of the utterance or the <i>rheme</i> ". (Mathesius 1975:81)
Firbas (1974; 1982; 1986)	theme - transition -	rheme	The theme carries the least communicative dynamism (CD); the transition has an intermediate amount of CD; the rheme carries the most CD
Chafe (1976)	given	new	Given: "that knowledge which the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance" ; New: "what the speaker assumes he is introducing into the addressee's consciousness by what he says" (Chafe 1976:30)

(continued on the next page)

Kuno (1972)	topic/given/known		course anaphoric
Kuno (1978)	old	new	" . . . Old, predictable information if it is recoverable from the preceding context; if it is not recoverable, it represents new, unpredictable information" (Kuno 1978:282-283)
Prince (1981)	given	new	Entities (NPs in a text): brand-new: anchored or unanchored; Textually evoked or situationally evoked; inferrables
Lautamatti (1978; 1987); Witte 1983a; 1983b); Connor & Farmer (1990); Cerniglia et al. (1990); Noh (1985); Mäkinen (1991; 1992)	topic	comment	"The speaker announces a topic and then says something about it . . . topics are usually subjects and comments are predicates" (Hockett 1958:201)
Bardovi-Harlig (1990)	topic/given/known	focus/new	"Topics are often described as given or known information" . Pronouns often serve as topics (cf. Kuno 1972). "The focus is generally independent of the context . . . cannot be identified from preceding discourse because it is new information". The focus cannot be predicted as topics can (Bardovi-Harlig 1990:46-47).
Lovejoy & Lance (1991); Lovejoy (1991)	theme	rheme	The theme: "the point of departure" (cf. Halliday 1967). The rheme: the information the writer wishes to impart about the theme (Lovejoy & Lance 1991:256).

When Halliday analyses the clause as a message, he divides it into one or more of three possible kinds of theme and a rheme. His analysis depends on structural or positional criteria for distinguishing themes from rheme. Halliday's division of a clause into one or more themes and a rheme involves three kinds of meaning that language conveys: the *ideational*, the *interpersonal*, and the *textual*. These concepts will be briefly characterized below because there is a close relationship between the thematic structure and the information structure. At this point, the characterization will mainly focus on parts that appear early in clauses because they have been explored more extensively than have the components that appear later in clauses.²⁶

²⁶ Vande Kopple (1991:327) stresses the importance of student writers being aware of the reasons for using the various kinds of themes, most of which affect the way clauses fit together in a text and the way the text fits its context. If students chose ideational themes capriciously, for instance, they would produce a string of clauses "that lack a consistent focal point or that have new information before given information" for no special reason.

Every clause has an element bearing ideational meaning as a theme. Ideational meaning reflects "our experience of the world that lies about us, and also inside us, the world of our imagination" (Halliday 1985:53). It represents actions, events, mental processes, and relations. Words and word groups conveying ideational meaning can appear as one of five possible structural elements in the clause: the subject, verb, complement, object, and adverbial (Quirk et al. 1985:49). The one of these five structural elements that appears first in the clause is the ideational theme. The metaphor to describe the function of the ideational theme which Halliday (1985:38) uses most often is "the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned". In other words, the ideational theme lays the basis for interpreting the rest of the clause.

The rheme consists of all the elements that follow the ideational theme, the last of which usually receives primary stress if the clause is read aloud (Quirk et al. 1985:1375), whereas the ideational theme normally has a minimum amount of prosodic prominence. The rheme conveys the rest of the message, with the most significant part of it ordinarily appearing at the end of the rheme. The following example indicates that the ideational theme of a declarative clause usually coincides with the grammatical subject:

Television (IT) / is one of the most important inventions made in this country (R).
(Mäkinen 1991:146).²⁷

Using Halliday's terms, the complete grammatical subject is the unmarked ideational theme of a declarative clause, the structural element that most commonly appears at the beginning. But sometimes writers use components other than the grammatical subject as the ideational theme in clauses. The following example shows such a theme. Halliday calls them marked ideational themes. The marked theme is an adverb or a prepositional phrase which functions adverbially:

In Finland (IT) / an average person watches TV approximately two hours every day
(R). (Mäkinen 1991:137)

Writers sometimes want to position information that is recoverable from the situation or from earlier portions of the text at the beginning of the text (cf. Vande Kopple 1986; 1991). Every clause has an ideational theme, whether it be marked or unmarked.

Interpersonal meaning, according to Halliday (1985:53), involves the speaker or writer doing something to the listener or reader by means of language. Interpersonal meaning frequently manifests itself in what Halliday calls modal adjuncts (words such as *certainly*, *maybe*, *usually*, *evidently*, *broadly speaking*, and *amazingly* and in vocatives). Halliday claims that if one or more such words appear before the ideational theme in a clause, they also function thematically. The

²⁷ The compositions comprising these examples appear in Appendix 2. The following abbreviations are used in the examples: IT (ideational theme), IPT (interpersonal theme), TT (textual theme), and R (rheme). See also Vande Kopple's (1991) article on Halliday's system of themes and a rheme.

interpersonal theme and the ideational theme thus function as starting points for the clause.

Luckily (IPT), / there (IT) / isn't very much discussion in television (R). (Mäkinen 1991:133)

If the word or words conveying interpersonal meaning come after the ideational theme, however, then they do not function thematically. They are not parts of the starting point of the clause but parts of the rheme.

Halliday defines textual meaning as "relevance to the context: both the preceding (and following) text and the context of situation" (Halliday 1985:53). Textual meaning enables writers to create coherent text by binding clauses together and then relating these texts to contexts. Textual meaning frequently manifests itself in continuatives (words such as *yes, no, well, oh, and now*) and conjunctive adjuncts (words and phrases such as *in other words, anyway, to sum up, moreover, next, likewise, as a result, otherwise, and in this respect*), in coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, and in definite relatives (*which, who, that, where*) and indefinite relatives (*whatever, whichever, whoever, wherever, however*). If one or more of such words appear before the ideational theme, they also function thematically, specifically as the textual theme. The textual theme and the ideational theme both function as starting points for the clause (Halliday 1985:54).

However (TT), / that (IT) / is not the whole story (R). (Mäkinen 1991:137)

Clauses can have several kinds of themes. When this happens, the natural order of appearance of the three themes is textual theme, interpersonal theme, and ideational theme:

So (TT), / in my opinion (IPT), / TV (IT) / doesn't make it more difficult to think independently (R). (Mäkinen 1991:141)

But although the textual theme may either precede or come after the interpersonal theme, the ideational theme is always the last of the themes. Whatever follows the first ideational component of the clause is, according to Halliday (1985:54), part of the rheme.

Halliday's model has been widely used, and it has also been interpreted in fairly different ways. Halliday's own interpretation seems to have undergone some changes over the years but, as Mauranen (1992) points out, these changes have mostly been specifications rather than major alterations. Although Halliday's approach provides a useful framework for extending research on such communicative roles as conveying given and new information, his system is not without complexities and problems.

The first difficulty concerns the problem of following Halliday's discussion of given and new information, as was shown above (see also Table 5.1.). Secondly, the function of the ideational theme lacks clarity. Occasionally Halliday characterizes the ideational theme as "the element which serves as the point of departure of the message" (1985:38). A bit later he writes about it as the element that "the clause is going to be about" (1985:39). Functioning as the point

of departure for a clause cannot be the same as being what the clause is about (Vande Kopple 1991:318). The present researcher agrees with Vande Kopple (1991:318) as to whether the position of certain elements appearing either earlier or later in clauses can underlie such differences in functional classifications, and whether such insignificant differences in position can have any rhetorical importance.

Despite the criticism discussed above, Halliday's system of theme/rheme analysis offers a fairly consistent means by which to analyse clauses into parts that have communicative roles in discourse. Although his system is fairly complex, it lends itself to modifications to meet the specific needs of the researcher.

Following closely the ideas of Halliday (1967; 1976; 1985), section 6.2.1.5 discusses the topical structure analysis used in the present study. Lautamatti's (1978; 1987) topical structure analysis focuses on the semantic relationships that exist between sentence topics and the discourse topic. The analysis proceeds by looking at sequences of sentences and investigating how the topics in the sentences build meaning as the text progresses. Her analysis was further elaborated by Noh (1985). This further elaborated version was applied to the data of the present study to examine the topic development in the EFL compositions.

5.1.3 Enkvist's definition of information structure

By information structure Enkvist means the pattern in which old (or given) and new information run through the text. Enkvist (1987:29) characterizes two such patterns:

(a) John was tired. He went home. He opened the door and went into the living room. He went to the cupboard and helped himself to a generous drink.

(b) We measure temperatures with thermometers. A thermometer consists of a tube partially filled with mercury and a scale. The scale is divided into degrees.

In (a) the cohesive chain consists of *John - he - he - he - himself*. In (b) the chain comprises *thermometers - a thermometer* and *a scale - the scale*. The pattern of (a) might be called *theme iteration* and that of (b) *theme progression*. The different patterns of information dynamics make the styles of (a) and (b) different. (For Daneš's patterns of thematic progression, see section 5.1.4.3 and for Lautamatti's three types of topical progression, see section 5.1.4.4)

According to Enkvist (1987; see also Table 5.1.), the information structure of a text is exposed through the distinction between old (or given) and new information:

Old or given information is a term for what a speaker or writer thinks the receptor already knows and has activated and foregrounded in his mind. He may also know it because everybody does, or because he has the prerequisite experience, or because he can recover it from the text or the physical and situational environment. New information, on the contrary, is thought to be new and unactivated to the receptor in his current state. The distinction is made clear by specific markers, such as articles, through intonation, and through word-order patterns. (Enkvist 1987:29-30)

Consequently, Enkvist regards factors such as articles, intonation, and word-order patterns as decisive in making the distinction between old and new information.

In this context, two major strategies for the ordering of the elements of clauses and sentences could be studied. One strategy concentrates on new information, which is given immediately. Old information is assumed to be unnecessary because it is either known or recoverable from the context. This strategy is called *crucial information first*:

A: "Where did John go?"

B: "To Paris." (Enkvist 1987:30)

According to Enkvist (1987), this strategy is common in dialogue.

The other strategy is Haviland and Clark's (1974) *given/new contract*, which they distinguish from the *given/new strategy*: the contract refers to a theory of information structure; and the strategy represents a method for language comprehension. According to the given/new strategy, the reader needs to identify and process the given and new information in sentences. Comprehension proceeds in a way such that the reader searches his/her memory for representations of the designated given information, and then incorporates new information into the existing 'given' memory representation.

For the given/new strategy to work properly, the intended given information must match information available in the reader's memory, as a result of previous extralinguistic or linguistic cues. If the information has never been presented or has been presented too long ago, integration by the given/new strategy becomes more difficult (Clark and Clark 1977:96).

The given/new contract is a theory of information distribution developed by text linguists and validated by psychologists in studies of reading comprehension. Haviland and Clark (1977) claim that the contract involves an implicit agreement between two people whereby each identifies information that is known and unknown. The more precisely writers evaluate the previous knowledge of their audience, the more accurately they can express the terms of their contract with regard to given and new expectations. When writer/reader expectations match, communication occurs more easily than in the case when there is mismatch.

The given/new contract shows the tendency for writers and speakers of English to organize their sentences in the unmarked sequence. The organization of information requires that speakers "judge what their listeners do and do not know and construct their sentences accordingly" (Clark and Haviland 1977:38; see Table 5.1.). When the subjects in Clark and Haviland's experiments were given pairs of sentences to read, their comprehension time was faster for the pairs where the given/new contract was closely adhered to. Thus, it would appear that the comprehensibility of a written text is to a certain degree a function of the manner in which information is distributed in sentences. This point is of great significance to ESL student writers, as Weissberg (1984) notes, since being aware of the conventions of information distribution in English may help them to increase "the comprehensibility of their writing, compensating, in part, for other formal errors they may make" (Weissberg 1984:488; for Weissberg's study of paragraph development models in scientific English, see section 5.1.4.3).

Sanford and Garrod (1981:94) point out that the speaker and the listener, or the writer and the reader, have made a tacit linguistic agreement that structures ought to be marked as old (given) and new information:

In interpreting any sentence, the listener first identifies the Given and the New, realizes that he is expected to know about the Given already, and so searches back in his memory for something to match it. When he finds the matching information, this is then set up as antecedent to the particular piece of Given information in the current sentence. (Sanford and Garrod 1981:94)

If the new information comes first, or uncommonly early, and therefore in a place where the listener or the reader might expect old information, it should be marked in one way or another.

Sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 dealt with the information structure of a text, that the ordering of the text into units of information on the basis of the distinction between old/given and new information. The research evidence cited in 5.1.3 supported the view that providing the old information first, and the new information later makes the reader's comprehension task easier. The present study adopted the concepts of topic and comment, which will be defined in section 6.2.

5.1.4 Functional sentence perspective

As was mentioned in section 5.1.2, Halliday brought some of the insights initiated by the Prague scholars to the attention of western scholars. Section 5.1.4 focuses on some of the most relevant notions of the theory of functional sentence perspective (FSP) for the present study.

According to one of the main proponents, Firbas (1986:40), FSP deals with the way in which "the semantic and syntactic structures of the sentence function in fulfilling the communicative purpose intended for the sentence". Different communicative purposes make the sentence structure function in different types of perspective. This area of linguistic structure is usually discussed in terms such as theme and rheme or topic and comment. Among the most prominent linguists associated with the Prague linguistic circle are Mathesius, Daneš, and Firbas. Many linguists agree that Weil's work (1844; as quoted by Vande Kopple 1986:72) *De L'Ordre des mots dans les langues anciennes comparées aux langues modernes* (translated into English in 1887 with the title *The Order of Words in the Ancient Languages Compared with That of the Modern Languages*) is the ultimate source for most of the basic ideas of functional sentence perspective. Weil, a French specialist in Greek, drew attention to the basic elements of a statement, theme and rheme, or topic and comment, in his treatise on word order (Mathesius 1975:81).

In addition to the notion of FSP, various other terms have been used in discussions of this area of linguistic studies such as 'information structure', 'theme/rheme structure', 'topic/comment structure', and 'topic/focus structure'. This study will adopt the notion of topic/comment structure (see section 6.2).

Sections 5.1.4.1, 5.1.4.2, and 5.1.4.3 present the conceptions of the most prominent adherents of FSP, which are of crucial importance for the present study. The discussion includes the major conceptions of Mathesius, Firbas, and Daneš. Section 5.1.4.1 focuses on Mathesius's views of FSP. Section 5.1.4.2 studies Firbas's

contribution to the present study, which is the notion of communicative dynamism. Daneš (1974) has shown that FSP theories can be used to identify basic text patterns in terms of thematic progression. As the present study applies Daneš's (1974) patterns of thematic progression to discover how EFL students develop topics and comments in their compositions, the patterns of thematic progression suggested by Daneš will be described in section 5.1.4.3. (For the analysis of the topic/comment development in the essays, see sections 7.1 and 7.3.)

5.1.4.1 Mathesius and FSP

Mathesius introduced the term functional sentence perspective (FSP) in an article in 1939, and he is generally regarded as the father of the Prague School's work on topic. Unlike many modern linguists who have been primarily concerned with features at or below the sentence level, Mathesius and the other Prague School linguists have focused on the flow of information through sentences. The reaction of the speaker to some reality is, according to Mathesius (1975), the most important feature of the sentence. In declarative sentences, this active part of the speaker is manifested in a certain assertiveness. Mathesius maintains that a closer study of sentences from the viewpoint of assertiveness shows that a vast majority of sentences contain two basic content elements: "a statement and an element about which the statement is made" (Mathesius 1975:81; see also Table 5.1.), which he defines in the following way:

The element about which something is stated may be said to be the *basis* of the utterance or the *theme*, and what is stated about the basis is the *nucleus* of the utterance or the *rheme*. (Mathesius 1975:81; emphasis in the original)

The fact that a declarative sentence, the most common type of sentence, and also other types of sentences contain these two basic components was recognized long ago. Plato, for example, divided a sentence into two components: *onoma* and *rhema*. The main purpose was to investigate the structure of thought, not to describe linguistic structures. Language was, however, assumed to be closely related to thinking (Language and its grammars 1994:18).

Mathesius (1975) clarifies the distinction between the theme and the rheme in the following way:

If a sentence is to be formulated clearly, especially in writing, we should make a clear-cut distinction between these two basic elements, i.e. we should employ a clear *functional sentence perspective*. The patterning of a sentence into the theme and the rheme is here called functional sentence perspective because this patterning is determined by the functional approach of the speaker. The requirement of clear formulation is usually ignored in that the functional sentence analysis is not carried out correctly or completely. Above all, the arrangement to be avoided is the choice of a theme that has not yet been stated in the preceding sentence, and secondly, the rhematic elements should not be introduced too early since they might be misinterpreted by the hearer (or reader), who expects that rhematic elements will constitute the culmination of the sentence. (Mathesius 1975:82)

Working mainly with Slavic languages, in which the word order is less rigid than in English, Mathesius employed the term *theme* to identify "what the sentence is

about" and the term *enunciation* to refer to "what is said about " the theme. The theme of a sentence announces "what is known or at least obvious in a given situation and from which the speaker proceeds in his discourse", while the enunciation adds new or unknown information to the discourse. In Slavic languages, the *theme* of a sentence generally precedes the *enunciation*. Extending his study to English, Mathesius argued that the more rigid word order of English usually means that *theme* coincides with the grammatical subject. Thus, theme and rheme are generally defined positionally with theme in the initial position and rheme in the noninitial position. According to Schneider and Connor (1991:413), the term *topic* later emerged as a synonym for theme and the term *comment* for enunciation.²⁸

5.1.4.2 Firbas's formulation of FSP

One of the main developers of the theory of FSP is Jan Firbas (1974; 1982), who has worked on the theory of FSP since the mid-1950s. In his article 'On the Dynamics of Written Communication in the Light of the Theory of Functional Sentence Perspective' (1986:40-71), he explores communication as a dynamic process. In fact, one of the basic concepts of the theory of FSP is *communicative dynamism* (CD), which according to Firbas (1986:42), refers to a "quality displayed by the development of information toward a particular communicative goal". Firbas (1986:42) defines the degree of CD conveyed by a certain linguistic element as "the relative extent to which this element contributes to the further development of communication".

To illustrate what he means by communicative dynamism, Firbas (1986:42) uses the following examples. In answer to *What about Peter?*, the elements of the structure *He has flown to Paris* are different to the degree they contribute toward the achievement of the communicative goal. *He* contributes least and to Paris most. *Has flown* ranks between the two, its notional component, *flow-*, being more dynamic than its temporal and modal exponents, the auxiliary *has* and the suffix *-n*. The communicative goal or purpose of the structure is to state the destination of Peter's flight. According to Firbas (1986), any linguistic element — a clause, a phrase, a word, a morpheme — can become a carrier of CD as long as it carries some meaning and simultaneously participates in the development of the communication.

Firbas (1986:42) points out that information covers not only purely factual content, but also attitudes, feelings, and emotions. The degree of CD carried by an element is always determined in relation to the contributions that the other elements within the sentence have in regard to the further development of communication. Within written language, an interplay of three factors — linear modification, context, and semantic structure — affect the distribution of degrees of CD (Firbas 1986:43-47).

The communicative importance of the sentence elements increases with the movement toward the end of the sentence. Communicative importance

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Bardovi-Harlig (1990), drawing on Dahl (1974), distinguishes between comment and focus (see also Table 5.1.).

determines the degree of CD. An element with a high degree of communicative importance contributes more to the further development of communication than an element with a low degree of communicative importance. An element expressing known information, information that can be retrieved from the immediate context, is communicatively less important. Since it contributes less to the further development of communication, it bears a lower degree of CD than an element conveying new, unknown information, which conveys communication nearer the intended communicative goal (Firbas 1986:43-44).

The third component, the semantic structure, will be studied with the help of the following two examples (Firbas 1986:45). In the sentence *A boy came into the room*, the verb denotes appearance on the scene (it can also denote existence), the subject a phenomenon appearing (or existing) on the scene, and each adverbial element a local setting. The scene provides the starting point of the development of communication and the phenomenon offers the goal. In the sentence *He has composed a number of powerful symphonies* (Firbas 1986:45), the verb-object combination expresses an action and the goal of the action. The pronominal subject is context-dependent, whereas the verb and the object are context-independent. The subject provides the starting point for the development of communication, whereas the object gives the goal reached by this development. The context-independent object is communicatively more important than the verb, which only expresses the action leading to and bringing about the result. As a result, the element referring to the agent bears the lowest degree of CD, and the element providing the result of the agent's action carries the highest degree.

In addition to the components, Firbas (1986:47-48) introduces the notion of the angle from which the semantic and grammatical sentence structure may be viewed, and which can be either static or dynamic. From the static angle, the structure is viewed as unrelated to any special context; in other words, as not functioning in any actual flow of communication. Seen from the dynamic angle, the structure is seen to be linked with contextual conditions (Firbas 1986:47-48).

Firbas (1974:25) stresses the delicacy with which a sentence is segmented. In most cases he would divide sentences into three parts: the *theme*, the *transition*, and the *rheme* (see Table 5.1.). The theme carries the least communicative dynamism. The transition has an intermediate amount of communicative dynamism while the rheme carries the most communicative dynamism. Thus for most purposes he would divide the example sentence into *He, has flown, and to Paris*.

Two more concepts need to be mentioned in Firbas's system: the *foundation-laying elements*, which form the theme, and the *core-constituting elements*, which form the non-theme. The non-theme comprises the transition and the rheme. The transition involves the elements performing the linking function. These transitional elements carry the lowest degree of CD within the non-theme. The highest degree of CD, on the other hand, is carried by the rheme proper. The theme expresses what the sentence is about and constitutes the point of departure in the development of communication. The elements in the theme carry the lowest degree of CD in the sentence.

The notion of communicative purpose has a central role in the dynamics of communication, because it determines the goal towards which the information

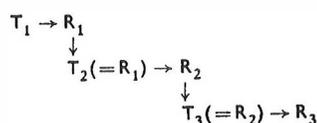
is to develop in a sentence and the distribution of degrees of CD over the sentence elements (Firbas 1986:56-57). According to Firbas, communicative purpose can be studied from at least three angles: the communicative purpose of the writer, the interpretation of the writer's communicative purpose by the reader, and the communicative purpose actually implied by the sentence structure.

The theory of FSP is context-oriented, paying constant attention to the manner in which each sentence is related to the context, and eventually integrated into it. The theory investigates the context which is immediately relevant to the sentence and therefore examines the communicative structure of the paragraph. Analysis of the thematic and rhematic layers of the paragraph and of the development of communication in them gradually leads to the investigation of this progression beyond the paragraph to the text as a whole. Consequently the theory of FSP starts with the sentence and moves to larger wholes.

5.1.4.3 Daneš's patterns of thematic progression

Daneš (1964; 1974), drawing on concepts of the Prague linguistic school such as old/new, theme/rheme, theme/enunciation, topic/comment, has shown that FSP theories can be used to identify basic text patterns in terms of thematic progression (TP). In fact, there are very few studies that have included an analysis of the rheme. In his study "rhemes are set on a near-equal footing with themes", as Mauranen (1992:126) puts it. Since Daneš's (1974) patterns of thematic progression take rhemes or comments into account, his approach offered a useful tool for exploring the way in which EFL writers develop the topic/comment progression in their essays (see section 7.1 and 7.3).

As most investigators of the functional school are concerned with the sentence as the unit of analysis, it is not easy to see how larger discourse topics are represented in this approach. Daneš (1974), however, concerns himself with the analysis of theme in texts, not just in sentences. He schematizes the patterns of the theme (T) and rheme (R) nexus in a text by introducing three patterns of thematic progression. The first pattern is called *simple linear thematic progression*. In the following text, which illustrates this text pattern, the topic of each sentence has been italicized.

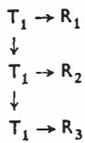


The first of the antibiotics was discovered by Sir Alexander Fleming in 1928. *He* was busy at the time investigating a certain species of germ which is responsible for boils and other troubles. (Daneš 1974:118).

Figure 5.1. The simple linear pattern of thematic progression.

In this pattern, the rheme or the comment of the previous sentence becomes the theme or the topic of the succeeding sentence (Figure 5.1.). Since this pattern of thematic progression results in one thread of chaining, Daneš (1974) calls it simple linear progression.

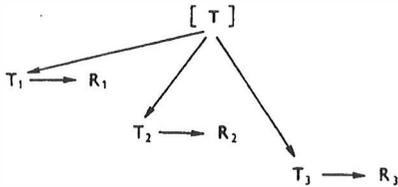
The second pattern is *thematic progression with a continuous theme*, in which pattern successive sentences express the same topic (see Figure 5.2.).



The Rousseauist especially feels an inner kinship with Prometheus and other Titans. *He* is fascinated by any form of insurgency . . . *He* must show an elementary energy in his explosion against the established order and at the same time a boundless sympathy for the victims of it. (Daneš 1974:119).

Figure 5.2. Thematic progression with a continuous theme.

In the third pattern (Figure 5.3.), which is called *thematic progression with a derived theme*, the topics of successive sentences are identified with reference to their relationship to a 'hypertheme'. Daneš applies the term 'hypertheme' to the discourse theme. The latter does not appear explicitly in the text but conceptually covers the individual sentences. In this connection, Noh (1985:79) uses the notion of 'discourse topic'. In comprehending a text, the discourse topic is derived from the meaning of individual sentence topics and from the way in which they are organized in a text.



New Jersey is flat along the coast and southern portion; *the north-western region* is mountainous. *The coastal climate* is mild, but there is considerable cold in the mountain areas during the winter months. *Summers* are fairly hot . . . (Daneš 1974:120).

Figure 5.3. Thematic progression with a derived theme.

Discourse topics do not only reside in the text but, as Witte (1983a:317)) puts it, "rather reflect the interaction of text features with the reader's knowledge". Thus a discourse topic is not derived from the text alone, but from the interaction of the text with the reader's prior knowledge. According to Witte (1983a), this does not, however, mean that the derivation of a discourse topic is a subjective matter; on the contrary, as texts cannot be artificially isolated from the communication process — a process which involves the text, the writer and the reader, it is important to identify textual cues which influence readers' construction of discourse topics. The relationship between the text and its discourse topic can be illustrated by applying Lautamatti's topical structure analysis to the development of discourse topics (see section 5.1.4.4).

Glatt (1982) undertook a study to determine if thematic progression ab-ac and ab-bc are easier to comprehend than other types of progressions, such as ab-ca and ab-cb. The randomly selected sample consisted of 20 college freshmen students who were enrolled in an introductory composition course. A pool of sentences was created consisting of stimulus sentences. Each subject was given a booklet consisting of 11 different sentence pairs. They were informed that the

experiment was designed to test their memory. After the subjects had finished reading the test booklet, it was exchanged for a correspondingly numbered multiple-choice test. The test contained the original stimulus sentences in the same order as the booklet, followed by four possible target sentences. Each student was instructed to circle the target he/she remembered reading in the booklet.

The study indicated that simple linear (ab-bc) and /or run-through (ab-ac) thematic progressions are easier to process than their counterparts, interrupted linear (ab-cb) or interrupted run-through (ab-ca) progressions. In the former case, given information precedes new information, whereas in the latter new information precedes old information.

Thematic progressions define an important way in which writers present information. These progressions establish linguistic patterns in the text that, in turn, relate sentences to each other. These patterns also build on reader expectations. Writers help ensure that information will be appropriately identified by the reader by placing given information in the thematic position, and new information in the rhematic portion of the sentence. Thus, placing given information before new information is keeping with a canonical rule of English usage that states that old information should precede new information in a sentence, which, according to Glatt (1982:102), is also supported by the research of the Prague linguists on the functional sentence perspective of language.

Extending his research into paragraphs, Vande Kopple (1982) conducted five readability and three retention experiments. He employed great numbers of randomly chosen high-school students as subjects. To test students' readability and retention skills, he used various paragraphs with a constant topic and their variants, and various paragraphs with simple linear progression of topics and their variants.

In the first three readability experiments, the subjects had to decide whether a paragraph consistent with FSP or its variant was easier to read. In the fourth, subjects read aloud either a paragraph consistent with FSP or its variant, trying to read as precisely and as fast as possible. Their readings were taped and scored for accuracy and speed. In the fifth experiment, subjects typed as accurately and rapidly as possible either a paragraph consistent with FSP or its variant. Their typed paragraphs were scored for accuracy and speed.

In the first retention test, subjects read either a paragraph consistent with FSP or its variant, and then took a recognition test on it. They received a sheet showing thirty randomly ordered words or short phrases. Ten of these, the elements in the test, expressed new information and appeared within the comments in the paragraphs consistent with FSP and within topics in the variant. The other twenty were distractors, occurring in neither paragraph. The subjects were told to circle the targets and avoid the distractors.

In the second retention test, subjects read either a paragraph consistent with FSP or its variant and then had to give short answers to ten randomly ordered questions. The words or brief phrases in the answers were numbered, and each expressed new information that had appeared within a comment in the paragraph consistent with FSP and within a topic in the variant. In the third retention test, subjects read either a paragraph consistent with FSP or its variant and immediately afterwards tried to reproduce it from memory in writing.

Vande Kopple (1982:54-55) concluded that paragraphs consistent with FSP emerged as significantly more readable and memorable than their variants. In general, the subjects in his study judged them to be easier to read than their variants. They performed better with them on the oral reading and typing tests. And, after reading them, the subjects performed better on the recognition, short-answer, and immediate recall tests.

A very probable explanation for these results can be developed if the given/new theory of comprehension (Clark and Haviland 1977) is extended from pairs of sentences into paragraphs. The subjects in the study read and remembered paragraphs best if each sentence in them expressed new information in its comment not in its topic.

As a teacher of scientific writing to ESL students, Weissberg (1984) attempted to verify the existence of the Daneš typology. Thus, instead of attempting to classify a paragraph by its line of argumentation (description, comparison/contrast, or definition), Weissberg preferred to consider paragraph development from the point of view of information distribution.

Sixty paragraphs from the introduction, methods/materials, and discussion sections from published experimental research reports in agriculture, biology, and engineering were analysed. Each paragraph was analysed for (1) the pattern(s) of topic development used, and (2) the types of cohesive devices (lexical repetition, synonym, pronoun, summative expression, and bridging) employed in the topic portion of each sentence (after the first sentence) of the paragraph to point back to recoverable information earlier in the text. In the pattern analysis, a paragraph was categorized as holding to a certain pattern if at least three consecutive sentences conformed to that pattern. If two or more such sequences conforming to different patterns were found, the paragraph was labelled 'mixed'. Paragraphs with no three-sentence sequences were labelled 'no pattern'. Below, the most important findings concerning the pattern analysis are summarized.

As to the degree of relative frequency, it was found that, among the 60 paragraphs, any one of Daneš's three patterns was significantly more likely to occur than was no pattern at all. In general, Weissberg (1984:493) notes that research report writers regularly use topic development patterns based on the given/new contract in their published works.

In those paragraphs, the linear pattern was found to be the most common, occurring particularly frequently in introductory and discussion paragraphs. The constant topic pattern occurred least frequently. Paragraphs with mixed patterns and with the hypertheme pattern accounted for the second and third most frequent occurrences, respectively. It is interesting to note that the majority of paragraphs with hypertheme patterns occurred in the methods/materials sections.

These findings suggest that the patterns of topic development described by Daneš are regular features of experimental research report writing. According to Weissberg (1984:494-495), they provide a valid heuristic for paragraph construction. But since a relatively large portion of paragraphs (over 21%) in this study were developed through a mixture of patterns, students should, instead of rigidly adhering to one set of paragraph criteria, feel free to combine and alter the three prototypes in authentic paragraphs flexibly.

5.1.4.4 Lautamatti's patterns of topical progression

The previous section briefly looked at the relationship between the text and its discourse topic as seen by Lautamatti. Lautamatti's (1978; 1987) work complements a parallel line of research in the United States, namely, that dealing with 'staging' in discourse, a notion introduced by Grimes (1975) and refined and tested empirically by Clements (1979).

They all view the contribution of sentence topics to the development of the discourse topic semantically. Sentence topics are seen as units of meaning which are hierarchically organized in the text. Using the term 'sentence' to refer to simple and complex sentences, Lautamatti (1978:71) explains the development of discourse in the following manner:

We (readers) expect sequences making up a piece of discourse to be related, however indirectly, to the . . . *discourse topic*. This relation may be direct, especially in short texts, or indirect, based on the development of subordinate ideas, *subtopics*, which in their turn relate to the discourse topic. The development of the discourse topic within an extensive piece of discourse may be thought of in terms of a succession of hierarchically ordered subtopics, each of which contributes to the discourse topic, and is treated as a sequence of ideas, expressed in the written language as sentences. . . . The way the written sentences in discourse relate to the discourse topic is . . . called *topical development* of discourse.

Witte (1983a:318) points out that such a view of the relationships of subtopics (or sentence topics) to the discourse topic surmounts the problems of using the orthographic boundaries of sentences and paragraphs as the major semantic markers in extended discourse. He suggests that the existence of particular sentence topics probably results from a writer's implicit sense of the discourse topic and from his/her decisions about how to make the discourse topic accessible to the reader.

These decisions reflect the writer's concern for global coherence and local coherence, which are necessary conditions for a well-formed and coherent text. To meet the condition of global coherence, writers establish relationships between their sentence topics and their discourse topic, and to meet the condition of local coherence, they establish relationships between the topics of successive sentences. In coherent texts which allow communication to occur between writer and reader, these relationships are expressed through sequences of sentences. Sequences of sentences contribute to the discourse topic by developing a succession of sentence topics. These sequences Lautamatti calls topical progression.

Lautamatti (1978; 1987) identifies three types of topical progression. The first type is *parallel progression*, which corresponds to Daneš's thematic progression with a continuous theme (see section 5.1.4.3), in which pattern the topics of succeeding sentences are referentially identical, using the same lexical words, synonyms, near-synonyms, superordinates, or pronouns. The example below illustrates this type of TP:

(1) *A motel* is defined as an establishment whose primary function is to provide overnight lodging to the general public. *It* is open twenty-four hours a day, . . . *A motel* is a real estate investment.

The second type of topical progression is *sequential progression*, which corresponds to Daneš's simple linear thematic progression (see section 5.1.4.3). In this type, the topic of a sentence is an element in the comment part of the preceding sentence or new elements that have not been mentioned in the previous sentence. The following examples describe this type:

- (1) *A motel* is also a business. *The motel business* requires special training . . .
- (2) *A child* is very unlikely to survive. *This helplessness* of human infants is . . .

The third type, *extended parallel progression*, refers to parallel progression that is temporarily interrupted by a sequential progression (see section 5.1.4.3). The example below represents the third type:

- (1) *A motel* is a real estate investment. *The real estate investor* might be interested for two reasons . . . *A motel* is also a business.

The topic of the first sentence (*A motel*) is interrupted by a different topic in the second sentence. But the topic of the first sentence is resumed as the topic of the third sentence, thus creating an extended parallel progression. The connections of sentence topics produced with the help of these three progression types yield the topical structure of discourse, which indicates the conceptual and sequential flows of individual sentence topics. As a way of indicating the relationships between the progression of sentence topics and the semantic hierarchy, Lautamatti uses the expression topical depth. For Lautamatti, the notions of topical progression, that is, the progression of sentence topics, and topical depth are combined to represent the topical structure of a text. (For the construction of topical structure, see sections 6.2.1.6.)

As the present research draws on Lautamatti's analysis, a brief presentation of her topical structure analysis will be given in this context. This is further motivated by the reference to Lautamatti in connection with the studies that have employed her analysis. Lautamatti makes a distinction between topical and non-topical material in sentence initial position, which is a significant development towards further delicacy, compared to the approach of Halliday discussed in section 5.1.2. According to Lautamatti, the initial sentence element may be identical with the mood subject, which in turn may be topical or non-topical. If non-topical, the mood subject may be either lexical/notional or a structural dummy. Non-topical material may organize the discourse, but it is the topical material that, by definition, develops the discourse.

To illustrate the functions of non-topical material in a written text, Lautamatti (1987:90-91) provides the following examples. Among non-topical material which may organize the discourse are, for instance, discourse connectives such as *consequently* and *however*. Secondly, other non-topical organisers of discourse are illocution markers such as *for example*, *to illustrate this point*. Apart from these, the writer may indicate the truth value of the information by using expressions like *it seems probable*, or *obviously*. These are called modality markers, which are considered to include references to authorities, such as *biologists suggest*,

as well as to the writer's own commitment (e.g. *I doubt whether*). Fourthly, the writer may make explicit his/her own attitude by using attitude markers such as *I would like to, it seems futile to*. Fifthly, the writer may employ material to refer to the properties of the organization of the text itself, e.g. *next, we shall discuss*, and finally, the writer may use *commentary* material to approach the reader.

Lautamatti's (1978; 1987) topical structure analysis has been applied either as such or modified by various other researchers, for example, Witte (1983), Noh (1985), Cerniglia et al. (1990), Connor and Farmer (1990). Based on empirical evidence from Witte's (1983) and Connor and Farmer's (1990) studies, Cerniglia et al. (1990) have developed an instructional sequence for teaching students how to perform a topical structure analysis and how to make it work as a revision strategy. They have used an innovative systems model to develop a computer-assisted lesson in topical structure analysis. Connor et al. (1990) report that their experience indicates that students enjoy learning about topical structure analysis and that the instruction in and use of the analysis enhance students' ability to assess passage coherence.

In Witte's (1983a) study, L1 students were asked to revise an expository paragraph. These revised passages were rated and analysed by using topical structure analysis. Witte's study revealed that the revisions which were scored low lacked a clear focus (or coherence), which showed that the student was uncertain about what the discourse topic was. Witte's (1983b) study also employed topical structure analysis. This study focused on patterns in L1 freshman-level students' writing and compared them with the quality ratings of the essays. Witte found topical structure analysis to be a fair indicator of writing quality.

Connor and Farmer examined the effects of instruction in topical structure analysis (for how to perform a topical structure analysis, see Connor and Farmer 1990). They constructed a modified version of the analysis for students as a revision strategy to check for coherence in their own writing. Connor and Farmer taught this revision strategy for students to employ when they were revising their first drafts. Their instruction gained positive results; even though statistically significant differences were not obtained between the control and experimental groups in terms of (a) rated coherence of their final products and (b) quality of revision (meaning-preserving versus meaning-changing), the trend indicated the potential of topical structure analysis as a tool for analyzing coherence in text and as a revision tool for students.

Following closely Lautamatti's (1978; 1987) and Witte's (1983a; 1983b) empirical research evidence, Connor and Farmer (1990) have isolated three crucial moves for students to perform in order for them to perform a topical structure analysis: (1) to identify sentence topics, (2) to determine sentence progression, and (3) to chart the progress of sentence topics.

To be able to identify topics, students need to be familiar with the information structure in a sentence according to its topic and comment. *Topic* would simply be explained as the "main topic of the sentence", which often, but not always, coincides with the grammatical subject of the sentence. *Comment* would be explained as "what is said about the topic", which is frequently the grammatical predicate.

To be able to determine sentence progression, students need to know how topics build meaning through either parallel, sequential, or extended parallel progression. In parallel progression, the sentence topics are semantically identical. This kind of progression or, repetition of a topic, is meant to reinforce the idea in the reader's mind. In sequential progression, the sentence topics, which are different from each other, are normally derived from the comment in the previous sentence. This helps the writer develop individual topics by gradually adding new details to an idea. This kind of topical development would be a requirement for good prose (Connor 1987b:683). Too much development of a sentence topic may distract the reader from the main idea. In extended parallel progression, a parallel progression may be temporarily interrupted by a sequential progression. In this third type of topical progression, the writer returns to a topic mentioned earlier in the essay (Connor and Farmer 1990:128-130). After students have identified and underlined the sentence topics in the compositions, they are ready to chart the progress of the sentence topics.

Connor and Farmer (1990) claim that students would benefit most by using this method after their first drafts, because, at that point in the writing process, students are still prepared to make substantial changes. Student response shows that the procedure helps them study the meanings of their sentences and forces them to relate these meanings to the main topic and the purpose of their writing. A lack of clear focus and unrelated pieces of information were discovered to be the major weaknesses in, especially, the poorer students' compositions in the present study.

Section 6.2 studies Noh's (1985) attempt to elaborate on the topical structure analysis originated by Lautamatti (1978; 1987) by introducing specific frames such as the thematic frame and the attitudinal/informational frame into the model. Section 6.2. also focuses on how this analytical model was tailored to meet the needs of the present data.

The above studies and the teaching methods based on topical structure analysis consider the identification of topics and the determination of sentence progression into parallel, sequential, or extended parallel types, but they seem to ignore the actual role of comments as a conveyor of new information in a sentence. The present study attempts to trace coherence in EFL compositions by also taking that relatively neglected element, the comment, into account (for the analysis of the topic/comment development in the compositions, see section 7.1).

5.1.4.5 Prince's taxonomy

As can be seen in Table 5.1., the general notion of given versus new information appears prominently in linguistics literature, under that name or under one of its aliases: old/new, known/new, topic/focus, and so on. Bewildered by the fuzziness of the terminology, Prince (1981) discusses three levels of givenness. The first level, according to Prince (1981:226), concerns givenness in the sense of predictability/recoverability:

- (1) Givenness: The speaker assumes that the hearer can predict or could have predicted that a particular linguistic item will or would occur in a particular position within a sentence.

This type is represented by what Kuno (1972; 1978) calls 'old/new' information and what Halliday and Hasan (1976) call 'given/new' information, although the two notions are defined in a different way and what is old for Kuno is not necessarily given for Halliday. Kuno defines old/new information in terms of recoverability, which correlates with deletability, but it does not address, for example, the difference in status between a nondeletable pronoun and its antecedent. Thus Kuno (1972; see also Table 5.1.) adds a second distinction, that of anaphoric/nonanaphoric.

For Halliday (1967), given/new is defined quite differently, in terms of intonation. An intonationally²⁹ marked or unmarked focus identifies what is new; given is defined as the complement of a marked focus. In Halliday and Hasan (1976), new is defined as in Halliday (1967), and given is defined as "expressing what the speaker is presenting as information that is recoverable from some source or other in the environment — the situation, or the preceding text" (Halliday and Hasan 1976:326). It is, however, optional because an information unit may contain no given information.

The second level concerns saliency, which Prince 1981:228) describes as follows:

(2) Givenness: The speaker assumes that the hearer has or could appropriately have some particular thing/entity . . . in his/her consciousness at the time of hearing the utterance.

Chafe's (1976) notion of given/new information falls under this heading. For Chafe, given information represents "that knowledge which the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance", and new, "what the speaker assumes he is introducing into the addressee's consciousness by what he says" (Chafe 1976:30; see also Table 5.1.).

Thirdly, givenness in the sense of "shared knowledge" can be defined in the following manner (Prince 1981:230-231)³⁰:

(3) Givenness: The speaker assumes that the hearer "knows", assumes, or can infer a particular thing (but is not necessarily thinking about it).

Clark and Haviland's (1977; see also section 5.1.3) given/new information represents this type. Given, for them, is "information (the speaker) believes the listener already knows and accepts as true" and new is "information (the speaker)

²⁹ This emphasis can probably be taken as reflecting Halliday's view of the primacy of speech, reflected e.g. in the following statement ". . . the unconscious nature of spontaneous speech; and it is just in this respect that we should perhaps insist on giving priority to spoken language. There is a sense in which the nature of language itself is determined by the mode in which it is first learnt; and that is the spoken mode" (Halliday 1985, XXV).

³⁰ Prince discards this term because it has given rise to great confusion. As people's belief-sets may be overlapping, the intersection constituting "shared knowledge", is taking the position of "an omniscient observer and is not considering what ordinary, nonclairvoyant humans do when they interact verbally" (Prince 1981:232).

believes the listener does not yet know" (Cark and Haviland 1977:4; see also Table 5.1.). It is not of greater importance whether the hearer knows the information directly for having been explicitly told it, or indirectly by means of inferencing. Kuno's distinction between anaphoric/nonanaphoric, mentioned above, likewise falls under this rubric.

The notion of givenness and its confusing use in literature have made Prince (1981:232-255) propose the term 'assumed familiarity'. The main concepts of Prince's taxonomy of the values of assumed familiarity will be described by using the examples she studies in her article.

- a. Pardon, would *you* have change of a quarter?
- b. *Noam Chomsky* went to Penn.
- c. I got on *a bus* yesterday and *the driver* was drunk.
- d. *A guy I work with* says he knows your sister.
- e. Hey, *one of these eggs* is broken!

To illustrate Prince's analysis of given and new information (see also Table 5.1.), her work (1981:235-237) will be followed very closely. She defines a text as a set of instructions from a writer to readers on how to construct a particular discourse model. The model includes discourse entities (for example, individuals, exemplars, substances, and concepts), attributes, and links between entities. The entities in a discourse model are represented by the noun phrases (NPs) in a text.

When a writer introduces an entity into the discourse, the entity is new. New discourse entities fall into two kinds. In one case, the writer may have to create a new entity, in which case the entity is *brand-new*. In the other case, readers may be assumed to have a corresponding entity in their minds and simply have to put it into the discourse model. Readers know the information but do not think of it until it is introduced into the text. Prince calls these entities *unused*. If the sentence *Noam Chomsky went to Penn* appeared in a text, the name *Noam Chomsky* would be unused information.

Brand-new entities seem to be of two types: *anchored* and *unanchored*. They are anchored if the NPs referring to them are linked, by means of another NP, to some other discourse entity. If the sentence *I got on a bus yesterday, and the driver was drunk* were the first in a text, *a bus* would be brand-new unanchored, whereas in the sentence *A guy I work with says he knows your sister, a guy I work with* is brand-new anchored.

In practice, there are two ways in which an entity can be evoked. It can be evoked on the basis of an earlier occurrence in the text, that is, *textually evoked*, or it can be *evoked situationally*. Situationally evoked entities cannot be found in the text but must be found in the context of the situation. *A guy I work with says he knows your sister, he* is textually evoked, whereas *Pardon, would you have change of a quarter? you* is situationally evoked.

The third type of discourse entity are the *inferrables*. An entity is inferrable if the writer can assume that readers can infer it via logical or plausible reasoning from discourse entities which are already evoked or from other inferrables. *I got on a bus yesterday and the driver was drunk. The driver*³¹ is inferrable from *a bus*, since

³¹ Note the use of the definite article.

readers can infer that the bus has a driver. A special subclass of inferrables are *containing inferrables*. In *Hey, one of these eggs is broken!*, *one of these eggs* is a containing inferrable, "as it is inferrable, by a set-member inference, from *these eggs*, which is contained within the NP and which, in the usual case, is situationally evoked" (1981:236).

Prince's analysis looks complex, and at points it is intuitive and nonexplicit. The differences between its various elements are so subtle and blurred that it is sometimes difficult to make a distinction between unused entities and inferrable entities. Vande Kopple (1991:316-317) maintains that the problem with the entities called inferrables may remain a matter of interpretation, subject to influences from different cultures, subcultures, readers' background knowledge, their purposes, and questions about the writer's intentions.

The taxonomy differentiates what has been treated as 'given' in the linguistics literature ('situationally and textually evoked'), and what has been considered as 'given' in the psycholinguistics literature ('situationally and textually evoked' together with the class of 'inferrables'; see also Vande Kopple 1991). Although Prince's taxonomy has been illustrated in this section, it is not, however, used in the present study. Her analysis was included to exemplify a fairly sophisticated way of analysing texts, whose use in empirical text analysis would be interesting to try out.

5.2 The process-based approach to discourse analysis

Fundamental to the process-based approach in the analysis of discourse is a focus on the content of a piece of text. This approach is concerned with the production and comprehension of texts. Process-based approaches have been influenced by several linguists' work. Among others, Fillmore's (1968) case grammar and Grimes's (1975) semantic grammar of propositions have greatly contributed to discourse analyses conducted by psychologists dealing with reading comprehension and development of discourse content. Unlike the sentence-based approach, in the process-based approach to discourse analysis, sentences are typically reduced to propositions. The notion of the proposition is defined in different ways, from the relationships between a predicate and its argument (Grimes 1975; Meyer 1975) to the psychological status of the semantic representation involved (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978; van Dijk and Kintsch 1983). This approach prefers superstructure models of texts to a linear representation of sentences as evidenced in the sentence-based approach, which may be due to the fact that many of the models were developed for the purpose of evaluating the text comprehender's understanding of texts.

Among various researchers using process-based approaches, Frederiksen claims that "a text's structure is a reflection of the knowledge structure of the speaker or writer who produced the text. The argument is that if a semantic distinction or structure is manifested in language, it must also represent an aspect of human memory" (Frederiksen 1975:57). Kintsch argues that "the memory

representation of a text is a function of content of the text, but not of the way in which it is expressed. That is, identical memory representation may be formed for paragraphs that are all members of the same paraphrase set" (Kintsch 1974:197). Meyer's semantic content structure analysis, which empirical studies have applied to explore the relationship between reading and writing, views a text as a complex proposition in which each proposition fulfills a rhetorical function. Her model "depicts the relationships among the content of the passage. It shows how an author of a passage has organized his ideas to convey his message, the primary purpose of his writing endeavor" (Meyer 1975:3). The key to understanding semantic content structure analyses is to know the concept of a simple proposition and how propositions develop a coherent text.

As was mentioned above, advocates of this approach are interested in representations of the semantic content, or information content, of texts. The notion of proposition is derived from formal logic where it often represents the context-independent meaning expressed in a sentence, whereas in the text analysis literature a proposition is used to represent an interpretation of a text sentence (Brown and Yule 1983). In text analysis literature, propositions are represented as relationships between a predicate and its arguments. They are expressed as in (1a):

1. John hit Mary.
- 1a. Hit (John, Mary).

The representation in (1a) is considered the single proposition which (1) as a sentence can be used to express. The analyst's interpretation of sentence (1) is dictated by his/her choice of semantic representation in (1a). Another feature of this text-analytical approach to the notion of proposition has to do with the psychological status of the semantic representation involved. In text-content analyses, propositions are treated as conceptual structures, i.e. what speakers have in their minds after they have read a piece of text. For Kintsch (1974) and van Dijk (1977), a proposition also shows the conceptual representation in which all knowledge is used and stored in the memory.

Very often the content of a text, but not the individual words, can be recalled. In order to justify the psychological status of proposition as a unit of semantic representation of text content, Kintsch and Keenan (1973) tested and confirmed an assumption that two texts, which were about the same length regarding the number of words in them but which differed in the number of underlying propositions, required different reading/understanding times. The higher the number of underlying propositions, the longer it would take the subjects to read and understand the text.

The representation of a text cannot be dealt with only as a list of propositions, but there must be a hierarchical relationship between the propositions. The logical network in Frederiksen (1975), Kintsch's (1974) template text base, Kintsch and van Dijk's (1978) macrostructure rules, and Meyer's (1975) rhetorical predicates are examples of higher level systems. According to Brown and Yule (1983:112), the highest proposition in the hierarchy is a possible candidate for being treated as the 'topic-proposition' of the text. The hierarchy of propositions will then enable the description of the topic-structure of a text.

One very influential approach to the analysis of the semantic representation of text is that of van Dijk (1977). His approach relates the representation of discourse content to the notion of 'discourse topic'. In a piece of written text, the topic is expressed as a complex proposition which is entailed by the set of propositions expressed by the sequence of sentences in the text. Van Dijk's analysis is based on an underlying semantic representation of the text rather than the sequence of sentences which constitute the text. The semantic representation of a text is its macrostructures which van Dijk (1977:6) defines as "the meaning of parts of a discourse and of the whole discourse on the basis of the meanings of the individual sentences". They are related to the semantic structure of sentences by semantic mapping relations or macro-rules. These macro-rules suggested by van Dijk (1977) include deletion, generalization, and construction rules.

The role of macrostructures in text comprehension is assumed to be very significant. They require cognitive knowledge or frames which define the relations between concepts and their subordinate and superordinate concepts for normal situations, events, and actions (van Dijk 1977).

Producing underlying propositions for every sentence of a longer text may result in a semantic representation even longer than the original text. Brown and Yule (1983:109) claim that semantic representation seems to amount to a translation of the text into another format. The procedure cannot produce the means of identifying 'the topic' of the discourse. Although van Dijk (1977:132) points out that "discourse topics seem to reduce, organize and categorize the semantic information of sequences as whole", he does not offer any means of reducing the semantic representation in order to produce the representation of the discourse. The semantic representation cannot be the topic because the expression of the topic of a discourse cannot possibly be longer than the discourse itself. The Kintsch and van Dijk (1978) model of text comprehension and production will serve as an example of a process-based approach to discourse analysis, which will be surveyed in section 5.2.1.

5.2.1 Kintsch's and van Dijk's model of text comprehension and production

The model by Kintsch and van Dijk (1978) claims that meanings arise from the interaction of text and reader. (For a more comprehensive review of psychological interactive models see, for instance, Samuels and Kamil 1984.)

In reading research interactive models grew out of dissatisfaction with the bottom-up and top-down models, which argued that reading comprehension is a uni-directional process which starts from the textual bottom of the cognitive top. For reading researchers interactive models seemed to offer a balanced view which admitted that both bottom-up and top-down processing strategies are at play in reading. Reading as an interactive process refers to a process where textual information is combined with the information that the reader brings to the text (Grabe 1988:56).

The Kintsch and van Dijk (1978) model of text comprehension and production is more concerned with text comprehension than with reading. By comprehension, Kintsch and van Dijk refer to the cognitive operations with which

the listener/reader works out the semantic structure of spoken or written discourse. They make a distinction between text comprehension and reading. By reading, they mean the initial perception of the text (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:364).

Kintsch and van Dijk consider text comprehension a complex and hierarchical process of information reduction. The model comprises three basic operations. First, it assumes that the comprehension process starts with the construction of a text base. The text base, or the microstructure of the text, is a coherent list of propositions which are related to each other by referential links or through the reader's inferences. The text base represents the "full meaning of the text", by which Kintsch and van Dijk mean that it is a readable paraphrase of the propositions of a text and their links to one another.

But the text base only represents an initial stage in text comprehension through which a deeper understanding of the text can be constructed. The second stage is the organization and condensing of the information of the text base into the gist, or the macrostructure, of the text. The macrostructure is the semantic deep structure of discourse. It characterizes the discourse as a whole. The microstructure and the macrostructure of the text are linked up to one another by macrorules, which reduce, organize, and condense the text base information, by, for instance, deleting irrelevant micropropositions from the macrostructure, generalizing on the basis of relevant micropropositions, or inferring a more global fact from relevant micropropositions. Discourse can be claimed to be coherent if its sentences and propositions at the microlevel are connected, and if these propositions are also organized at the macrolevel. The third stage assumes that text production is a process where new texts are constructed on the basis of "the memorial consequences of the comprehension processes" (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978:363-366).

In this model, text comprehension is characterized as the interaction of text and reader. In this interaction the power of the text lies in the information it contains and in its schematic structure. If a text has a conventional schematic structure, it gives readers a set of criteria by which they can determine what type the particular text represents. With their help, readers are able to recognize the units of the text (e.g. Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion in research reports). As was pointed out above, for Kintsch and van Dijk (1978) coherence is the outcome of the connectedness of the surface level propositions of a discourse, and of the global organization of these propositions. One proof of coherence is that text information can be reduced to a kernel statement.

Kintsch's and van Dijk's model claims that the reader and the text both interact in the construction of text meaning. Comprehension is constrained by the schematic structures by the text, but it is directed by reader goals and inferences. Although, in theory, Kintsch and van Dijk note that the pragmatic, social and cultural context may affect comprehension, "the role of context remains a marginal issue for them, so that comprehension is primarily a decontextualized process taking place between the text and the reader's mind only" (Leppänen 1993:92).

A tree-like hierarchical text structure enables the importance level of text information to be defined. The information high in the hierarchy should be recalled better than the information low in the hierarchy (Kintsch and van Dijk

1978; Meyer 1975). This differential recall has been examined and confirmed in a number of experimental studies (e.g. Connor 1984).

There is a fundamental methodological problem with the proposition-based analysis of texts. Despite the appearance of a formal and objective kind of approach, this approach is inevitably subjective (Brown and Yule 1983:114). There may not be a single correct semantic representation for a text because each analysis represents only the interpretation of a certain analyst. Subjectivity is also a question of degree, that is, whether text-processing and interpretation are totally idiosyncratic, or only to a small extent. Aristotle, when discussing the level of accuracy in *Nichomachean Ethics* (translated in 1985), claims that it is characteristic of an educated person to "look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits" (1985:1730). Popper (1972:58) regards clarity as "an intellectual value" because without it, critical discussion would be impossible. He does not consider exactness or precision intellectual values as such; "on the contrary", he continues, "we should never try to be more exact or precise than the problem before us requires" (Popper 1972:58).³² Hence all text-processing and interpretation is by definition subjective up to a point, but so are most interesting things in life. It should be enough to have a system that you can defend with good arguments.

At this point, it is useful to compare the topical structure analysis developed by Lautamatti (1978; 1987) with the Kintsch and van Dijk model (1978). These two models share many characteristics. Firstly, they both use the concept 'topic' as a key notion in their discourse analysis models. Secondly, they identify coherence in a discourse using similar concepts: 'topic (or sentential topic)' in a sentence, 'discourse topic' for the theme of discourse, and 'sequential topic' (topical progression in the topical structure model). Thirdly, they both attempt to connect the topics in sentences (sentential topics) to the topic of the discourse (discourse topic).

As to the differences between these two models, the first difference concerns the degree to which the concept 'topic' is specified. In topical structure analysis, topics in sentences or clauses are differentiated as main topics or subsidiary topics, according to the status of the topical units in which they appear. But this distinction is not made in the Kintsch and van Dijk model. From a structural viewpoint, this distinction specifies information as either main or subsidiary, which is similar to the differentiation between the main clause and a subordinate clause in the linguistic analysis of sentences. From the viewpoint of the cognitive processes of discourse, it identifies the relative importance of information in terms of main versus subsidiary (cf. Noh 1985).

Secondly, in the Kintsch and van Dijk model, the sequentiality in discourse is represented in terms of 'sequential topics'. It may, however, be laborious to connect the sequences between the sequential topics in a tree-like hierarchical representation of discourse structure such as theirs.

The third difference between the models is in the way the topics in sentences are connected to the topic of the whole discourse. Even though Kintsch and van Dijk emphasize the importance of connecting sentential topics in the

³² Bruner (1990:108) regards validity as "an interpretive concept".

microstructure with the discourse topic in the macrostructure, they do not provide any concrete tools for this purpose. In topical structure analysis, this problem is solved by the establishment of the topical depth dimension (see section 6.2).

To sum up, topical structure analysis has many features which contrast it with other text structure analyses. First, it is possible to construct the macrostructure or macro-proposition of a discourse by means of sentence topics, without undergoing the time-consuming business of analysing texts into propositions, as adopted in Kintsch and van Dijk (1978), Meyer (1975), and Frederiksen (1975). Secondly, the structure of parallel and sequential topical progressions shows the overall flow of discourse content, and, moreover, it illustrates the structural pattern of the discourse, which is comparable with the top level rhetorical structures proposed by Meyer (1975). Thirdly, the topical depth dimension provides some textual devices for connecting information at the local level (clause and sentence level) to the gist of the text at the global level, which makes it possible to construct or infer the topic of discourse. Fourthly, readers can construct the topical structure of a discourse as they read, whereas in such models as those by Kintsch (1974), Frederiksen (1975), Meyer (1975), and Kintsch and van Dijk (1978), readers need to read through the whole text before being able to analyse the structure. Fifthly, topical structure analysis is simple and easy for students to use as a learning tool (see also Connor et al. 1990; Noh 1985:109-110).

5.2.2 Rhetorical structure analysis by Mann and Thompson

This section will survey a more recent approach to text patterning, developed by Mann and Thompson, known as Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST). The Rhetorical Structure Theory of Mann and Thompson (1987) is a relatively formal account of text structures. RST is not only a model for conducting analysis, but a general theory of text organization.

In a functional theory the postulated relations are described in terms of the goals of the writer. Some text parts ('nuclei') are more important for the writer's goals than others ('satellites'). Since the RST model includes these two different types of elements, it is also hierarchical in the sense of having components with different importance values. This functional hierarchy reflects the variability of focus in communication. Natural messages obviously contain some text elements which are more important than others for the writer's communicative purposes in terms of propositional content.

The patterns consist of schemas of variable complexity, the simplest comprising a single relation between the text parts, which most often occurs between a nucleus and a satellite. Typical relations between nuclei and satellites are, for instance, 'elaboration', 'enablement', 'purpose', 'solution', and 'circumstance'. The schemas form an open set, which means that it is possible to add new evidence to them from text analyses. This openness allows the writer to form novel relations in texts.

One of the major shortcomings of this model is its narrow and unspecific notion of rhetoric. Text structures have a significant function in ordering propositions, but rhetoric cannot be reduced to text structures, because many other textual features influence the rhetorical effect of a text. Besides this, Mauranen

(1992:219) points out that if the rhetorical goals were specified more distinctly than is done in RST, and if the structures identified by analysts were indicated by segment boundaries and the character of the relations between the different parts, this kind of functional analysis would be more meaningful. Thus, rhetorical structure theory fails to demonstrate in a systematic way that linguistic indicators correlate with its interpretation of text structures.

5.3 The procedural approach to discourse analysis

The previous section looked at the representation of text-content. The representations employ the tree-structure to express the hierarchical relationships existing among the text components. An alternative model, which is essentially heterarchical in nature, has been proposed by de Beaugrande (1980). It was originally a computational sentence-parsing model, which was later developed as Augmented Transition Networks (Woods 1978).

The approach developed by de Beaugrande (1980) draws heavily on a view of text as communicative interaction. It is a procedural model which establishes a network of relations between elements in the 'text-world'. According to de Beaugrande, a mere linguistic analysis of texts in which texts are seen simply as units larger than sentences, or sequences of sentences, is doomed to failure. The analysis includes a syntactic procedure which yields a grammatical network. In addition to the grammatical relations, de Beaugrande (1980:77) proposes another network, a conceptual network. In processing, these transitions can be 'augmented' with heuristic searching strategies.

The stance taken in this approach is quite different from those of the other models described above. In de Beaugrande's model of text processing, text is defined as an "actual system, being a set of elements functioning together" (de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981:35). Once the text has been defined as an actual system, de Beaugrande specifies seven functional principles of textuality: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality. These seven key characteristics of text apply not only to the texts that we read, but also to the texts that we write (Harste 1985:13). Harste adds that it is a short step from these characteristics to the strategies that successful readers and writers use in text interpretation and production.

The primary concern in this approach is the reader's search activity in establishing connectivity between textual occurrences. These search activities in production processes occur throughout the following stages: planning - ideation - development - expression - parsing. In comprehension, a similar set of processing stages proceeds in the reverse direction (de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981:39-43). ATN models (de Beaugrande 1980; Woods 1978) maintain the heuristic strategy scheme by making use of functional information which is received directly from the surface structure.

The ATN model is a promising model in simulating computers for language processing (de Beaugrande 1980; 1981; Rumelhart 1977; Woods 1978).

One of its most important advantages is its flexibility. In the ATN processing model suggested by de Beaugrande (1980), the processor (or a reader) conducts both syntactic and conceptual analyses through a phrase or a clause until the head of a piece of text is found. Although this approach may yield a precise account of a large number of the potential conceptual relations within a text, with longer texts the conceptual network will become more complex to apply.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has examined various forms of inquiries into language processing by characterizing them into three approaches: sentence-based, process-based, and procedural. The examination done in this chapter is neither thorough nor exhaustive, but it is considered sufficient for the purposes of this study in the sense that it both covers the historical background and discusses the major approaches.

The sentence-based approach puts the emphasis on the on-going processing of language along with the linear progression of text. The process-based approach is more interested in answering the question of what the reader can remember after reading a text. The choice of proposition as a unit of analysis and the hierarchical representation of text-content are indicative of the focus of the approach, the knowledge structure stored in the memory after reading. The Rhetorical Structure Analysis model views the text in terms of the relations among its component parts. The same relations are assumed to hold at all levels of text structure, so that a specification of these levels from clause level to overall text level yields a hierarchical analysis of the whole text, in which some parts of the text are more important ('nuclei') than other parts ('satellites'). RST is a functional theory, in which the postulated relations are described in terms of the goals of the writer. Although text structures have a central role in ordering propositions, rhetoric cannot be reduced to text structures. One of its most obvious shortcomings is its limited view of rhetoric.

The procedural approach, in turn, represents the notion of topic, which in the network configuration of expository discourse is the node that acquires additional linkage between the stretches of text across the sentence boundary. Despite its precision, the complexity of this model of analysis would make it hard to apply it to longer texts.

On the basis of the assumptions that textual information (not propositional semantics) in a coherent discourse is connected in certain ways, the present study attempts to develop a system by which a discourse can be analysed, and through which the structure of a discourse can be represented. This model will be explored in chapter 6.

6 DATA AND METHODS

Chapter 6 falls into two sections. Section 6.1 gives an analytical description of the writing assignment starting with the instructions that the students who took part in the study were given, the main characteristics of the reflective composition, and the rating method that was used in the study (for the choice of topics and prompts, the types of writing tasks, and the choice of assessment methods, see chapter 4). Section 6.2 focuses on the analysis that was used to investigate the relationship between topic development and writing quality in the High, Mid, and Low categories of the student compositions.

6.1 Description of the data

The data of the present study comprise 24 compositions written in English, the students' foreign language, as part of their normal school work. Sections 6.1.1, 6.1.2 and 6.1.3 address the writing task, the instructions, and the rating procedure.

6.1.1 The task instructions

This section discusses the instructions which accompanied the writing task. The writing task was taken from the International Study of Written Composition of the IEA project in which it had mainly been used in an L1 context. Choosing a writing task and instructions which the foreign language students were not accustomed to, and also an analytical rating method that the foreign language teachers were not familiar with, was motivated by a desire to test how well they would suit a foreign language assessment context.

The instructions (see Table 6.1.) were devised by the IEA international team, and they are reported by Lucisano (1987:60-62; see also Gorman et al. 1988):

Table 6.1 The task instructions: the reflective composition

Below are a number of observations and questions. Select one and write an essay in which you reflect on what is said and state your own viewpoint. However, in writing your essay you might also take account of different points of view. In your essay you may refer to personal observation, to books that you have read, to films, plays or whatever will contribute to what you want to say.

Your essay will be judged on what you have to say, how clearly you present and illustrate your thoughts and how effectively you express them.

1. Does watching television make it difficult to think independently?
2. Many young people today find it difficult to talk to and understand middle-aged people.
3. What might happen if students were given more control over what they study and how they study?
4. What might the world be like if the role of women in society really changed?
5. It is preoccupation with possessions, more than anything else, that prevents men from living freely and nobly.
6. 'Doesn't the heart in the middle of crowds feel frightfully alone?' (Charles Lamb)

Note: You have 90 minutes to complete your writing.

The reflective composition

Tasks in which students have to invent or generate in order to inform, express or persuade.

QUESTION	ANSWER	RELATION TO SCORING SCHEME
What form of text am I supposed to write?	An academic essay with reflection and personal views and opinions as well as those of others	Structure of text type as appropriate to "academic" tradition; appropriate style and tone
To whom am I supposed to write?	Addressee not specified but presumably an unknown assessor	Style and tone as appropriate to the "academic" discourse
Why should I write? What is the purpose of writing?	To inform a reader of my considered views; perhaps to express or persuade	Fulfilling of purpose judged on content and organization
What am I supposed to write about?	One of a set of specified general issues: social, cultural, or psychological	Content judged for presumed maturity of thinking
How is my composition going to be judged?	Criteria specified	Content, elaboration and examples, structure, style and tone
How much time am I allowed?	90 minutes	

Within the IEA International Study of Written Composition, Lucisano (1987) developed a system for analysing the assignments (see above). The analysis is based on metacognitive knowledge about tasks (Flavell 1976), or task recognition (Sternberg 1984). It was expected that analysing the task instructions in order to identify or infer the purpose, topic, and audience of their writing, the expected text type, the rating criteria, and the amount of time available for the task would help the student writers perform their writing task (Lucisano 1987:45).

The set of questions and answers relates the task to the constants, parameters and variables of the writing situation and the scoring scheme in the following way. An answer to the first question (Question 1: *What form of text am I supposed to write?*), whether it is explicitly stated in the task instructions or has to be inferred, establishes the required text type (variable). By finding an answer to the second question (Question 2: *To whom am I supposed to write?*) the students have identified the audience (parameter). The answer to the two questions in the third item (Question 3: *Why should I write? What is the purpose of writing?*) establishes the intention or the purpose of writing (parameter). Generating an answer to the fourth question (Question 4: *What am I supposed to write about?*) identifies the topic of writing (parameter). The answer to the fifth question (Question 5: *How is my composition going to be judged?*) informs the student about the rating criteria. Knowing the answer to the last question (Question 6: *How much time am I allowed?*) the student can, at least in principle, plan and monitor his/her writing within the time allotted (Lucisano 1987:45-48).

The main purpose of providing writing assignments with instructions is to reduce the creative burden on student writers. Furthermore, instructions may result in more uniform structuring of the essays, which, in turn, may help the raters. As regards the present study, the students were asked to read the instructions carefully before starting to write. The task analysis as a form of pre-writing activity was left to the individual students to perform. The extent to which instructions may help EFL writers is dependent on how well their function is made explicit to student writers in class. Although this procedure of developing and improving students' metacognitive knowledge of writing awaits empirical testing, making students conscious of the details of the kind of task that they are expected to perform will surely clarify the nature of the task and, with practice, can reasonably be expected to lead to a better written product.

It is evident that the title, instructions, or subtitles in the writing task function as signals to the writer as concerns the content of an essay. A good essay must be related to the title, that is, the world that the writer describes must somehow be connected with the title. A student writer who fails to establish this relationship will be penalized in the final examination of L1, and, similarly, in the final examination of a second or a foreign language. Naturally, sticking to the title is a necessity in other writing contexts as well.

6.1.2 The reflective composition

The reflective composition, as Lamb and Purves (1988:172) report, represents the final stage in composition instruction in most countries in the IEA study. It is a demanding task. On the basis of a relatively brief stimulus, students have to

develop a content, organize it, and produce a text that represents "both subtlety of thinking and clarity in organization and style" (Lamb and Purves 1988:172). The result is to resemble the kind of composition that is called an "essay". The word "essay" comes from French and means an attempt. Essay writing is an old tradition, and success in it has marked the student's ability to enter the university.

As a cognitive exercise, the reflective essay suggests that the writer attempts to explain something and to explore unknown phenomena. The purpose of writing a reflective composition is to invent or generate in order to inform, express or persuade (cf. Vähäpassi 1988). Writing an essay is related to thinking because it usually requires substantive problem-solving. As Lamb and Purves (1988:172) note, "to be able to write a good essay one must be able to perceive reality, reflect on it, and then give a linguistic expression to something discovered through such activity". Consequently, the essay places its primary focus on the explication of the topic rather than on the writer or the reader of the essay. Lamb and Purves (1988:173) describe the topic as "one or more concepts whose connections are explored, or one or more propositions whose validity is discussed". Some essays require a topic-centered explication, other essays may have a more persuasive aim in which the writer attempts to convince the reader of the truth or usefulness of the writer's views. (For different text types, see section 2.1.) At its best, essay writing is discovery, new perceptions, or a solution to a problem through thinking and reflection (Takala 1987c).

This type of writing is usually associated with school writing (Degenhart 1987:37). As Lamb and Purves (1988:173) maintain, essay writing at school gives one of the few systematic opportunities to young people to clarify their world views, perceptions of reality, and to express them in a clear and coherent text (see also Kaijanaho 1988; Vähäpassi 1987e).

As was mentioned in section 1.2, a short composition consisting of 150-200 words has been a compulsory component in the foreign language test in the matriculation examination since 1977. A reflective composition was chosen for the study because it was assumed to represent the writing tasks that students need to master both in the foreign language test in the matriculation examination as well as in their later professional lives.

6.1.3 The assessment procedure

The compositions were written as a normal part of student assessment. The teachers were aware of them being used as research data. As was mentioned in section 4.1, the writing task, the instructions, and the assessment method used in the present study were taken from the Written Study of the IEA project. The method of assessment was exceptional in a foreign language context, and, therefore, the teachers had to be trained to assess the compositions according to the guidelines employed in the IEA project. The rating method was a combination of an analytical method and a general impression rating (cf. Diederich 1974; Quellmalz 1979; Lloyd-Jones 1977; see chapter 4 for the assessment of writing).

Before being distributed to the raters, the essays were photocopied and the student writers' names were deleted from them. A training session in the use of the scoring scheme was carried out, particularly to draw the raters' attention to the

need to separate the different aspects of their evaluation — organization, content, style, tone, mechanics, and the general impression — from each other. The main goal of using such an evaluation was to discover how well a combination of an analytic rating scale and general impression marking would suit the evaluation purposes of compositions written in a foreign language. A thorough investigation of the applicability of the evaluation procedure described above fell, however, beyond the scope of the present study.

The compositions were then evaluated analytically by two raters: first by the students' own teachers of English and then by another rater. The rating scale extended from one to five, five being the highest score. The rating procedure and the benchmark compositions³³ were borrowed from the IEA study. Finally the essays were impressionistically graded by the students' own teachers.

The raters seemed to fulfill the essential prerequisites for competent raters: they were qualified and came from similar backgrounds; and they were trained to conform to agreed-upon-criteria of judgment (see Charney 1984:69; for the choice and training of raters, see chapter 4). The raters were all experienced teachers of English: four of them were experienced teacher educators at the University Training School and two experienced teachers from the Jyväskylä Lyseo who had also worked as teacher educators. These teachers had been assessing EFL compositions since 1977 when the composition was established as a compulsory component of the foreign language test in the matriculation examination.

The grades that the two English teachers gave to the compositions are very important for the empirical analysis of the present study because the compositions were divided into three quality categories on the basis of the quality ratings assigned to them by these experienced teachers. The purpose of this division was to highlight differences between the characteristics of good, mid-quality, and poor essays. In the course of the study, to remove a possible topic effect, only 49 compositions written under title number one *Does watching television make it difficult to think independently?* were chosen for the analysis. Out of these 49 compositions 24 empirically selected essays formed the final data of the present study. They represent three quality categories as follows: High (N=4), Mid (N=9), and Low (N=11).

The method which was used in the analysis to select the 24 essays was based on the mean and the standard deviation. The High essays were one SD (=standard deviation) above the mean, and the Low essays one SD below the mean. The Mid essays fell in between these limits. This procedure has the advantage of being 'objectively data-based' and avoids subjectivity in establishing cut-off points.

Table 6.2. below shows the grades that the compositions were given by the raters. The scores varied from one to five. The table also shows the students' final grades in English at the end of their last school term and their matriculation exam results in English in the spring of 1989 (about six months after the data for this study had been collected). It is clear that the grades and the matriculation exam results are not only indicative of the students' writing ability but cover a wider

³³ The purpose of the benchmark compositions is to consolidate the uniformity of rating.

area of their language performance. (For the components of the matriculation examination in English as an A-language, see section 1.2.)

Table 6.2 The rating scores obtained by the participating students (composition), their final grades in English, and their matriculation exam results

High (N=4)	Score	Grades in English	Matriculation Exam
Comp. No 1	4 + 5	10	Laudatur
No 2	4 + 5	9	Laudatur
No 3	4 + 5	9	Magna Cum Laude
No 4	4 + 5	9	Laudatur
Mid (N=9)			
Comp. No 1	4 + 3	9	Cum Laude Approbatur
No 2	3 + 4	8	Cum Laude Approbatur
No 3	4 + 3	9	Magna Cum Laude
No 4	4 + 3	10	Laudatur
No 5	4 + 3	9	Laudatur
No 6	3 + 4	8	Laudatur
No 7	4 + 3	9	Laudatur
No 8	3 + 4	8	Magna Cum Laude
No 9	3 + 4	10	Laudatur
Low (N=11)			
Comp. No 1	3 + 2	7	Magna Cum Laude
No 2	2 + 3	8	Cum Laude Approbatur
No 3	1 + 1	7	Approbatur
No 4	3 + 2	8	Cum Laude Approbatur
No 5	2 + 3	8	Lubenter Approbatur
No 6	3 + 2	8	Cum Laude Approbatur
No 7	2 + 2	7	Magna Cum Laude
No 8	2 + 3	7	Cum Laude Approbatur
No 9	2 + 3	8	Cum Laude Approbatur
No10	3 + 2	9	Laudatur
No11	3 + 2	7	Cum Laude Approbatur

It is worth remembering that the material in the present study consists of students' *first drafts* with no feedback and probably with very minor revisions.

6.2 Methods

The methods and analyses used in this study were harnessed to provide answers to the following research tasks:

- (1) How are topics and comments developed in compositions representing three quality categories, High, Mid, and Low?
- (2) Is there a relationship between rated essay quality and topic development?
- (3) What patterns of topic/comment development occur in compositions representing three quality categories, High, Mid, and Low?

To answer the first research question, a detailed analysis of the compositions was performed. This analysis was descriptive in nature. Topical structure analysis (Lautamatti 1978; 1987) was used to answer the second research question. Sections 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 introduce the basic concepts of the analysis, and then show how it was applied to the present material. To find out what patterns of topic/comment development occur in these EFL compositions representing three quality categories, Danes's (1974) three patterns of topical progression were traced in the present data. (For the findings of the present study, see chapter 7.)

6.2.1 Topical structure analysis

The concepts of 'topic' and 'comment' were adopted as key terms for the analysis, and the model representing the structure of discourse was called topical structure analysis as developed by Lautamatti (1978). This section describes the main concepts and their definitions as used in Lautamatti's topical structure analysis (see section 5.1.4.4). But, as the model employed in the present study was the version of topical structure analysis elaborated by Noh (1985), his elaborated approach for analysing written discourse needs to be explored. The modifications that were made for the purposes of the present study will also be discussed. A detailed description of this model appears in Noh (1985:57-77). In addition to developing an analysis model, he also tested its psychological validity using various measures of comprehension and production.

6.2.1.1 Definitions of topic and comment

The definitions chosen for topic and comment are primarily *position-based*, i.e. topic is identified according to position in the syntactic relations of sentence structure. Hockett's distinction between topic and comment clearly shows this in that "the speaker announces a topic and then says something about it . . . topics are usually subjects and comments are predicates" (Hockett 1958:201). Chomsky (1965), Halliday (1967), Grimes (1975), and Clements (1979) also use topic as a signalling

device for the semantic choice of the point of departure of a sentence.³⁴ In their work, the term topic is used to refer to those textual elements which come before the verb in a clause or a simple sentence.

The concept of 'givenness' is a key notion among those researchers who try to find the topic in relation to the textual context provided previously in the text. Thus, the topic of a given clause or sentence is the element which has been mentioned in the previous sentence or at least can easily be identified in the previous textual context. The works of Daneš (1974), Firbas (1974), and Halliday (1974) are of major importance in the *textual context-based* definition of topic (see sections 5.1.4.2, 5.1.4.3, and 5.1.2).

Due to the complexity of the term topic, and the multiplicity of the suggested ways of identifying it, the researcher needs principles on which the topical analysis of sentences and discourse can be soundly based. The following criteria will be applied. Firstly, topic will be examined at the discourse level. The identification of clausal and sentential topics will be done in connection with the information previously provided in the text. This decision means the rejection of proposals that define topic on the basis of the logical representation of sentences (Dahl 1969). On the basis of the assumption that the sequential format of the sentence is "inflexibly and precisely fixed a priori by the construction of the types of logic being used" (de Beaugrande 1980:118), the proponents of this view argue that the topic-comment structure requires an analysis in the form of logical implications (Dahl 1969).

Secondly, the term topic is used to refer only to the topic in a clause or a simple sentence. Noh (1985) claims that if there is a topic in a piece of discourse, it is one that is inferred from the clausal and sentential topics in it, and thus it can vary from one reader to another. The topicality-based definitions were thus excluded from the analysis.³⁵

The position taken in this study was a combination of both the position-based and the textual context-based analyses of topic. In applying these two criteria for the identification of a topic in a stretch of text, the priority was given to the position-based criterion. According to Noh (1985:56-57), there are two reasons for this choice: (1) in language processing, the incoming information is generally processed first, and then integrated into the previous text, and (2) by giving the priority to the position-based analysis of topic, room is allowed for possible misinterpretations of topics at given moments in the preceding discourse.

The priority given to the position-based criterion must be further clarified. The topic-comment arrangement is a structure-related variable, whereas given-new is an information-related variable. Topic-comment is a clause or sentence feature, whereas given-new is a discourse feature. Therefore, the given-new arrangement structures the information in such a manner that it is related to the preceding discourse, while, drawing on Halliday (1974), Noh (1985) views the topic-comment relation as structuring the information in such a way that is independent of what has gone before. Consequently, the definitions of topic status

³⁴ The use of the sense of 'aboutness' is a common denominator for these researchers.

³⁵ See the notion of topicality (Enkvist 1975; Brown and Yule 1983; Lautamatti 1983).

and given status in a topical unit do not fully coincide. As topic-comment is more directly derived from *the topical unit* which is the minimum CD distributional field, the position-based criterion is applied before the textual context-based criterion. (For Firbas's views of functional sentence perspective and the concept of CD, see section 5.1.4.2.) The actual process of applying these two criteria will be demonstrated in section 6.2.1.2 with some examples.

6.2.1.2 The topical unit

The topic-comment arrangement of information is seen in terms of the unit of the message to be conveyed (Noh 1985:58). Noh calls the delimitation of a topic-comment field a topical unit, which, according to him (1985:58), is a question of degree. For example, sentence (1) below

(1) A friend is also someone that you can rely on and turn to when you need advice on a problem or worry.

can be delimited in four different ways ("/" indicates the boundary between topical units, and the underlined words indicate the topic in the topical unit):

(1-a) A friend is also someone that you can rely on and turn to when you need advice on a problem or worry.

(1-b) A friend is also someone that you rely on and turn to/when you need advice on a problem or worry.

(1-c) A friend is also someone/that you can rely on and turn to/when you need advice on a problem or worry.

(1-d) A friend is also someone/that you can rely on/and (you can) turn to/when you need advice on a problem or worry.

In sentence (1-a), the whole sentence is treated as a single topical unit providing a single syntactic field for topical analysis, whereas in sentence (1-d), the same sentence is segmented into four topical units according to the clausal boundaries. The fourth method, that is sentence (1-d), delimiting a sentence into clausal units, was adopted for the purpose of the present study.

There are two reasons for adopting a clausal unit as the topical unit. Firstly, the syntactic structure of a clause is thematically unmarked, and therefore the most stable, while other syntactic structures which are bigger than the clause might convey different thematic structures according to the writer's options. The second reason for preferring the clause as showing the basic syntactic field of the topical unit is because the finite verb within the clause occupies the central position in the distribution of communicative dynamism (see also Noh 1985:59). (For Firbas's concept of communicative dynamism, see section 5.1.4.2.) All other elements — subject, complement, subject complement, object complement, adverbial — can be expressed by other clauses, which provide their own distributional fields of CD and are referred to as distributional subfields of CD. The finite verb, however, never provides a distributional subfield.

For the present purpose the topical unit turned out to be a more practicable unit of analysis than the proposition would have been.³⁶ As the proposition is a heavily content-loaded unit, it cannot always capture the intended message. The other major shortcoming of proposition-based text analysis, according to Noh (1985:47), is that it cannot gain control over the topical (thematic) sequences of connected discourse. There are usually thematic sequences in succeeding sentences which writers and readers prefer to maintain. Noh (1985:47) calls this preference 'topic maintenance preference', which, he claims, greatly contributes to constructing a coherent piece of discourse (cf. Brown and Yule 1983; Witte 1983a; Witte 1983b).

Noh's (1985) analysis is based on the assumption that textual information in coherent discourse is connected in strategic ways, and therefore the primary demand for the reader in text processing is to follow the structure imposed on the text by the writer's textualization strategies.

6.2.1.3 The identification of topics in topical units

The position-based criterion of topic identification was thus adopted in this study, as has been done by the majority of researchers, particularly those who are oriented towards functional sentence perspective (for FSP, see section 5.1.4). This criterion has frequently been defined as the point-of-departure criterion (for Halliday's notions of information structure, see section 5.1.2).

The next sentences indicate further refinements as regards the application of the position-based criterion. The examples below are taken from the present study (for the compositions, see Appendix 1) unless indicated otherwise.

- 1) In the TV serials, things go fine.
- 2) Yesterday we discussed the financial arrangement. (Halliday 1970:161).

With the definition of topic as the point of departure, Halliday would view *In TV serials* and *Yesterday* as the topics of the sentences. He would justify his decision by claiming that the first elements in the sentences are fronted, and thus agree with the point-of-departure definition of topic. By using fronting devices, which are called *topicalization* or *thematization*,³⁷ the fronted elements are given more psychological attention than elsewhere. Agreeing with Noh (1985), these two justifications, the point of departure and attention attraction seem to be justified enough, but the main messages are neither *In the TV serials* nor *Yesterday*, but *things* and *we* respectively. The fronted elements only provide the contextual frames from

³⁶ In a careful and thorough study of some of the problems related to the theme of the present study, Lindeberg (1988) was not able to find a conclusive system for deriving the propositions from even short student texts.

³⁷ Li and Thompson (1976) claim that the languages of the world can be typologically classified on the basis of whether the sentence-initial constituent in a sentence is a topic or a subject. On the basis of their analyses of data from a dozen language families they conclude that "the topic is a discourse topic, whereas the subject is to a greater extent a sentence-internal notion" (1976:466). Topic prominence is much more common in Oriental languages than in Indo-European and other language families (1976:460).

within which the rest of the sentences hold (Noh 1985:62). It is difficult to see *In the TV serials* and *Yesterday* performing the functions of topics at the discourse level. Rather, it would be reasonable to regard the left NPs — *things* and *we* as the topics of the sentences on the basis of the textual-context criterion adopted as the second criterion of topic identification.

6.2.1.4 The thematic frame

Noh (1985:65), drawing his definition of topic from Chomsky (1965:221), redefined it as the leftmost NP dominated by the finite verb in a topical unit. This modified definition of topic emphasizes the function of the finite verb in the CD field. In addition to this definition, Noh proposed a new term 'thematic frame' to distinguish between the first element (NP) of the sentence, which is the grammatical subject, and other first elements which are fronted from comment position. The thematic frame allowed for an intentional construction of syntactic structures that were different from their unmarked structures. The thematic frame is an optional slot, which depends on the writer's intention. Using this optional slot, the two examples above could be reanalysed in the following manner:

Unmarked structure:

Topic (leftmost NP in a clause with a finite verb) + Comment

Obligatory slot

(1) In TV serials + things are going fine.

(2) In a few years + we shall be at the same stage.

Marked structure:

Thematic frame + Topic (leftmost NP in a clause with a finite verb) + Comment

(Optional slot) Obligatory slot

(1) In TV serials, + things + are going fine.

(2) In a few years + we + shall be at the same stage.

The topics in the unmarked structures are simultaneously the thematic frames of the sentences, because the thematic frame is an optional slot. The application of the thematic frame has several distinct advantages in topical analysis. First, the notion of the thematic frame captures the writer's purpose of indicating the thematic importance of certain elements by fronting in the CD distributional structures without confusing them with the grammatical and discursal notion of topic.

Second, given information usually precedes new information, and very often given information coincides with the topic of the topical unit. Thus, by presenting given information (topic) first and new information (comment) later would make comprehension easier (cf. Clark and Haviland 1977; see section 5.1.3 for the given/new contract). The main function of the thematic frame is to show this kind of purposeful communication that provides or restricts the contextual

frame, the point of perspective or background from which the rest of the message can be viewed.

Finally, by distinguishing the thematic frame from the topic in each topical unit, it is easier to trace and connect the main flow of topics in the construction of the topical structure of the whole discourse. Section 6.2.1.6, in which the construction of topical structure is discussed, shows this advantage.

6.2.1.5 The attitudinal/informational frame

Exploration of the following examples illustrates the use of the attitudinal / informational frame:

- (1) It is natural that TV affects its viewers a lot.
- (2) Young people claim that their parents do not understand them.

The solution taken in the present study was to separate the two clauses from each other, and to treat the first clause as *an attitudinal frame* (S1) or *informational frame* (S2), which expresses the writer's attitude or his/her source of information toward the main clause. Thus the topical analyses of these two sentences would be as follows:

MARKER	ATTITUDINAL FRAME	TOPIC	COMMENT
that	It is natural	TV	affects its viewers a lot.
that	Young people claim	their parents	do not understand them.

The introduction of the attitudinal/informational frame has the following implications. First, it expresses the writer's attitude or source of information toward the main content. Second, as regards the global coherence of discourse, the information in the attitudinal/informational frame presumably has little effect on the construction and development of the whole discourse. (For Lautamatti's 'non-topical' material, see section 5.1.4.4.) It can be argued that even without the information in these two frames, the main content of the discourse would remain intact.

The following examples need to be discussed among the problematic cases concerning the identification of topic. Noh (1985:67) regards thetic sentences like *It rains*, and *It was a good programme*, following Firbas (1982), as one topic without comment. Secondly, semi-clauses containing expanded non-finite verbal forms were dealt with in the following way (for details, see Noh 1985:73-74):

TOPIC	COMMENT
1) Watching soap operas	is not good for you.
2) (you) you	To be able to watch TV critically need to make choices.

Neither Lautamatti nor Tirkkonen-Condit (1982:36-39), who largely follows Lautamatti's analysis, deal with any cases where the main clause subject, even though topical, is post-verbal, for instance in inverted sentences. Halliday (1967:212f.) considers a WH-element or a finite verbal element a theme in an initial position. According to his definition of rheme, "all that follows the theme", a mood subject following an initial finite verbal element would presumably be part of the rheme. For Lindeberg (1988) his approach was not delicate enough for tracing thematic patterns. That is why she turned to Taglicht (1984) to find a concept to cater for the needs of her analysis (the marked rheme).

Noh (1985) does not discuss the case of an inverted sentence. However, such a case exists in Ventola and Mauranen's (1990:52-63) study, in which they examine topical progression in scientific articles written in English. Their notion of theme is based on Halliday's more recent writings (1985:39). The solution which Ventola and Mauranen came to is seen in the following example:

Are (interpersonal) we (topical), however, justified in assuming that?

For Ventola and Mauranen (1989:54) the interpersonal theme is a theme that precedes the topical theme and expresses the writer's attitude to the message. On the basis of this observation, the interpersonal themes of inverted sentences were classified under the attitudinal frame.

In the discussion above, two criteria — the position criterion and textual context-based criterion — were adopted for the identification of topic in a topical unit. The position criterion was given the priority of application over the textual context criterion. So, the identification of the topic in a topical unit was first decided by applying the position criterion. The decision was then checked by the textual-context criterion. Table 6.3. demonstrates the differences between the system applied in the present study, following Noh (1985), and that of Halliday (1970).

Table 6.3 Topic-comment sample analyses according to Halliday and Noh

Unit No.	Marker	Att./Inf. Fr.	Thematic Fr.	Topic	Comment
Halliday's System					
1.				The human infant	shares with all other undamaged human infants, a capacity to learn language.
2.				For this reason,	biologists now suggest that language is 'species-specific' to the human race
3.				which	means they consider the human infant to be programmed in such a way that
4.				it	can acquire language
Noh's system					
1.				The human infant	shares with all other undamaged human infants, a capacity to learn language.
2.				For this reason,	
				biologists now suggest	
	that			language	is 'species-specific' to the human race,
3.				which means	
				they consider	the human infant
					to be programmed in such a way
4.	that			it	can acquire language

As can be seen in Table 6.3., the elements *biologists*, *which*, and *they* appear under the headings of Attitudinal/Informational Frame or Thematic Frame. In fact, Halliday (1970) identifies *which* as the topic in the clause in which it appeared. In Noh's study they are classified as 'frames'. The reasons for this classification were (1) that these elements failed to meet the second criterion (the textual context-based criterion), and (2) that the clauses in which these elements appeared really furnished some contextual environments where the following topic-comment elements could be understood. The major differences among the two systems can be clearly seen in the sequential development of the topics as follows:

Halliday (1970): The human infant - for this reason - which - it.

Noh (1985): The human infant - language - the human infant - it.

The above comparison, as shown in Table 6.3., indicates that Noh's approach reveals the topic area of the example text, and also the sequential development of the topics, more clearly than Halliday's system does.

6.2.1.6 The construction of topical structure

This section discusses the structure of a piece of discourse in terms of the topics identified by means of the criteria defined above. As the components of this structure are topics in their topical units, the represented structure of a discourse is called 'topical structure'.

Before presenting how the topical structure of a piece of discourse was constructed in a mapping form, mention has to be made of the advantages of this particular construction. Firstly, topical structure makes it possible to examine the overall development of topic flows in discourse. It indicates, in a schematic form, what the writer wants to write, and how he organizes, conceptually and sequentially, the message. Secondly, the distinction between main (the topic in the main clause) and subsidiary topics (topics in the subordinate clauses) helps the researcher determine the relative importance of the information in a discourse. Thirdly, the examination of sentence topics in terms of their conceptual categories, hierarchical levels, and proportional use provides indirect indications of the discourse topic. In the process of constructing the topical structure Noh's (1985:83-86) procedure was closely followed.

Step 1. Identification of the topic in the first sentence

1-a. The two sentence topic identification criteria were followed to identify the topic of the first sentence in the passage. The thus identified topic was then placed at the highest level of the topical structure diagram. The positioning of the first sentence topic at the top of the diagram is done simply because that topic is the first sentence topic in the passage.

1-b. If the first sentence had more than one clausal topic, the topic in the main clause was identified and put at the highest level. The other topics (subsidiary topics) were assigned half a level below the main topic. The reason for placing the subsidiary topics a half level below was (1) to indicate that the topics in the subordinate clauses were regarded as less important than the topic of the main clause, and (2) to separate these subsidiary topics in the first sentence from the main topic of the next level which was to be connected to the main topic of the first sentence by the sequential topical progression.

Step 2. Identification of the topic in the next sentence

The topic in the next sentence was identified. If there was more than one topic in the next sentence, the main clause topic was identified first followed by the subsidiary topic(s).

Step 3. Identification of the progression type and the connection between adjacent topics

The topic identified in step 2 was compared with the topic of the immediately preceding sentence. If one or both of the two adjacent sentences had both a main topic and subsidiary topic(s), the comparison was made between the main topics.

After that the topic was assigned to a position in the following way: if the sentence topic (or main topic) was considered to be the same as the preceding sentence topic (or main topic), it was assigned to the same level as the preceding one (parallel progression type); if the topic was different from the preceding sentence topic, this topic was assigned one level below the previous topic (sequential progression type).

It should be noted here that the subsidiary topics in the same sentence were assigned half a level below the main topic, while a new main topic in the current sentence was assigned one level below the main topic of the preceding sentence. Thus topic shifts between sentences could be clearly distinguished from the differential positioning of main and subsidiary topics within the same sentence; finally, if the topic was a resumed topic, having been interrupted by one or more sequential progressions, then it was assigned to the same level as the earlier topic (extended parallel progression type). The connections between the main topics were drawn with a solid line and those between the main topic and the subsidiary topic(s) with dotted lines in the topical structure diagram.

Step 4. Steps 2 and 3 were repeated for each sentence in the compositions

6.2.1.7 An example of topical structure

The topical structure of discourse used in this study was based on the assumption that topics in discourse would have to do with three properties (Noh 1985). Firstly, they would have to do with the main ideas of the discourse, secondly, with the central thread of the discourse, and finally, topics could be represented in a hierarchical structure. These three properties of topics were assumed to represent the conceptual, sequential, and hierarchical connectivities of discourse. Thus, by means of the topical structure an attempt was made to integrate all three properties of topics into a single schematic structure.

The distinction of main topics from subsidiary topics in a complicated sentence was to represent the relative importance of topics at the sentence level. The identification and placement of the three topical progression types between the sentence topics represented the flow of topics at the discourse level. These two methods of topical analyses enabled the construction of the topical structure representing the conceptual and sequential connectivities of the discourse in a hierarchical form. An example of topical structure is illustrated in Figure 6.1. using the list of topical units in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 The topical unit analysis of the first paragraph in composition High 3 (see Appendix 2)

1. In this world *the television* has a great influence to our life and to our way of thinking.
2. Almost *all the families* in so called 'rich' countries has one or two televisions in their homes.
3. *People* and especially *children* are watching much more television now than earlier.
4. Even though *these* are the facts
5. *that* does not mean
6. that *watching TV* makes it more difficult to think independently.

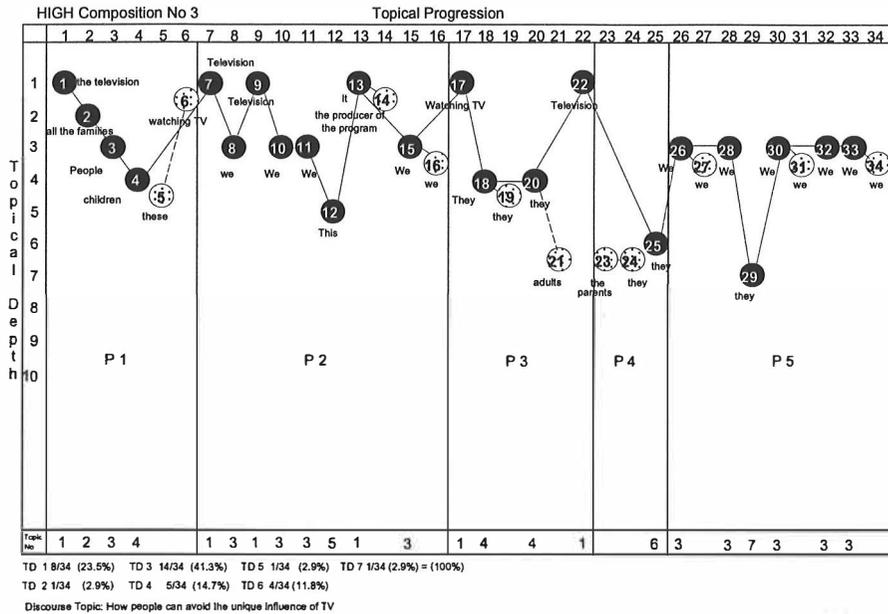


Figure 6.1 The topical structure of composition High 3 (a fragment text)

A few comments need to be made on the example. Firstly, the horizontal dimension in Figure 6.1. shows the left-to-right sequentiality of the sentences in the text. Secondly, the vertical dimension represents two features regarding the conceptual connectivity. One is the semantic subordination of subsidiary topics. As can be seen in the sentence, clause 1 and clause 3 function as background or contextual environment and are subordinate to clause 2, which is the main clause foreground or focus of the sentence. The subordinate clauses are indicated by dotted circles in the topical structure diagram. They are expressed by taking a position half a level below the position of the main clause, which is indicated by a solid circle in the topical structure diagram.

The other feature in relation to the vertical dimension is topical depth, which indicates the number of successive sequential progressions between sentence topics. The combination of topical progression and topical depth in the diagram shows the overall structure of topic development in the text. Another

significant feature of Figure 6.1. is the index on the bottom line. The numbers indicate the cumulative number of 'unique' sentence topics that appear in the text as it progresses.

The topical structure of discourse shows the relationship between the main topic and the subsidiary topic(s) at sentence level. It also indicates the numbers of unique sentence topics in the total number of sentence topics, all of which are considered important discourse factors contributing to the complexity of the text in production.

6.2.1.8 Illustrative samples of topical structure analysis

To illustrate the method, the representation of the topical structures of one good, one mid-quality, and one poor essay entitled *Does watching television make it difficult to think independently?* will be shown. The purpose of the figures and diagrams is to indicate to the reader how the analysis was applied to the student compositions. Text A represents the High quality group. Text B belongs to the Mid quality group. Text C is the representative of the Low quality group.

In Figure 6.2. below Text A has been analysed using topical structure analysis.³⁸ The horizontal lines in the figure denote paragraph divisions. In Figure 6.5. the representation of the topical structures of Text A is illustrated showing topical progression, topical depth and the unique topics. The vertical lines in Figures 6.2., 6.3., and 6.4. indicate the original paragraph division in the students' compositions. The schematic representation of the analysis of Text B is shown in Figure 6.3., and Figure 6.6. illustrates the topical progression of the same text. Figures 6.4. and 6.7. illustrate the corresponding features of Text C. The solid lines in the diagrams indicate the linking between the main topics.

Figure 6.2. The topical structure of Text A.

High Composition No 1

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. to watch television?	//Is it dangerous
			2. Does watching TV	reduce one's capability to have own, free opinions?
			3. I	don't think so.
			4. It	all depends on
how much and how and why		first of all	5. you	watch
			6. you	watch.
		In Finland	7. we	have now three national TV-channels.

(continued on the next page)

³⁸ As was mentioned earlier in section 1.3, the compositions were used in their original forms, without any corrections.

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
that		That means	8. we	should nomore watch every watchable program
			9. we	should choose.
			10. Choosing	is now keyword.
			11. Many people	watch television in a completely wrong way.
			12. They	just turn the TV-set on and start watching
what		no matter	13. the program	is.
			14. A much better way	would be to watch only particularly interesting, prechosen programs
and only if			15. you	don't have anything 'better' to do.
that	I'm still not saying		16. one	should only watch educational programs like documents or news.
		Of course	17. these programs	widen your knowledge on various things and by doing so increase your ability to judge things right.
But			18. TV	should also entertain you:
		there are more than	19. shows, etc.	to choose from
Even as			20. you	can handle.
			21. entertainment	should just relax you,
			22. you	should still choose carefully,
because			23. pure trash	is always available.
			24. You	shoul always remember too
that			25. programs	like Dallas or Dynasty are pure fantasy and imagination
and			26. they	have nothing to do with real life.
So, if			27. you	just remember to choose your program carefully,
			28. you	will still be able to think for yourself
and			29. you	won't become a slave of 'the box'.

Figure 6.3 The topical structure of Text B

Mid Composition No 1

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
	In my opinion	there is	1. a great danger	nowadays in watching TV.
how much			2. We	don't maybe realize
			3. we	really watch television.
and			4. It	is a powerful medium
			5. it	can change our attitudes and thinking.
	There is no use to argue			
that			6. we	can choose
what			7. we	want to watch
because			8. we	sometimes watch programmes
which			9. we	don't like.
			10. Children	are more in danger
than			11. adults	are.
			12. They	have not seen the world
as much as			13. their parents	have.
If			14. they	watch television hours and hours every day.
			15. they	get bored, impatient and tired.
			16. to give thoughts, opinions and answers	// It is very easy to that kind of person through TV.
			17. That	is a very good way to affect people.
	I think			
that			18. making opinions	is not so easy
even if			19. we	don't have the media affecting us.
So			20. to understand	// it's not hard
that			21. we	have the media affecting us.
			22. We	have to watch television
because			23. it	also gives us some kind of machine
			24. that	knows everything.
			25. We	can think independently enough by watching around us without sitting in front of television every evening.

Figure 6.4. The topical structure of Text C.

Low Composition No 3

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. We	have more free-time, holidays than before.
			2. People 3. (people)	can go to the cinema, or watching video.
If			4. we	have nothing to do
			5. we	can watch TV.
			6. It	isn't always a good idea.
When			7. you	are too often at home,
			8. you	would come more lazy and passive.
			9. You	need not think or move:
			10. you	just be and watch.
		There is	11. many kind of film	on TV.
If			12. we	watch too much adventure films,
			13. normal live	is boring.
			14. It	is only normal live.
		Another point is		
that if			15. you	have some TV heroes
			16. you	give up your own way of think
and			17. you	only think
what			18. you	want to be
and			19. you	live like your stars-unreal world.
	It's good			
that			20. many families	can talk and criticize about TV programs.
If			21. we	take good care of our own thinking
and (if)			22. (we)	are critical
			23. TV	is not dangerous,
and			24. it	make not difficult to think independently.

As described in section 6.2.1.7, the horizontal dimension in Figures 6.2., 6.3., and 6.4. indicates the sequence of the sentences in this composition. It proceeds from the first sentence to the last in that order. The number of topics in Text A is 29, in Text B 25, and in Text C 24. Thus in purely quantitative terms there is not much difference between the sentence topics. Along the vertical dimension the notion of topical depth indicates the amount of successive sequential progression between the sentence topics. There is a clear difference between the three texts: the number of topical depth levels goes from eleven in Text A, to six in Text B, and to three in Text C. The combination of topical progression and topical depth in Figures 6.5., 6.6., and 6.7. (below) shows the overall structures of topic development in the three texts. The indices on the bottom lines show the

cumulative numbers of the unique sentence topics appearing in the texts as they progress. In Text A the number is nine, in Text B seven, and in Text C three.

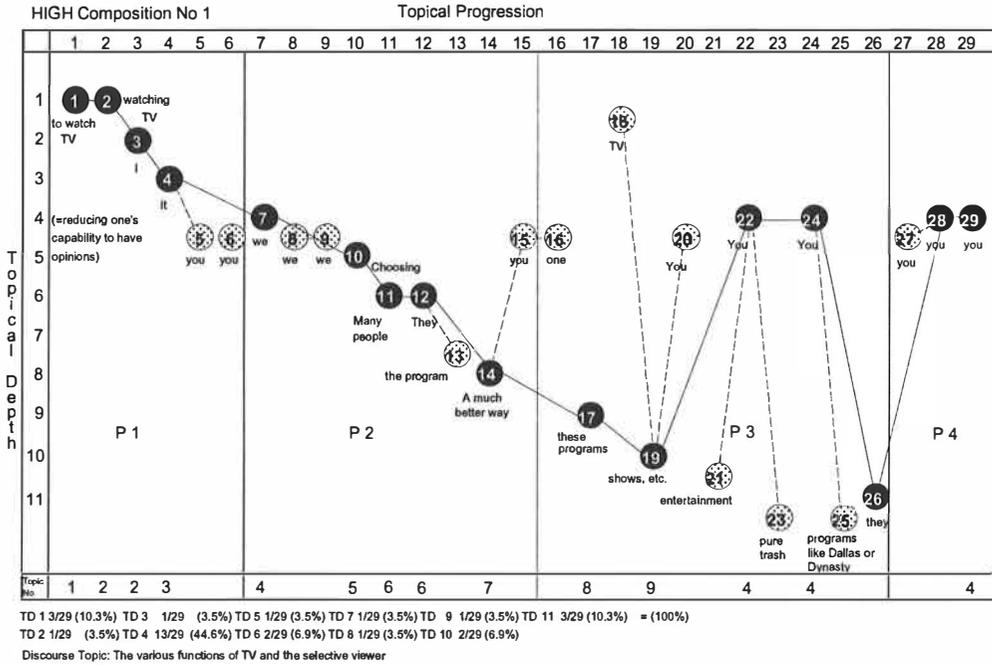


Figure 6.5 Topical progression of Text A

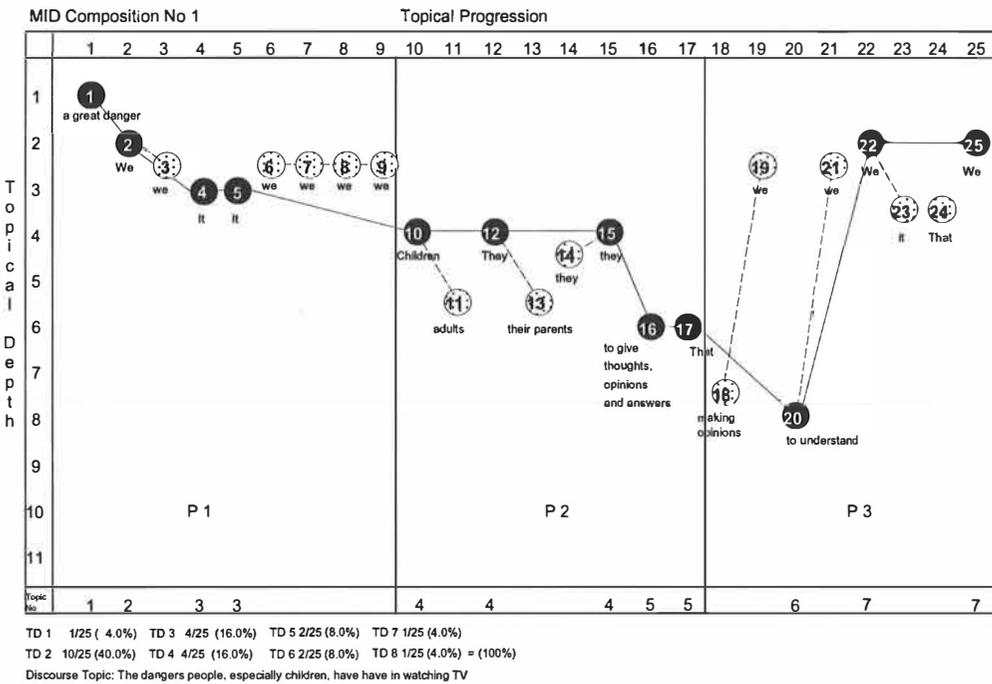


Figure 6.6 Topical progression of Text B

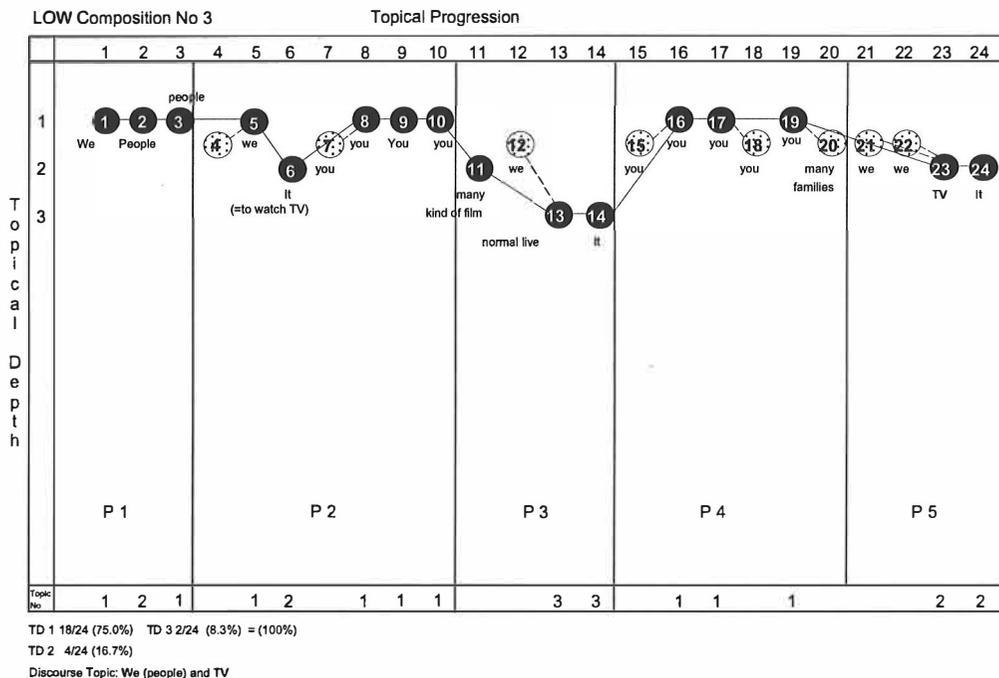


Figure 6.7 Topical progression of Text C

In conclusion, to overcome the shortcomings of some other models of discourse analysis (see chapter 5), Noh (1985) developed a revised analytical approach to describe topical structure. The key notions used for constructing the topical structure of a discourse are 'topic' at the sentence level, and 'discourse topic' at the global level of the discourse. The basic unit of the analysis, consisting of a topic and a comment, is a 'topical unit'. Employing the three key notions — topical unit, topic, and discourse topic — mechanisms are created for (1) the segmentation of discourse into topical units, (2) the identification of topic in a topical unit, and (3) the identification of connectedness between the topical units.

The diagramming of topical progression provides two dimensions in the topical structure: (1) topical progression in the discourse moving horizontally from left to right, and (2) topical depth representing the level of depth of the topical units in the discourse. The topical depth dimension is considered to provide textual clues for the relationship between the information at microlevel and that at macrolevel, thus enabling the construction of the discourse topic on the basis of the microlevel textual information.

6.2.1.9 The statistical analyses

Originally 89 compositions were written on the titles mentioned in section 6.1.1. Then, to remove the possible — and undesirable — topic effect, only the compositions written under the essay title *Does watching television make it more*

difficult to think independently? were chosen for the final analysis. At this stage the number of the compositions was 49.

Three quality categories were formed on the basis of the grades given to the essays by two teachers of English. The teachers evaluated the compositions by using a scale from one to five, one being the lowest and five the highest grade. The sum scores were then computed. The mean and standard deviation were used to achieve an 'objective' basis for the analysis. The cases remaining one standard deviation below the mean formed the lowest category. The cases which fell by one standard deviation above the mean made up the highest quality category. The cases in the middle created the mid-quality group. The total number of compositions included in the present study is 24. In the continuation of the study three quality categories, High (N=4), Mid (N=9), and Low (N=11) were compared by describing means and standard deviations. To study the topical depth dimension, the topics that fell into various topical depths were counted within the certain quality category. The measures of central tendency (means) and of dispersion (standard deviations) were then based on the cases falling into a certain topical depth dimension.

In the classification it was considered appropriate to have the first topical depth dimension (TD 1) as such without combining it with the next category, because it was thought to form the basic starting point ('base line') of the topic development. TD 2 was then combined with TD 3, and correspondingly TD 4 with TD 5. In Table 7.2. (section 7.2) the basic, uncombined categories are also displayed to make it possible to describe in finer detail the possible differences in the topical depth dimension between the different quality categories. TD 6+ is a merged category because the cases seemed to get fewer and fewer from that category on, leading to obvious problems of reliability. The correlation was tested by computing the χ^2 , the coefficient of contingency (C), and the coefficient of determination.

Section 6.2.1.6 addressed the construction of topical structure. According to the rules given there for identifying topics, subsidiary topics in the same sentence were assigned a half level below the main topic, while a new main topic in the same sentence was assigned to a level below the main topic of the preceding sentence. To study topic shift the means of the percentages within a certain quality category were counted (for topic shifts, see section 7.2.5). The preliminary analysis was applied only to two compositions representing the highest and lowest quartiles of the data. The main purpose was to see if the phenomena studied correlated with writing quality.

7 THE RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results of the study. It falls into three main sections. Section 7.1 focuses on topic/comment development in the EFL compositions of the three quality categories (High, Mid, and Low). The findings draw on a descriptive analysis of the topic/comment development in the compositions. Section 7.2 addresses the findings of the present study in more quantitative terms focusing mainly on the relationship between rated essay quality in the three quality groups and topic development in the compositions. The findings presented in this section are based on topical structure analysis. The main emphasis in this analysis is on topical depth and on topic shift. Section 7.3 discusses the patterns of topic/comment development in the compositions representing the High, Mid, and Low categories. The findings of this section draw on a descriptive analysis of topic/comment development in the compositions.

7.1 The topic/comment development in the High, Mid, and Low categories

Since the concepts of topic and comment are both essential factors affecting the information structure in a text (see chapter 5), sections 7.1.1, 7.1.2, and 7.1.3 will investigate the relationship between rated essay quality in the three quality categories (High, Mid, and Low) and the way in which EFL students develop topics and comments in their compositions. The analysis, which is based on Daneš's (1974) patterns of thematic progression (see section 5.1.4.3), attempts to find out whether there are certain patterns of topic/comment development in a particular quality group. As stated in section 5.1.4.3, Daneš (1974) schematizes the

patterns of the theme and rheme nexus in a text by using three patterns of thematic progression. The first pattern is labelled simple linear thematic progression. The second pattern is called thematic progression with a continuous theme, and the third is thematic progression with a derived theme. For the sake of clarity, the present study employs the notion of a constant topic to refer to Daneš's first pattern, and simple linear topical progression to refer to his second pattern. The third pattern, that of a derived theme does not occur in the present data. With the help of this analysis the present study attempts to provide an answer to the first research question, that is, to determine whether there is a relationship between rated essay quality and topic/comment development in the sample compositions written by EFL students. (For the use of Daneš's patterns in the present data, see section 7.3.)

The compositions in the High category will be analysed first, followed by the analysis of the Mid group, and that of the Low one. The analysis will proceed in the following way: first, some general remarks will be made based on the figures indicating the topic/comment development in a given composition. This will be followed by a detailed description of the topic/comment in the same composition.

7.1.1 The topic/comment development in the High category

Section 7.1.1 deals with the topic/comment analysis of the compositions in the High category, which consists of four compositions. The discussion concerns the way in which those EFL writers who were judged good organize the information in their compositions. The compositions appear in their uncorrected forms on the left accompanied by the topic/comment analysis on the right. Below are the compositions and the figures indicating the topic/comment development in them. Some general remarks about the topic/comment development in a given composition will be made first, which will be followed by a detailed description of the topic/comment flow in that composition. As has been mentioned earlier (see, e.g. in section 6.1), the title selected was *Does watching television make it more difficult to think independently?* The topics are printed in italics. For the comments in the compositions, see Appendix 2.

A first look at Figure 7.1. shows that the writer tends to introduce new topics, but unlike the writers in the low category (see section 7.3), he seems to develop them gradually, instead of parading all the pieces of information one after the other. T1, T4, T5, T7, and T14 are examples of this writer's way of developing the topics in his composition. As regards the comments in this composition (see the figure above), the writer uses Daneš's (1974) first pattern of topical progression, that of simple linear progression. Comment C9 (the idea of choosing) seems to be dominant among all the comments in this composition.

This writer appears to know how to engage his readers' attention effectively. He starts the essay with a set of two questions which are directly related to the title: *Is it dangerous to watch television?* and *Does watching TV reduce one's capability to have one's own, free opinions?* C2 in S2 explicates the comment portion in S1 by skilfully paraphrasing the title of the writing assignment. Unlike the writers in the low category, this writer takes a stand right at the outset in S3,

which he explicates in the comments in S4. It is not only the comments in S4 that support the writer's claim but whole clauses. The topic/comment relationship is very close, which gives a very vigorous start to the composition.

High 1	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) Is it dangerous to watch television? (2) Does watching TV reduce one's capability to have own, free opinions? (3) I don't think so. (4) It all depends on how much you watch and first of all how and why you watch.	(1) T1↓ -	C1
	(2) T1↓ -	C2
	(3) T2 -	C3
	(4) T3 -	C4
	T4↓ -	C5
	T4↓ -	C6
(5) In Finland we have now three national TV-channels. (6) That means that we should nomore watch every program but we should choose. (7) Choosing now is the keyword. (8) Many people watch television in a completely wrong way. (9) They just turn the TV-set on and start watching no matter what the program is.	(5) T5↓ -	C7
	(6) T5↓ -	C8
	T5↓ -	C9↓
	(7)	T6 + C10
	(8) T7↓ -	C11
	(9) T7↓ -	C12
	T8 -	C13
(10) A much better way would be to watch only particularly interesting, prechosen programs and only if you don't have anything 'better' to do.	(10) T9 -	C14
	T4 -	C15
(11) I'm still not saying that one should only watch educational programs like documents or news. (12) Of course these programs widen your knowledge on various things and by doing so increase your ability to judge things right. (13) But TV should also entertain you: there are shows, etc. to choose from more than you can handle. (14) Even as entertainment should just relax you you should still choose carefully, because pure trash is always available. (15) You should always remember too that programs like Dallas or Dynasty are pure fantasy and imagination and they have got nothing to do with real life.	(11) T5 -	C16↓
	(12)	T10 + C17
	(13) T1 -	C18
	T11 -	C9
	T4 -	C19
	(14) T12 -	C20
	T4 -	C9
	T13 -	C21
	(15) T4 -	C22
	T14↓ -	C23
	T14↓ -	C23
(16) So, if you just remember to choose your programs carefully, you will still be able to think for yourself and you won't become a slave of the 'box'.	(16) T4↓ -	C9
	T4↓ -	C24
	T4↓ -	C25

Figure 7.1 The topic/comment development in High 1. T= topic, C= comment. The sentence numbers are in brackets. The lines indicate paragraph divisions in the compositions. ↓ indicates both the use of a constant topic and the simple linear topical progression in the comment column.

In the second paragraph the writer focuses on the situation in Finland. The constant topic in S5 and S6 gives a backbone to the sentences, which is consolidated by the well-constructed and meaningful comments C7, C8, and C9. In addition to the close topic/comment relationship, the writer uses C9 as the topic of S7, which is indicative of Daneš's linear topical progression. The linear pattern of thematic progression is extremely unusual in the present data. In C9 in the sixth sentence, the writer introduces the idea of 'choosing', which he elaborates on in the

rest of the paragraph. In S8-S9 he explains how many people watch television in the wrong way, after which, in S10, he offers a solution to the situation. Each of the comments in S8-S10 add new information by creating the effect that can be seen in Figure 7.1. The idea of choosing is also expressed in watching pre-chosen programs in C13.

The beginning of the third paragraph shows how skilfully this student writer attempts to convince the reader of what he has to say. C17 in S11 adds a great deal of solid information to T10. This effect is strengthened in S12, in which the same comment becomes the topic of the sentence, showing Daneš's linear pattern of topical progression. C9 in S13 brings up the element of selecting, which is repeated in C9 in the following sentence. C23 in S15 makes an abrupt contrast between fantasy and reality.

The last paragraph draws a conclusion, in which the idea of choosing one's programmes carefully constitutes the main element of C9, which in this last sentence, S16, appears for the third time as a comment. Unlike the weaker compositions, the repetition of C9 in this composition does not impair the quality; on the contrary, it constitutes the discourse topic of the composition. In addition, the constant topic accompanied by the repeated C9, the notion of 'choosing', by C24, and especially by C25, which is lexically aptly expressed, brings the essay to a well-structured close.

High 2

		TOPIC	COMMENT	
(1) <i>'Television has become drug for the American nation,' my Psychology teacher in Indiana said to me.</i> (2) <i>He is truly worried and for a good reason.</i> (3) <i>Young American people watch TV five to seven hours every day.</i> (4) <i>There are over a hundred channels to choose from and broadcasting through day and night in the States.</i> (5) <i>Older people, especially mothers who don't go to work, watch their 'lovely big eye'.</i> (6) <i>You also have to remember how good babysitter TV is.</i> (7) <i>Children just sit and watch TV like angels.</i>	(1)	T1	- C1	
		T2↓	- C2	
	(2)	T2↓	- C3	
	(3)	T3	- C4	
	(4)	T4	- C5	
	(5)	T5	- C6	
	(6)	T6	- C7	
		T7	- C8	
		T1	- C9	
		T8	- C9	
	(8) <i>It seems that television has become a habit for too many of us.</i> (9) <i>It is so easy open TV and get some snack with Dynasty and Dallas.</i> (10) <i>Beautiful people have no worries, no wars, no unemployment.</i> (11) <i>Soon you start dreaming like your favorite actor and acting like him.</i> (12) <i>You start to live like him.</i> (13) <i>You can't anymore realize what reality is.</i> (14) <i>If you are honest to yourself, you have to admit that you would like to live in your idol's way.</i>	(8)	T1	- C10
		(9)	T9	- C11
		(10)	T10	- C12
		(11)	T7↓	- C13
(12)		T7↓	- C14	
(13)		T7↓	- C15	
		T11	- C16	
(14)		T7↓	- C17	
		T7↓	- C18	
		T7↓	- C19	
(15) <i>TV is not a very good friend.</i> (16) <i>Only the news and some documentaries tell you the truth.</i> (17) <i>You don't have to think or make your own decisions with TV.</i> (18) <i>It is true that TV can offer very good and educating programs.</i>	(15)	T1	- C20	
	(16)	T12	- C21	
		T13	- C22	
	(17)	T7	- C23	
	(18)	T1	- C23	

(19) <i>But isn't there any other way to experience them yourself with your own eyes, ears and hands?</i>	(19)	T14	-	C24
(20) <i>After all we should live our life not just watch the others live.</i>	(20)	T7	-	C25

Figure 7.2 The topic/comment development in High 2

Figure 7.2. indicates the writer's attempt to maintain topic T7 (you), which refers to the TV viewer. The comments seem to vary throughout the composition. The writer begins her text with a quotation, which, according to Scarcella (1984:676) is an effective device for catching the reader's attention. C1, in S1, offers a colourful beginning. In C2 of S2 the writer seems to share her psychology teacher's view of television. In S3-S7 she exemplifies what she means by being 'worried and for a good reason'. The topic/comment development runs smoothly in the first paragraph. The topics that she repeats are 'television' and 'my psychology teacher'. All the comments in the first paragraph add new information to the topics.

The second paragraph builds on the idea of television being a 'drug' for Americans. The comments of S8-S15 build up the image of a dream world in which many TV viewers are unable to distinguish reality from their idols' way of living. First, in S8-S10, she focuses on television, but later, in S12-S15, she changes her angle from television into its viewers, with the only interruption being T11, 'reality'. In other words, her focus on the influence of television on its viewers is strengthened by her tendency to maintain 'you' as a constant topic.

The third paragraph contains heavy criticism of television. In this paragraph the writer repeats some of the topics such as 'television' and 'you'/'we', which shows her way of approaching the writing task. In S18 she reminds the viewers of their independence as regards their thinking and decision making. C23 in S19 gives her reasons for the previous claim, but these two sentences, S16-17, should have been combined. As Figure 7.2. shows, the topic/comment development in S14-S20 creates a jerky effect. The writer appears to have problems in finding a solid focus for her composition, which is especially true of the last paragraph. S19, which is a question, catches the reader's attention effectively though. The writer offers her own answer in S20. Generally speaking, the whole composition forms a well-connected whole from the quotation given in S1 up to the comment in S20.

High 3

	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) In this world <i>the television</i> has a great influence to our life and to our way of thinking.	(1) T1	- C1
(2) Almost <i>every family</i> in so called 'rich' countries has one or two televisions in their homes.	(2) T2	- C2
(3) <i>People</i> and especially <i>children</i> are watching much more television now than earlier.	(3) T3	
(4) Even though <i>these</i> are the facts that does not mean that <i>watching TV</i> makes it more difficult to think independently.	(4) T4	- C3
	(4) T5	- C4
	T1	- C5

(5) *Television* gives us only one point of view and *we* must see the other one behind the screen.

(6) *Television* gives us the one way of thinking. (7) *We* have to find the other one by ourselves. (8) *We* can find different opinions in different programmes. (9) *This* depends about the producer of the program. (10) *It* has all the opinions that the producer of the program has. (11) *We* have to think carefully what *we* see in the television and choose our own opinions.

(12) *Watching TV* too much can make it too difficult to think independently.

(13) *They* are so young that *they* can't understand what is right or wrong and *they* can't think so independently as *adults* can.

(14) *Television* can give the wrong expression to the children.

(15) It's important that *the parents* are about their so much that *they* don't let their children to watch too much television. (16) *Parents* can also lead their children to the right way of thinking. (17) *We* can choose what *we* want to watch from television.

(18) In Finland *we* have three different channels and in Australia *they* have six different channels. (19) *We* don't have to watch the things *we* don't want to see because *we* can always change to the other channel.

(20) *We* can get the new idea from television but *we* all are our own independent persons.

(5)	T1	-	C6
	T6	-	C7
(6)	T1	-	C6
(7)	T6↓	-	C7
(8)	T6↓	-	C8
(9)	T7	-	C9
(10)	T1	-	C10↓ T8 + C11
(11)	T6↓	-	C12
	T6↓	-	C13
<hr/>			
(12)	T1	-	C14
(13)	T4↓	-	C15
	T4↓	-	C16
	T4↓	-	C17
	T9	-	C18
(14)	T1	-	C19
<hr/>			
(15)	T10↓	-	C20
	T10↓	-	C21
(16)	T10↓	-	C22
<hr/>			
(17)	T6↓	-	C23
	T6↓	-	C24
(18)	T6↓	-	C25
	T11	-	C26
(19)	T6↓	-	C27
	T6↓	-	C28
	T6↓	-	C29
(20)	T6↓	-	C30
	T6↓	-	C31

Figure 7.3 The topic/comment development in High 3

Even a cursory look at the topic/comment development in High 3 (see Figure 7.3.) shows a trend towards maintaining a constant topic as in T1, T4, particularly T6, and T10. The comments for their part, despite C6, seem to continuously add new information to the topics. There is one case in which the writer uses the comment in the previous clause as the topic of the following clause. Another point concerning the topic development in this composition is that, unlike the poorer writers who often only appear to give a list of topics, this writer seems to concentrate on only a few topics and to develop them.

A closer look at the topic/comment development in this composition shows that, right at the outset in C1, the writer takes a stand by claiming that television has an effect on our way of thinking. C2 in S2 and especially C3 together with T4 in S3 raise 'children' into a group that may be more vulnerable to the influence of TV because they watch it more than before. C4 and C5 in S4 sum up the main ideas expressed in the first paragraph so far. Simultaneously S4 creates certain expectations in the reader as to how the writer would go on justifying her claims. Generally speaking, as regards the topic/comment development in the first paragraph, it seems to form a complete well-constructed entity of its own.

The expectations raised in the reader by the first paragraph are satisfied in the second paragraph. C6 and C7 in S5 explain the biased view that TV imparts to its viewers. This partial point of view is stressed in C6 in S6, and clarified in C8 in S7. In S7 the writer changes her point of view from television to that of the viewer, which she attempts to maintain in the rest of the second paragraph. In S9, the previous comment C9 becomes the topic of the sentence. C9 and C10 in S9 and S10 focus on the influence of the producer as a source of bias in TV programmes. In S10 the comment of S9 becomes the topic of clause T8. In S11 the writer retains T6, and in C13 also raises the question of selecting one's opinions. As regards the topic/comment development, the second paragraph, as the previous one, constitutes an integrated unit.

The third paragraph takes up the idea of watching TV too much, which can make it more difficult for children to think independently. T4 together with C15-C17 in S13 emphasize the problems that young viewers may have in trying to think independently. In S14 the writer changes her approach from children to television, that is, to T1 again. The third and the fourth paragraphs seem to belong together. T10, 'the parents', appears to continue the idea of contrasting children with adults in S13. Thus T10 with C20-22 in S15-S16 elaborates on the topic 'parents'. Combined these two paragraphs would form a more coherent piece of text.

The last paragraph draws a conclusion by adopting the notion of choice as a key concept (C23). The writer uses a constant topic almost exclusively in this paragraph. The use of a constant topic with changing comments builds up into a solid conclusion for the composition. In terms of quality, this composition does not seem to equal the other three compositions in the High category.

High 4

(1) *Watching TV* is voluntary. (2) *We* wouldn't have to watch it if *we* didn't want to. (3) *We* don't have to think as *the people* on TV do. (4) But I admit that *watching TV* may have an influence on our opinions and all our way of thinking. (5) I think that *we* are able to resist the TV's influence if *we* want to.

(6) Those *who* watch telly all day and night long day in day out without any real hobbies are really in danger. (7) I think that *that* is their own fault for letting it happen. (8) *TV* is very much full of crap and everything not important. (9) *TV* also gives us a great deal of useful information and news of *what* is going on in this world of ours.

	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1)	T1	- C1
(2)	T2↓	- C2
	T2↓	- C3
(3)	T2↓	- C4
	T3	- C5
(4)	T1	- C6
(5)	T2↓	- C7
	T2↓	- C8
(6)	T4	- C9
(7)	T5 = T4 + C9	
(8)	T1↓	- C10
(9)	T1↓	- C11
	T6	- C12

(10) <i>Young people</i> may have some difficulties in creating their opinions independently.	(10) T7	-	C13
(11) <i>The television</i> may influence on them without <i>them</i> even noticing it.	(11) T1	-	C14
(12) <i>That</i> may sometimes be the purpose of TV producers.	T8	-	C15
(13) In the same way <i>the producers and creators of political programmes</i> are trying to influence adults, the voters in the elections.	(12) T9 = T1 + C14 + T8 + C15		
(14) I think that <i>TV</i> can make it more difficult to think independently - at least for some of us.	(13) T10	-	C16
	T11	-	C17
	(14) T1	-	C18

Figure 7.4 The topic/comment development in High 4

This writer, like the other three writers in this quality category, tends to develop the topics in her composition. There is a tendency to maintain T1 and T2. Surprisingly enough, she picks up a proposition given earlier three times in her composition. As to the comment development, the writer seems to change comments continuously thus adding new information to the sentences (see Figure 7.4.).

The writer starts her composition with T1-C1 by claiming that watching TV is voluntary. In the next two sentences S2-S3, she supports her claim. There her focus changes from watching television to the viewer. In C4 in S4 she admits that TV may have an effect on our thinking. Again in S5 she returns to the TV viewer T2, 'we'. The topic/comment development in it, T2-C7, T2-C8, emphasizes the viewer's ability to resist the effect of TV on his/her thinking.

The second paragraph elaborates on an idea that was launched in C6 in S4. In S7 the writer picks up a proposition mentioned in S6. This is the only composition in this quality category that exhibits such a strategy and, in fact, it is done again in S12. Then in S8-S9, the writer's focus changes to T1, the topic of TV. T1-C10 in S8 and T1-C11 in S9 with T6-C12 indicate the writer's view of television programmes. The constant topic T1 together with C10-C12 indicates contrastive views on the role of television, but this writer is unable to express these contrasts explicitly enough. Furthermore, in S8 she seems to have problems with vocabulary and style as well.

The third paragraph returns to the question put forward in the title of the writing task. The T7-C13 relationship takes up the basic question, that of young people having difficulties in forming their own opinions when watching TV. C14 and C15 in S11 add information about the covert effect of TV on young viewers. S12 is an interesting case because in T9 the writer picks up a proposition expressed in S11. In S13 T9-C16 and T10-C17 reveal the agents of probable indoctrination. C17 in S13 extends the range of those who may become influenced by TV to adults. The T1-C18 pair finally draws a conclusion, which is well based on the previous discussion. On the whole, this composition appears to be more uneven in its topic/comment development than the other three.

7.1.2 The topic-comment development in the Mid category

This section explores the way in which the EFL writers in the Mid quality category (N=9) convey information in their compositions, i.e. how the information is realized in the topic/comment development. As before, the title of the writing task was *Does watching television make it difficult to think independently?* The analysis will proceed in the same way as in the previous category (see section 7.1.1 above).

Mid 1	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) In my opinion there is <i>a great danger</i> nowadays in watching TV.	(1) T1 -	C1
(2) <i>We don't</i> maybe realize how much <i>we</i> really watch television.	(2) T2↓ - T2↓ -	C2 C3↓
(3) <i>It is</i> a powerful medium and <i>it</i> can change our attitudes and thinking.	(3)	T3 + C4 T3 + C5
(4) There is no use <i>to argue</i> that <i>we</i> can choose what <i>we</i> want to watch because <i>we</i> sometimes watch programmes which <i>we</i> don't like.	(4) T4 - T2↓ - T2↓ - T2↓ -	C6 C7 C8 C9
(5) <i>Children</i> are more in danger than <i>adults</i> are. (6) <i>They</i> haven't seen the world as much as <i>their parents</i> have. (7) If <i>they</i> watch television hours and hours every day <i>they</i> get bored, impatient and tired. (8) It is very easy <i>to give thoughts, opinions and answers</i> to that kind of person through TV.	(5) T5 - T6 - (6) T5 - T7 - (7) T5↓ - T5↓ -	C10 C11 C12 C13 C14 C15 C16
(9) <i>That</i> is a very good way to affect people.	(8) T8 - (9) T9 -	C17 C18
(10) I think that <i>making opinions</i> is not so easy even if <i>we</i> don't have the media affecting us. sitting in front of television every evening.	(10) T10 - T2 -	C19 C20
(11) So it's not hard <i>to understand</i> that <i>we</i> are living in the crossfire of all kind of bad things. (12) <i>We</i> have to watch television because <i>it</i> also gives us some kind of machine <i>that</i> knows everything. (13) <i>We</i> can think independently enough by watching around us without sitting in front of television every evening.	(11) T11 - T2↓ - (12) T2↓ - (13) T2↓ -	C21 C22 C23↓ T3 + C24 T11 + C25 C26

Figure 7.5 The topic/comment development in Mid 1

Figure 7.5. shows the writer's tendency to maintain topics T2, T3, and T5. The comment development displays a fair amount of variety. This writer uses Daneš's (1974) simple linear topical progression three times, in S3 and S12, in which the comment of the previous clause/sentence becomes the topic of the following one.

As regards the title of the composition, the writer takes a clear stand in S1 by claiming that watching TV imposes a danger on the viewer. C2 and C3 together with T2 in S2 clarify that claim. If the first two sentences were combined with 'because' in front of S2, the information structure would constitute a tighter entity. But this is something that the present model does not show. C4 and C5 in S3 emphasize the claim that the writer makes in S1. The topic/comment relationship

in S4 seems to work, but the argumentation in it is flat. This is another point that the analysis does not reveal.

The topic/comment relationship in S5 returns to the danger of watching television mentioned in T1-C1 in the first sentence, but this time it is approached from a limited point of view by specifying children as the most vulnerable group of TV viewers, and by contrasting them with adults. The constant topic, T5, accompanied by C13-C16 in S6-S7, consolidates the writer's focus on the dangerous influence of TV on children.

The even flow of information is interrupted by two badly constructed sentences S8 and S9, in which 'that kind of person' in S8 and 'people' in S9 show the writer's faulty command of grammar. In S9 the writer picks up the proposition expressed in the previous sentence. Despite bad grammar, the topic/comment relationships T8-C17 and T9-C18 seem to work well.

The third paragraph starts unclearly by introducing the idea of 'making opinions', which the writer probably uses to refer to thinking independently. Bad grammar together with the messy organization of information in S11 weakens the credibility of the writer's message. It is difficult for the reader to see the connection between S11 and S12. In S12 the writer uses the linear pattern of thematic progression twice: C23 becomes the topic of the subordinate clause, T3, and C24 becomes T11 in the relative clause. But it is difficult for the reader to know what she means by "it gives us some kind of machine . . ." Moreover, the writer's use of the negative 'not' makes the reader's task even more demanding, particularly in the last paragraph. However, the messiness of the way the ideas are put forward in this composition are not brought out in the analysis.

Mid 2

		TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) <i>Television</i> is a machine <i>which</i> is easy to switch on and off. (2) <i>This</i> usually happens if <i>one</i> has not anything special to do. (3) <i>Channels</i> are many and <i>everyone</i> can find something interesting.	(1)	T1 -	C1↓ T2 - C2
	(2)		T3 = T2 + C2
(4) <i>Television</i> is often watched just for fun.	(3)	T4 -	C3
(5) <i>It</i> is a good entertainer but <i>it</i> has some other effects, too. (6) <i>People</i> lose their independence of thinking when <i>they</i> watch films and programs in which <i>everything</i> tend to be perfect. (7) <i>Problems</i> come up if <i>they</i> are easily solved and <i>life</i> is smiling in every turn.	(4)	T4 -	C4
(8) When <i>one</i> watches these kind of programs <i>he</i> sucks them into mind and starts thinking that <i>his life</i> is also dancing on roses. (9) <i>Reality</i> is often forgotten and <i>one</i> becomes a prisoner of imagination. (10) <i>Children</i> are in an especially big danger to lose their independence when <i>they</i> are watching TV without their parents' control.	(5)	T4 -	C5
(11) <i>They</i> don't find it only amusement. (12) <i>They</i> identify themselves to stars and other actors on the screen. and help to find an own personality.	(6)	T1↓ -	C6
	(7)	T1↓ -	C7
	(8)	T1↓ -	C8
	(9)	T4↓ -	C9
	(10)	T4↓ -	C10
	(11)	T6 -	C11
	(12)	T7↓ -	C12
	(1)	T7↓ -	C13
	(2)	T8 -	C14
	(3)	T4↓ -	C15
	(4)	T4↓ -	C16
	(5)	T9 -	C17
	(6)	T10 -	C18
	(7)	T4 -	C19
	(8)	T11↓ -	C20
	(9)	T11↓ -	C21
	(10)	T11↓ -	C22
	(11)	T11↓ -	C23

(13) Instead of watching TV <i>we</i> should get hobbies <i>that</i> improve thinking	(13) T4 -	C24! T12 + C25
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Figure 7.6. The topic/comment development in Mid 2.

Figure 7.6. indicates that the writer tends to maintain a constant topic, at least in places. As regards the comment development in this composition, there are two cases where the writer uses Daneš's simple linear type of topical progression: in S2 and in S13. In addition to that, in S2 he picks up the proposition given in the latter part of S1 to become the topic in S2. Otherwise, he seems to vary the comments in his composition.

The first paragraph forms a fairly closely knit entity of ideas. In the second paragraph the constant topic in S4 and S5 together with C6-C8 roll the text onwards quite well. C8 in S5 with the phrase 'some other effects' creates certain expectations in the reader. The rest of the paragraph elaborates on the influence of television on its viewers. The writer's tendency to use constant topics such as T1, T4, T7, and T11 together with changing comments explains the effects that the writer mentioned in S5. In S10 with T11 the writer focuses on the most vulnerable group, children. The writer's use of the constant topic consolidates the text structure. Poor grammar, such as 'amusement', 'identify themselves to', however, disturbs the reader.

The topic/comment pair in S13 works well, although the sudden change of topic from 'children' to 'we' comes unexpectedly to the reader. Besides, the writer does not develop C25, the idea of finding one's own personality. His deficient command of the language impairs the conclusion, which he tries to draw in S13. Generally speaking, composition Mid 2 seems to be better than Mid 1.

Mid 3	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) I think that <i>age</i> has a strong effect in this matter. (2) The younger <i>you</i> are the stronger the <i>power of TV and commercials</i> are. (3) Of course <i>we</i> have to exclude those small children <i>who</i> don't even understand <i>what</i> is said on TV.	(1) T1 - (2) T2 - T3 - (3) T2 -	C1 C2 C3 C4!
	T4 + C5	
(4) <i>The effect</i> is seen more often among teenagers than adults. (5) <i>Young people</i> want to look and act same way with their friends. (6) When <i>they</i> see a certain kind of model on TV <i>they</i> forget common sence and start acting like the people on TV. (7) <i>They</i> want to be like the guys in Miami Vice.	(4) T5 - (4) T6 - (5) T7! - (6) T7! - T7! - (7) T7! -	C6 C7 T7! + C8 C9 C10 C11 C12
(8) <i>Adults</i> are more realistic when <i>they</i> watch TV. (9) <i>They</i> might like some product that <i>they</i> see there but <i>they</i> usually don't hurry to buy it rightaway. (10) <i>The effects</i> are also connected with the time that <i>you</i> spend by watching TV.	(8) T8! - T8! - (9) T8! - T8! - T8! - (10) T6 - T2!	C13 C14 C15 C16 C17 C18 C19

(11) The more often <i>you</i> watch the bigger <i>the effects</i> are.	(11)	T2↓	-	C20
(12) I do think that in the end <i>to let the TV affect to your opinions</i> is always your choice.	(12)	T6	-	C21
		T9	-	C22

Figure 7.7. The topic/comment development in Mid 3.

As can be seen in Figure 7.7., this writer attempts to maintain a constant topic in the main body of her composition. The arrows in the figure show that she uses C1 in S1 as the topic of another sentence: T6 in S4, S10, and S11. The only exception in the comment column appears to be C4, which becomes the topic of the following clause. The other comments keep on adding new information to the topics, as is the case in most of the compositions.

The writer seizes the question posed in the title of the writing assignment right at the outset in S1. The key factor for her seems to be the viewer's age. The comments C2 and C3 in S2 support the comment in S1. As regards the content of S3, it appears to be an unnecessary and irrelevant sentence. If it were elaborated by, for example, discussing the hidden influence of TV on toddlers, it would make more sense to the reader.

Paragraph two returns to C1 in S1, the notion of age having an effect on a TV viewer. S4 with T6-C7 concentrates on discussing the effect of TV on young people. C7 in S4 organizes paragraph two and paragraph three as well by contrasting teenagers with adults. The comments C7-C12 in S4-S7 concentrate on the influence of television on young people by adding new information to the constant topic T7, 'young people' or 'they'. Although there are some errors of grammar in the sentences, the second paragraph seems to form a coherent unity of its own.

The topic/comment relationship in the first two sentences S8-S9 in paragraph three seems to work well. But there is an abrupt change in the writer's focus as regards the information in S10. T5-C18 and T2-C19 work well, and S11 clarifies the statement made in the previous sentence. Despite the sudden change of focus in S10, these two sentences seem to consolidate each other. In S12 the writer draws a clear-cut conclusion. This writer seems to have a personal touch in his composition, which makes his composition a low high.

Mid 4

		TOPIC		COMMENT
(1) <i>Television</i> is like using drugs to some people. (2) <i>They</i> can't think independently or use their brains effectively. (3) <i>That</i> is a problem in countries with a large number of television channels, for example in the USA.	(1)	T1	-	C1↓
	(2)	T2 + C2		
	(3)	T3 = T2 + C2		
(4) <i>The television</i> affects people in many ways. (5) <i>It</i> gives you entertainment just by the touch of the button. (6) <i>You</i> start to watch TV and <i>nothing</i> or <i>nobody</i> can disturb you. (7) <i>The television</i> gives you the right answers: <i>Rambo</i> could have won the Vietnam-army by himself; it was Iran's fault that their plane carrying passengers was shot down by the	(4)	T1↓	-	C3
	(5)	T1↓	-	C4
	(6)	T4	-	C5
		T5		
		T6	-	C6
	(7)	T1	-	C7
		T7	-	C8
	T8	-	C9	

US.-army. (8) *That* was all true, right? (9) If *you* think so, *you* are a slave of the television.

(10) The younger *you* start watching television many hours a day it is obvious that *you* won't be able to think independently and *you* will believe everything on TV. (11) I don't mean that *everyone* would become dependent on TV. (12) But *it* is a problem among children and teenagers. (13) *Parents* should let their children read good books and *they* should learn them to play like children.

(8)	T9 = T1 + C7 + T7 + C8 + T8 + C9
(9)	T4↓ - C10
	T4↓ - C11
<hr/>	
(10)	T4↓ - C12
	T4↓ - C13
	T4↓ - C14
(11)	T10 - C15
(12)	T1 - C16
(13)	T11↓ - C17
	T11↓ - C18

Figure 7.8 The topic/comment development in Mid 4

A look at Figure 7.8. shows that the topic/comment development in this composition varies. The writer not only gives a list of ideas, but he tries to develop the topics. He picks up a proposition mentioned earlier to become the topic of the following sentence, as is the case in S3 and S8. The comment development follows the same pattern as in so many other compositions: almost every comment seems to add new information to the topics being discussed (the only exception is C1 which becomes T2 in S2).

The writer of this composition immediately takes a clear stand right in the first sentence. The topic/comment relationship in S1-S3 appears to work well. He uses the linear pattern to combine information in S1 and S2. By employing the proposition mentioned earlier in S3 in S3 he creates the impression of a well-developed paragraph as regards the information structure in it.

In S4 in the second paragraph the writer claims that TV affects people 'in many ways'. This claim creates certain expectations in the reader. C4 in S5 illustrates one way of influencing its viewers, 'entertainment', which is clarified in S6. S7 continues to satisfy the promises made in S4. The two examples in S7, T7-C8 and T8-C9, indicate the biased information that TV may offer. The statement in S10 draws the reader's attention to the hidden influence of TV on its viewers. As an attention getting device, S8 is very effective because it stops the reader for a while. In T4-C10 and T4-C11 the writer draws a conclusion to finish his argumentation started at the beginning of the paragraph.

In the third paragraph the viewer's age emerges as a crucial factor affecting his/her ability to think independently. C12-14 together with the constant topic T4 convey the writer's message onwards smoothly. S11 specifies the writer's claim that he made in the previous sentence, which he further exemplifies in S12. S13 draws the final conclusion, which puts the responsibility on parents' shoulders. T11, the constant topic, pulls the clauses together with the information conveyed in C17-18, but the wrong words, i.e. 'let' instead of 'make' and 'learn' instead of 'teach', hamper the understanding of the reader.

The writer tends to return to the idea of television being a 'drug' to some viewers. On the whole, his way of structuring the entire composition seems to work fairly well, which is strengthened by the writer's tendency to use constant topics. The constant topics seem to consolidate his grip on the writing task.

Mid 5

(1) Do *you* have any opinion of your own or have *you* just heard some well-based opinions. (2) In TV and newspapers *you* are given lots of information. (3) *Television* is a very good thing to make us change our opinions. (4) If *you* watch very famous people talking about things *you* are not very sure about. (5) It is very easy to *imitate their sayings* as your own opinions. (6) *That* is not a very independent way of thinking.

(7) Luckily, there isn't *very much* election *discussion* in television except before and *politicians* do speak so strange that it's better for an ordinary person to *avoid* that sort of speaking.

(8) In TV serials *you* are given lots of ideas how *things* should be if *they* are going fine that means that ugly hat *you* are wearing looks great and *you* will give as smart impression as Don Johnson if *you* smoke the same way than *he* does.

(9) TV does make independent thinking more difficult but in today's world *you* are given ready opinions everywhere so *you* can watch TV as much as *you* want if *you* remember to think with your own brains as much as possible.

	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1)	T1↓	- C1
	T1↓	- C2
(2)	T1↓	- C3
	(3)	T2 - C4
(4)	T1↓	- C5
	T1↓	- C6
(5)	T3	- C7
(6)	T4 = T3 + C7	
(7)	T5	- C8
	T6	- C9
	T7	- C10
(8)	T1	- C11
	T8↓	- C12
	T8↓	- C13
	T1↓	- C14
	T1↓	- C15
	T1↓	- C16
	T9	- C17
(9)	T2	- C18
	T1↓	- C19
	T1↓	- C20
	T1↓	- C21
	T1↓	- C22

Figure 7.9 The topic/comment development in Mid 5

The topic development in Mid 5 (see Figure 7.9.) shows the writer's tendency to maintain a constant topic, such as T1 and T8. In only one case does the writer pick up a previously stated proposition, viz. in S6. The comments seem to vary with no surprises in their progression.

The first paragraph begins with a question, but in this composition the question as an attention drawing device (Scarcella 1984) does not seem to work as well as in the previous composition Mid 4 (see S8 in it), because here it remains at too superficial a level. In fact, it is also loosely connected with the title of the writing assignment. The information in S2 stays at a very general level. The use of a constant topic in S1 and S2 does not diminish this superficiality. But it is in S3 that the writer starts getting down to the core of what he wants to say, although the choice of the adjective 'good' seems flat there. 'Powerful' would strike the reader more effectively. The topic/comment relationship T1-C5 and T1-C6 in S4 and T3-C7 in S5 are all right but the most prominent deficiency here seems to be the writer's inability to combine sentences. In S6 the idea of not being able to think independently finally comes into the picture. Unlike S6 and S7, which should be combined, the third paragraph would make better sense if it were split into shorter sentences and if the information in it were rearranged.

S8 forms an entire paragraph, paragraph three. This long sentence begins with an introduction which attempts to maintain the constant topics 'things' and

'they'. An example usually makes a text easier to comprehend but in this case the writer is not capable of making his claim first and then illustrating it with an example. The topic/comment flow runs fairly evenly, but the information is not comprehensible enough to the reader. The grammatical errors and the writer's inability to use punctuation also distract the reader. As regards S8, the analysis does not show the messiness of the sentence.

S9 also constitutes a whole paragraph, as does S8. In S8 the writer illustrates the influence of TV on the viewer by giving an example. Providing an example to clarify the writer's views is a useful way as such, but this writer is unable to connect the example sufficiently to support his claims. In other words, the example remains isolated from the text itself.

In the last two paragraphs the difficulty lies in arranging the information structure in such a way as to make it more comprehensible to the reader. The use of constant topic T1 gives a solid backbone to the sentence, which is consolidated by the new information provided in the comments. S9 would be more effective if it were divided into two sentences. Mid 5 appears to be a low Mid composition.

Mid 6	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) Nowadays it's very difficult to find a house without television.	(1) T1	C1
(2) Of course it gives us very important information like news and documents.	(2) T2	C2↓
(3) But those programs take only couple of hours a day.	(3) T3 + C3	
(4) We still and watch many more hours even from seven different channels.	(4) T4	C4
(5) It's fine to talk about competition society and competition society really has taken many problems on it's shoulders.	(5) T5	C5↓
(6) TV and it's entertainment programs gives a possibility to think about something else than work.	T6 + C6 (6) T2	
(7) But sometimes it has it's influence on people.	(7) T7	C7
(8) We'll forget our own opinions.	(8) T2	C8
(9) We are very sad if someone dies in a love story or if somebody is treated with injustice.	(8) T4↓	C9
(10) If something like this happens in a real life we don't feel anything.	(9) T4↓	C10
(11) It's maybe easier to hire an actress who does all those difficulties for us.	T8	C11
(12) But is life then worth living?	T9	C12
(13) Are we then independent?	(10) T10 = T8 + C11 + T9 + C12	
(14) What would happen if we would destroy every television in the world?	T4	C13
(15) Maybe we will start listening to radio and after some years we are at the same stage - not by watching but by listening.	(11) T11	C14↓
(16) But if you are watching television many hours every day it's sure that you are soon looking at yourself in TV -instead of the filmstar.	T12 + C15 (12) T13	C16
	(13) T4	C17
	(14) T14	C18
	T4↓	C19
	(15) T4↓	C20
	T4↓	C21
	(16) T4↓	C22
	T4↓	C23

Figure 7.10 The topic/comment development in Mid 6

Figure 7.10. shows this writer's attempt to maintain T4 as a constant topic. There is one instance in S10 in which the writer picks up the proposition expressed in the previous sentence. The comment column indicates three cases where the writer uses a linear thematic progression, in S3, S5, and S11. Otherwise the comments show excessive variation.

The information in the first paragraph remains at a very general level. This writer seems to list various facts about watching television. The topics vary in all the sentences. The topic/comment relationships within individual sentences work fairly well, especially between S2 and S3, where the writer uses Daneš's simple linear pattern of topical progression.

In the second paragraph S5 suddenly opens a discussion of the 'competition society', but the discussion in it remains implicit to the reader despite the linear pattern of topical progression, which would usually make the text cohere. The change of topics in S6 at first sounds abrupt, but T2 and T7 together with C5 partly attempt to clarify the information given in S5. S7 gets down to the point, to the effect of television on viewers, although the writer does not explain what kind of effect she is thinking of. S8 and S9 with their well-working topic/comment relationships explicate the writer's intentions, although instead of the word 'opinions', 'emotions' would be a better choice. The claim in S10 sums up the ideas expressed in T8-C11 and T9-C12. Although the topic/comment relationship does not indicate it, the information in S11 is unclear. The next three questions in S12-S14 are an effective means of drawing the reader's attention to the subject matter despite bad grammar. Constant topic T4, also in S15, and the information conveyed by the comments C20-C21 seem to function well.

A closer look at the information in S16 reveals the writer's inability to draw a clear and reader-friendly conclusion. Despite the well-functioning topic/comment relationship, the information in S16 remains unclear to the reader.

Mid 7	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) <i>Your own nature</i> is the most important thing in affecting on your independence. (2) However, <i>you</i> are not the only thing affecting your nature. (3) <i>Your home</i> and <i>your friends</i> are also there in creating you.	(1) T1 (2) T2 (3) T3 T4	- C1 - C2 - C3
(4) <i>A great deal of people</i> think that television is a monster. (5) <i>These people</i> are often only thinking of television's negative influence on passive people. (6) <i>A passive viewer</i> is taking his ideas straight from this monster. (7) <i>They</i> identify with JR in Dallas and with Alexis in Dynasty. (8) Sometimes <i>they</i> cannot even chance these roles fitting to the world in which <i>they</i> are living right now. (9) <i>Television</i> can also have a positive influence on people. (10) <i>It</i> can teach independent teaching by showing us good people and bad people. (11) Together with a safe home and a suitable amount of good TV programs <i>a young people</i> learn to wonder what is right and what is wrong.	(4) T5 T6 (5) T5 (6) (7) T7! (8) T7! T7! (9) T6! (10) T6! (11) T8	- C4 - C5 - C6! T7 + C7 - C8 - C9 - C10 - C11 - C12 - C13

(12) I don't think that <i>television</i> is a monster	(12)	T6	-	C14
because <i>my parents</i> were quite clear in their		T9	-	C15
opinions what <i>I</i> was allowed to watch.		T10	-	C16

Figure 7.11 The topic/comment development in Mid 7

As can be seen in Figure 7.11., this writer, as so many other writers in the present data, also attempts to maintain a constant topic such as T6 and T7. She, however, seems to vary the comments in her composition, except in S6 with its linear pattern of topical progression.

Considering the title of the writing task, the first paragraph starts with irrelevant information. C1 in S1 introduces the idea of independence. The information in S1 and in S2 remains unclear to the reader, because the writer changes the focus in S2. C3 in S3 repeats the idea expressed in C1. 'Your own independence' and the idea of 'creating you' are used synonymously. As concerns the information in the first paragraph, it is awkwardly organized, which can also be seen in Figure 7.11. with its shifting topic/comment development.

The second paragraph suddenly starts criticizing television as a 'monster', although later on C6 in S5, C7 in S6, C8 in S7, C9 and C10 in S8 explain what the writer means by the metaphor. In S6, C6 becomes the topic of the sentence, which strengthens the topic/comment flow in this composition. But there are lexical and syntactic problems, especially in S8, which the present analysis does not disclose. In the next three sentences, from S9 to S11, the focus is on the positive effect of television on people. The advantages of television are expressed in C11 and C12 together with T7, but the wrong word choice 'teaching' unfortunately disturbs the readability of the text, which is aggravated by naïve reasoning. The topic/comment relationship in S11 is right but the expression 'a young people' and the use of the word 'wonder' thwart the writer's efforts. The last paragraph returns to the idea of television being a 'monster'. The balance between the topics 'television', 'my parents', and 'I', and the comments C14-C16 is clear, and the writer's stand can easily be seen there.

Mid 8		TOPIC		COMMENT
(1) <i>Television</i> has become one of the most	(1)	T1↓	-	C1
common methods to transmit information. (2)	(2)	T1↓	-	C2
<i>It</i> has all the advantages of a well informing	(3)	T1↓	-	C3
equipment. (3) <i>It</i> transmits sound and at the	(4)	T2	-	C4
same time <i>a picture</i> is connected to sound. (4)		T3	-	C6
<i>Television</i> does not let us form our own image	(5)	T1	-	C7
from the things that <i>the sound</i> tells us. (5) So <i>it</i>		T4	-	C8
offers 'ready made' information forcing us to				
think more and more in the ways that <i>the</i>	(6)	T5	-	C9
<i>information</i> is given.				
(6) <i>Watching television</i> is often referred to	(7)	T6	-	C10
watching movies. (7) But <i>we</i> should		T7	-	C11
remember that almost 50% of <i>television'</i>				
<i>transmission time</i> is news and documents.				

(8) But still <i>radio</i> is more to listen than television. (9) I think <i>we</i> should watch and listen news from television and listen radio plays instead of watching movies from television because by watching TV <i>we</i> cannot understand them wrongly and by listening radio plays <i>we</i> could form our own world of the play.	(8)	T8	-	C12
		T6↓	-	C14
		T6↓	-	C15
	(9)	T6↓	-	C13
		T6↓	-	C14
		T6↓	-	C15

Figure 7.12 The topic/comment development in Mid 8

Figure 7.12. shows the writer's attempt to maintain a constant topic, as in T1 and T6. The comments, however, appear to vary. The first paragraph mainly employs the constant topic 'television' and 'it'. The comments in S1 and S2 build the image of television as a transmitter of information. C7 and C8 in S5 add valuable information to the topics 'it' and 'the information'. The text in the first paragraph forms a unity such that the reader can see the writer's attempt to build a coherent paragraph but is disturbed not so much by poor topic/comment relationships as by bad grammar ('a well informing equipment', etc.).

C9 and C10 in S6 and S7 give their contributions to the topics, but difficulties begin in S8, which is syntactically impossible. S9 is a complex sentence, which shows the writer's inability to express himself clearly. As concerns the length of S9, it almost equals that of the first paragraph. It requires considerable processing by the reader. Equating the notion of 'watching television' with that of 'watching movies' and comparing 'watching television' with 'listening radio plays' seem very clumsy, which makes it difficult for the reader to follow the writer's reasoning. The writer's choice of maintaining a constant topic in S9 somehow helps the comprehension of the text. C13-C15 accomplish their task by adding information but the entire structure of the sentence imposes extra demands on the reader. The writer never seems to get down to the point but remains at a superficial and very limited level of thinking. The topic/comment analysis does not reveal all the weaknesses mentioned above.

Mid 9

		TOPIC		COMMENT	
(1) <i>Television</i> is one of the most important inventions made in this country. (2) Despite atomic energy, space-flights etc, <i>television</i> has more than anything else affected the lives of individual persons. (3) In Finland <i>an average person</i> watches TV approximately two hours every day. (4) Therefore <i>TV</i> has become an authority in our lives. (5) <i>We</i> believe what a <i>TV-commentator</i> says to us in the news. (6) <i>We</i> believe that in no doubt. (7) <i>We</i> can't check that ourselves.	(1)	T1↓	-	C1	
		(2)	T1↓	-	C2
		(3)	T2	-	C3
		(4)	T1	-	C4
		(5)	T2	-	C5
			T3	-	C6
		(6)	T2↓	-	C7
	(7)	T2↓	-	C8	

(8) *TV influences us.* (9) *We know that commercials don't tell us the other side of the things they promote.* (10) *We also know that American police-series are not the whole picture of America.* (11) *It, however, affects us sub-consciously.* (12) *Many fear to go to the USA, because they believe to get robbed or killed immediately.* (13) *The crime situation may be bad in big cities, but that bad it is nowhere.*

(14) *Now you may think that TV is bad.* (15) *You wouldn't be alone, many other feel like that.* (16) *However, that is not the whole story.* (17) *News are the same in the papers, too.* (18) *So TV is not the only one to blame if they are not true.*

(19) *In fact watching foreign TV channels via Cable-TV gives us more choice.* (20) *We can often see things happening in this world from the other side as well.* (21) *We get more independence in making our decisions when we receive information from several sources.*

(22) *I'm proud to say that at least I'm quite independent in my thinking.* (23) *I hope that many others are, too.*

(8)	T1	-	C9
(9)	T2	-	C10
	T4↓	-	C11
	T4↓	-	C12
(10)	T2	-	C12
	T5	-	C13
(11)	T6 = T5 + C13		
(12)	T7↓	-	C14
	T7↓	-	C15
(13)	T8↓	-	C16
	T8↓	-	C17
<hr/>			
(14)	T9	-	C18
	T1	-	C19
(15)	T9	-	C20
	T10	-	C21
(16)	T11 = T9 + C18 + T1 + C19		
(17)	T12	-	C22
(18)	T1	-	C23
	T13	-	C24
(19)	T14	-	C25
(20)	T2↓	-	C26
(21)	T2↓	-	C27
	T2↓	-	C28
<hr/>			
(22)	T15↓	-	C29
	T15↓	-	C30
(23)	T15↓	-	C31
	T16	-	C32

Figure 7.13 The topic/comment development in Mid 9

A general look at Figure 7.13. shows the writer's attempt to use a constant topic in his composition. Twice, in S11 and S16, the writer picks up a proposition given earlier in the composition. In the latter case, he picks up the proposition mentioned not in the previous sentence but in the one before that. He appears to vary the comments throughout the composition.

The text starts with a very clear statement, in which the topic/comment relationship works well. C2 in S2 supports the claim in S1. In the first two sentences the constant topic pulls the strings together effectively. In S3 and S4 the text narrows itself down to the situation in Finland, which is expressed by close topic-comment relationships, T2-C3 and T1-C4. In the next three sentences S5-S7, Finnish viewers' uncritical way of watching TV is introduced. The last two sentences at the end of the first paragraph could be omitted because they simply repeat the information already given in S5, thus making the text unnecessarily redundant. In addition, S6 is unclear.

At the beginning of the second paragraph, T1-C9 in S8 takes the reader back to the information given in S2. The biased view of commercials and American police series is well presented in S9 and S10. S11, which indicates the subconscious influence of television, picks up the proposition given in the previous clause. S12 gives an example of the effect of TV on people's subconsciousness.

The third paragraph attempts to balance the bias discussed in the previous paragraph by introducing the possibility of choosing when there is a variety of

sources to receive information from. The first two sentences S14 and S15 could be combined to make the text tighter. S16 represents an interesting change in the text, which is strengthened by T12-C22 in S17 and T1-C23 and T13-C24 in S18. C25 in S19 adds the notion of 'choice', which is supported by the constant topic 'we' and the comments C26-C28 in S20 and S21. S20 could, however, be left out because the same information is repeated in S21 in a succinct form. Bad grammar, e.g. 'News are', 'they are', at places must have affected the grade of this composition. The last paragraph constitutes an effective conclusion with the constant topic 'I' and the comments C29-C32 adding adequate information to it and the other topic 'many others'. This composition is clearly a high-Mid one.

7.1.3 The topic/comment relationship in the Low category

Section 7.1.3 focuses on the analysis of the topic/comment development in the third quality category, which comprises 11 compositions written on the title '*Does watching television make it more difficult to think independently?*' See section 7.1.1 for a description of the analytical procedure.

Low 1	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) <i>People</i> watch TV a lot nowadays. (2) It maybe difficult <i>to make decisions</i> and <i>think independently</i> for a person <i>who</i> is a TV freak and <i>who</i> believes everything that <i>he</i> has been told on the TV.	(1) T1 -	C1
	(2) T2 -	C2
	T3↓ -	C3
	T3↓ -	C4
	T3↓ -	C5
(3) <i>I</i> am afraid of the manipulation of the TV. (4) <i>I</i> am sure that <i>TV</i> selects and changes the information <i>it</i> gets. (5) <i>So we</i> maybe don't know anything about the other case that <i>TV</i> is sending us. (6) <i>The TV producer's view</i> may be extremely different when <i>it</i> is compared to our attitude.	(3) T4 -	C6
	(4) T5↓ -	C6
(7) For example, there are <i>many candidates in the elections</i> and <i>you</i> don't know them very well. (8) From the TV news <i>you</i> will get information telling you that <i>candidate three</i> is the best. (9) <i>I</i> bet that <i>your vote</i> will be given to the candidate three.	(5) T5↓ -	C7
	(5) T1 -	C8
	T5 -	C9
(10) <i>You</i> must have a strong self-confidence. (11) Don't trust everything that <i>you</i> have been told. (12) Use your own brains and don't sink to the world of TV lies. (13) It is not easy <i>to make opinions</i> even if <i>we</i> don't have the media affecting us. (14) <i>So</i> it is nohard <i>to understand</i> that <i>we</i> are living in the crossfire of all kind of affects. (15) <i>We</i> have to watch television because <i>it</i> also gives us information. (16) <i>But we</i> must not think it as some kind of machine <i>that</i> knows everything. (17) By watching around us and living full life without sitting in front of television every evening <i>we</i> can think independently enough.	(6) T6↓ -	C10
	T6↓ -	C11
	(7) T7 -	C12
	T1↓ -	C13
(10) <i>You</i> must have a strong self-confidence. (11) Don't trust everything that <i>you</i> have been told. (12) Use your own brains and don't sink to the world of TV lies. (13) It is not easy <i>to make opinions</i> even if <i>we</i> don't have the media affecting us. (14) <i>So</i> it is nohard <i>to understand</i> that <i>we</i> are living in the crossfire of all kind of affects. (15) <i>We</i> have to watch television because <i>it</i> also gives us information. (16) <i>But we</i> must not think it as some kind of machine <i>that</i> knows everything. (17) By watching around us and living full life without sitting in front of television every evening <i>we</i> can think independently enough.	(8) T1↓ -	C14
	T8 -	C15
(10) <i>You</i> must have a strong self-confidence. (11) Don't trust everything that <i>you</i> have been told. (12) Use your own brains and don't sink to the world of TV lies. (13) It is not easy <i>to make opinions</i> even if <i>we</i> don't have the media affecting us. (14) <i>So</i> it is nohard <i>to understand</i> that <i>we</i> are living in the crossfire of all kind of affects. (15) <i>We</i> have to watch television because <i>it</i> also gives us information. (16) <i>But we</i> must not think it as some kind of machine <i>that</i> knows everything. (17) By watching around us and living full life without sitting in front of television every evening <i>we</i> can think independently enough.	(9) T9 -	C16
	(10) T1↓ -	C17
	(11) T1↓ -	C18
	(12) T1↓ -	C19
	(13) T10 -	C20
	T1 -	C21
	(14) T11 -	C22
	T1↓ -	C23
	(15) T1↓ -	C24
	T6 -	C25
	(16) T1 -	C26
	T12 -	C27
	(17) T1 -	C28

Figure 7.14 The topic/comment development in Low 1

The topic development in this composition (see Figure 7.14.) does not seem to follow any of Daneš's (1974) patterns clearly. The writer appears to introduce new topics almost continuously. There are only a few cases of his tendency to maintain a constant topic: T3 in S2, T1 in S7 and S8, T1 in S10 and S11, T1 in S14 and S15, and again T1 in S16 and 17. Consequently, T1 is the topic that this writer prefers to maintain by referring to it with such words as 'people', 'we', and 'you'. As regards the comments in the composition, Figure 26 shows that each comment appears to add new information. Thus, both the topics and the comments seem to form a list of new ideas, instead of indicating the writer's ability to combine the topic/comment development into an effective flow of information.

A closer study of the topic/comment interrelationship reveals that at the beginning of the second paragraph the comment C6 in S4 repeats the essential content of the comment of S3 (see Figure 7.14.). This fairly common feature of EFL composition writing was also a typical problem with Finnish academic writers in Mauranen's (1992:151) study. (For other similar cases in the low category, see section 7.3.3.5.) The same problem continues in S5 because C7 and C8 hardly add anything new. Even the next two comments in S6 contain virtually nothing new and, besides, C11 remains obscure although in the next three sentences the writer attempts to clarify the claim he makes in S3 by giving an example of 'the manipulation of the TV'.

In the last paragraph, S11 and S12 with their topic/comment relationship elaborate on the idea mentioned in S10, which is seen as the writer's attempt to use the same topic. The comments in S12, S13 and S14 add no new information to the comment in S11. The information in S13 and S14 is messy and even contradictory. The redundancy and the problems that it causes the reader of the text could be avoided by leaving out these two sentences.

The topic/comment development in S15, S16, and S17 contributes to the final conclusion, that of critically selecting what you watch. Bad grammar also affects the low grade of the composition. Despite the flaws mentioned above, this composition is not the weakest representative of the Low category.

Low 2

	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) <i>The TV</i> is a quite new machine and almost every family has got it.	(1) T1	C1
(2) Today it's hard to live without television.	T2	C2
(3) <i>The time</i> flies when you are watching TV.	(2) T3	C3
(4) There is many good programs, animals and history programs on TV.	(3) T4	C4
(5) <i>These</i> are good because they help you to understand the world.	T5	C5
(6) But there is also programs that don't learned anything for you, Dallas and Dynasty, for example.	(4) T6	C6↓
(7) They just give you a model how you should live and dress and how you can be a very rich businessman.	(5) T7	T7 + C7 C8
(8) So these films will show you what kind of people you should have to be.	(6) T8↓	C9
(9) If you don't have enough money, you are nothing.	(7) T8↓	C10
	T5↓	C11
	T5↓	C12
	(8) T8	C13
	T5↓	C10
	(9) T5↓	C14
	T5↓	C15

(10) *You* can't buy the finest clothes because *you* haven't got money to move your hairstyle and *you* don't have such a nice hobbies as *they* in those films have.

(11) It's much more important *to think independently*.

(12) If *you* are not as *all your friends* are, I don't think *that* is a bad thing.

(13) *You* have to say what *you* want to say though *all the others* will disagree with your idea.

(14) Be critical when *you* are watching TV because *television* can't really make you a good busennessman.

(10)	T5↓	-	C16
	T5↓	-	C17
	T5↓	-	C18
	T8	-	C19

(11)	T9	-	C20
------	----	---	-----

(12)	T5	-	C21
------	----	---	-----

	T10	-	C22
--	-----	---	-----

	T11 = T5 + C21 + T10 + C22		
--	----------------------------	--	--

(13)	T5↓	-	C23
------	-----	---	-----

	T5↓	-	C24
--	-----	---	-----

	T12	-	C25
--	-----	---	-----

(14)	T5	-	C4
------	----	---	----

	T1	-	C26
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Figure 7.15 The topic/comment development in Low 2

This writer's way of developing topics varies (see Figure 7.15.). At places she keeps changing topics, as at the beginning of the essay, while at other places she tries to maintain the same topic, as T7 in S5, T5 in S7, S9, and S10. The writer's preference for topic maintenance, her tendency to have a constant topic, is most clearly seen in S9 and S10. Interestingly enough, in S12, the writer picks up a proposition expressed in the previous clauses, which is very unusual among all the writers in the present data, not only in the low category.

Another point worth mentioning is C6 in S4, which becomes the first topic in S5. EFL writers do not seem to use this pattern very often in their compositions. All the other comments except the comments in S12 and S14 add new details to the composition. C4 in S14 is redundant: it simply repeats the idea expressed in the comment of S3 (for other redundant comments in the Low category, see Low 3 and Low 4).

A closer look at the topic/comment development indicates that S1 combines the first two ideas although no relation appears to exist between them. The use of the adjective 'new' and the T2-C2 pair do not seem to belong together. In S2 she claims that it is difficult to live without a TV set. As many other weak writers in this data, she offers ideas that do not find any support either earlier or later in the text. New ideas are often introduced without any further explanations or clarifications.

In the next three paragraphs the writer tries to give reasons for why some programmes are worth watching and others are not. Among the programmes that are good for TV viewers are programmes on animals and history. In S5 she uses the second pattern of Daneš's topical progression, that of a constant topic, which means that the comment of the previous sentence becomes the topic of the following sentence. This pattern is unusual in the present data, also in the higher quality categories. In S5 she gives the reason why those programmes are good, but the comment C7 only repeats the assertion that the programmes are so good, and the subsidiary clause and its comment T7-C8 do not elaborate on what she means by understanding 'the world'.

The next two paragraphs deal with the TV programmes that the writer finds harmful, i.e. Dallas and Dynasty. In S8, S9, and S10 she explicates the model that those two programmes offer to TV viewers. In S10, the comment portion C18,

"because you haven't got money to move your hairstyle", and the topic/comment combination T5-C16 are not reasons for not being able to buy "the finest clothes". Generally speaking, the writer's reasoning in the whole paragraph is very thin and feeble.

The fifth paragraph seems to be badly out of joint because there the writer diverts the reader's attention from the influence of TV to the possibility of thinking independently among your friends. This is where the writer wanders off the title, which is generally a serious fault. In the last paragraph the writer exhorts us to be critical when watching TV by returning to the model that programmes like Dallas and Dynasty may offer to uncritical viewers (see C12 in S7). As regards this link, there seems to be a tendency towards coherence in her composition.

Low 3	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) <i>We</i> have more free-time, holidays than before.	(1) T1↓	- C1
(2) <i>People</i> can go to the cinema, or watching video.	(2) T1↓	- C2
(3) If <i>we</i> have nothing to do <i>we</i> can watch TV.	T1↓	- C5
(4) It isn't always a good idea.	(3) T1↓	- C4
(5) When <i>you</i> are too often at home, <i>you</i> would come more lazy and passive.	(4) T2	- C6
(6) <i>You</i> need not think or move: <i>you</i> just be and watch.	(5) T1↓	- C7
(7) There is <i>many kind of film</i> on TV.	T1↓	- C8
(8) If <i>we</i> watch too much adventure films, <i>normal live</i> is boring.	(6) T1↓	- C9
(9) It is only normal live.	T1↓	- C10
(10) Another point is that if <i>you</i> have some TV heroes <i>you</i> give up your own way of think and <i>you</i> only think what <i>you</i> want to be and <i>you</i> live like your stars unreal world.	(7) T3	- C11
(11) It's good that <i>many families</i> can talk and criticise about TV programs.	(8) T1	- C12
(12) If <i>we</i> take good care of our own thinking and are critical TV is not dangerous, and <i>it</i> make not difficult to think independently.	(9) T4↓	- C13
	(10) T4↓	- C14
	(10) T1↓	- C15
	T1↓	- C16
	T1↓	- C17
	T1↓	- C18
	T1↓	- C19
	(11) T5	- C20
	(12) T1↓	- C21
	T1↓	- C22
	T6↓	- C23
	T6↓	- C24

Figure 7.16 The topic/comment development in Low 3

The topic/comment development in Low 3 is shown in Figure 7.16. The sentences in this composition seem to form a list of ideas rather than a text. The writer approaches the writing assignment mainly from the TV viewer's point of view. He keeps referring to the same topic with such words as 'we', 'people', and 'you'. He is, however, unable to elaborate the topics he introduces, and that is why the composition remains a list of ideas. The strategy that he employs is the one that Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) call the 'knowledge-telling strategy' (for Bereiter and Scardamalia, see sections 2.3.2 and 8.2).

A closer look at the topic/comment development reveals that the relationship between S1 and S2 is not consistent, but neither of these analyses brings out this inconsistency. Both the figure above and the diagram of the topical progression (for Low 3, see Appendix 3), reveal the monotonous effect of topic development in this composition. Figure 7.16. indicates the writer's tendency to employ a constant topic, that is, the first pattern of Daneš's (1974) topical progression.

As regards the comment development in Low 3, the writer keeps introducing new ideas in the comment portions almost continuously. The only exception is T4 in S8, which becomes C14 in S9, though the writer repeats the notion of 'normal live' there. The comment development only strengthens the monotonous picture created by the topic development in the essay.

Another reason for the low grade of the composition is unsuccessful paragraph division. For example, the first two paragraphs should have been combined because the comment portions in the sentences in the second paragraph seem to be a continuation of the comment in the first sentence. The first and the second paragraphs are examples of what Wikborg (1990:143) calls an unjustified change of paragraph "when it functions neither as a (sub)topic-shift marker nor as a rhetorical means of highlighting a statement or set of statements".

The third and fourth paragraphs would have provided a better basis for argumentation if they had been put together. S11 in the fourth paragraph appears suddenly, without any warning to the reader. The last paragraph is a single-sentence paragraph. According to Wikborg (1990:143), single-sentence paragraphs are used in well-formed texts to give particular emphasis to a point. However, such a rhetorical consideration does not explain the paragraph structure of this text. Wikborg (1990:143-144) claims that a coherence break of this type in her data is explained by a feeling among many Swedish students that the shorter the paragraphs, the more readable the text. The same claim may apply to Finnish EFL writers' way of structuring paragraphs. Some Finnish students seem to follow the conventions of popular journalism, just as many Swedish students do in Wikborg's (1990) study, in which very short paragraphs are the norm. This brevity may also be the result of some foreign language teachers' advice to weaker student writers to avoid over-long compositions for fear of mistakes. The topic/comment development in the last paragraph is effective as such but the problem there is that the conclusion comes unexpectedly to the reader because the writer seems to be unable to lead his reader up to it in the previous paragraphs.

Low 4

	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) Today <i>we</i> have many TV channels to watch.	(1) T1↓ -	C1
(2) <i>We</i> get a lot of information from different corners of the world.	(2) T1↓ -	C2
(3) <i>That</i> is a good thing for our brains.	(3) T2= T1 + C2	
(4) <i>We</i> have to use them.	(4) T1 -	C3
(5) <i>Every TV channel</i> does give us a modell of thinking.	(5) T3↓ -	C4
(6) <i>It</i> in a way tells us what we should think.	(6) T3↓ -	C4
(7) But nowadays <i>we</i> have lot of TV channels and <i>every channel</i> has its own point of view.	(7) T1↓ -	C1
	T3 -	C4

(8) <i>We must choose.</i> (9) <i>We must use our brains and select the information.</i> (10) <i>We must produce our own opinion on each matter.</i>	(8) T1↓ - C5
	(9) T1↓ - C3 + C5
	(10) T1↓ - C3 + C5
(11) <i>When we see two reports about one thing: We see one on Worldnet. - (12) It is made in USA and we see the other on Moscow TV.</i> (13) <i>Those reports are certainly different.</i> (14) <i>We must make up our minds and choose what believe.</i> (15) <i>We cannot one-eyedly just believe in one and forget the other report.</i> (16) <i>We must think and decide.</i> (17) <i>And we must do in ourselves.</i>	(11) T1↓ - C9
	T1↓ - C10↓
	(12) T4 + C11
	T1↓ - C12↓
	(13) T6 + C13
	(14) T1↓ - C14
	(15) T1↓ - C15
	T1↓ - C16
	(16) T1↓ - C17
	(17) T1↓ - C18
(18) <i>So in my opinion TV doesn't make it more difficult to think independently.</i> (19) <i>It makes it a must.</i>	(18) T7↓ - C19
	(19) T7↓ - C20

Figure 7.17 The topic/comment development in Low 4

As can be seen in Figure 7.17., the writer of Low 4 has a strong tendency to maintain T1 as a constant topic throughout her composition. The topic/comment development in this composition seems to vary. In the first paragraph the writer combines the first two topics and comments successfully to make the information flow well (see Figure 7.17.). T2 in S3 picks up the proposition of the previous sentence. There is a similar case in Low 2. In S4 the writer continues with the constant topic 'we', T1, which she introduced in S1.

After the introductory paragraph, she begins to explicate the comment she mentioned in S1, 'many TV channels to watch'. The information in S5, S6, and S7, both in the topics and in the comments repeats itself. The use of redundant information was also discovered to be a typical feature of the writers of Low 2 and Low 3 (see above). S8 with its T1-C6 combination brings up the idea of 'choosing', which T1-C3+C6 elaborates by combining the ideas of 'using our brains' and 'selecting the information'. T1-C3+C5 in S10 again indicates the writer's tendency to use redundancy. In other words, the topic/comment development in her composition progresses very slowly.

The following paragraph illustrates the idea that she introduced in the comment of S10. In the third paragraph the writer gives an example. She tends to use the same topic almost exceptionally throughout the paragraph, that is, a constant topic. S12 picks up the comment of the previous sentence as its topic, C10-T4, which is unusual in the present data. Surprisingly, the same happens in S13, where the writer uses C9 as the topic of the sentence. Towards the end of the paragraph in S14-S17, the writer returns to the constant topic 'we'. The topic/comment development works well. But the writer's inability to construct explicit sentences disturbs the reader's task (see e.g. S14 and S17). In the last paragraph in S18 and S19, to sum up her ideas, the writer changes her point of view, from that of the TV viewer to TV. The writer's praiseworthy effort in S18 to establish a clear and vigorous conclusion seems to succeed.

Low 5

(1) *Television* is maybe the most effective machine that a *human being* has developed. (2) You can hear sounds on the radio and see pictures on the paper. (3) On television *sound* and *picture* are together and *that* makes television so effective.

(4) Almost *everybody* has own TV. (5) *People* watch all kind of programmes from serious documents and news to soapoperas like Dallas ans so on. (6) *The news* is the most effective programme. (7) Almost *everybody* watch the news. (8) *They* want to know what is going on here.

(9) *Six blacks* died and *several* injured when *the army* suddenly began to shoot. (10) At the same time *pictures* are rushing into your minds. (11) *White soldiers* are shooting black kids. (12) *People* are crying for help. (13) *Television* not only give you information but also tries, depending on situations, to change your own opinions. (14) You can find a good example of this in politics. (15) You haven't really thought about voting anybody. (16) But though you curiously watch that evenings programme *which* shows candidates' interviews, *some of them* might effect you that you rush out of your room to vote just him. (17) And you could be very disappointed of your decision afterwards.

(18) *Television* also give you everything ready: in a nice waterproof packet. (19) You can get every details of Irak and Irans war, year by year. (20) But *it* also makes you think and *that* is the most important thing.

(21) There is *no real answer* to this question. (22) I think that *everybody* should have own independent ideas about all kind of matters. (23) TV gives information and readymade opinions. (24) But what you are going to do with it is up to you. (25) *Everyone* has to make its own decisions.

	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1)	T1	C1
	T2	C2
(2)	T3	C3
(3)	T4	
	T5	C4
	T6=T4 + T5 + C4	
(4)	T7	C5
(5)	T3	C6
(6)	T8	C7
(7)	T7↓	C8
(8)	T7↓	C9
(9)	T9	C10
	T10	C11
	T11	C12
(10)	T5	C13
(11)	T12	C14
(12)	T13	C15
(13)	T1↓	C16
	T1↓	C17
(14)	T3↓	C18
(15)	T3↓	C19
(16)	T3↓	C20
	T14	C21
	T15	C21
	T3↓	C22
(17)	T3↓	C23
(18)	T1	C24
(19)	T3	C25
(20)	T1	C26
	T16=T1 + C26	
(21)	T17	C27
(21)	T3↓	C28
(22)	T3	C29
(23)	T1	C30
(24)	T3↓	C29
(25)	T3↓	C29

Figure 7.18 The topic/comment development in Low 5

Generally speaking, the topic development in Low 5 is more varied than in Low 3 or Low 4, for example. As regards the topic/comment in S1-S3, the relationship seems to work well. T6 in S3 picks up the proposition mentioned earlier in the sentence, which, however, repeats the information given in C1, and thus sounds redundant. In S4-S8 the focus is not quite clear, which can be seen as a jumping effect in the topic/comment development in Figure 7.18. Bad grammar, especially in S4 and S7, also disturbs the reader.

The third paragraph starts with an example, which is useful and illustrative as a linguistic device. The writer returns to the information she mentioned in S3, the effectiveness of TV as a transmitter of information. She gives

a news flash to serve as an example of such effectiveness. The topics and the comments in S9-S12 vary. The topic/comment development in these sentences seems to function well, with the comments adding new information to the topics. In S13 with its constant topic, 'television', and the comments, C16 and C17, and especially C17, the writer finally reaches the topic that she is expected to discuss in her composition. But in the example to illustrate the influence of television on its viewers, the writer changes her focus to the viewer. In the rest of the paragraph, she attempts to stick to a constant topic.

C24 in S18 adds a new aspect to the content, which is exemplified by C25 in S19. C26 in S20, however, presents a contrast, which is strengthened in T16. T16 picks up the proposition given in the previous sentence, which is the second case of this type of topic/comment development in this composition. The idea could, however, have been further elaborated.

S21 in the last paragraph, the conclusion, introduces a new topic. The order of the next two sentences S22 and S23 could have been switched: first S23, which is a summary of the two previous paragraphs, then S22. The use of repetitive comments in S22, S24, and S25 is superfluous. Low 5 is not the poorest representative of the Low category, although it is uneven in places.

Low 6	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) <i>The television is today the largest medium in the world.</i>	(1) T1	- C1
(2) <i>The news comes to our homes in few seconds.</i>	(2) T2	- C2
(3) <i>People watch television more and more every day.</i>	(3) T3	- C3
(4) <i>News and entertainment comes from TV.</i>	(4) T2	- C4
(5) <i>They have to see it daily, because reading papers is more difficult.</i>	(5) T3	- C5
(6) <i>It's easy to the TV companies to make watchers think about the information that is useful to some country.</i>	(6) T5	- C6
(7) <i>People lost their independence of their king and they just become slaves of television, who can't live without it.</i>	(7) T6	- C7
(8) <i>TV is like a drug.</i>	(7) T7	- C8
(9) <i>People have to get it always more.</i>	(7) T3!	- C9
(10) <i>TV reporters are heroes in watchers' minds, although and they only pick up some news and read them.</i>	(8) T8	- C10
(11) <i>Actors become youth idols.</i>	(8) T1	- C11
(12) <i>People don't anymore go to the theater.</i>	(9) T3	- C12
(13) <i>They rather stay at home and watch soapoperas like Dallas and Dynasty.</i>	(10) T9	- C13
(14) <i>In Finland we must change TV programs into higher level.</i>	(10) T10	- C14
(15) <i>We could have less commercial rubbish and we could use the money for programs which make people think about living and being here in the world.</i>	(11) T11	- C15
(16) <i>If the style don't change, I am sure that watching TV makes it more difficult to think independently.</i>	(12) T3!	- C16
	(13) T3!	- C17
	(14) T12!	- C18
	(15) T12!	- C19
	T12!	- C20
	T13	- C21
	(16) T14	- C22
	T1	- C23
		- C24

Figure 7.19. The topic/comment development in Low 6.

The general impression of the topic/comment development in Low 6 (see Figure 7.19.) is one of a constantly shifting focus. Both the topic development and the comment development in this composition seem continuously to add new elements to the essay. Consequently, the reader's task becomes more demanding.

The writer appears to change the focus all the time. He is not sure how to arrange the focus. C1 in S1 is somewhat ambiguous because of the word 'medium'. In S4 T2 appears again, combined with T4. The comments C2 in S2 and C4 in S4 are repetitive. These ideas could have been expressed in one sentence. Similarly, C5 in S5 adds almost nothing new to C3 in S3. Other such repetitive comments were discovered in the preceding compositions in the Low category (see also section 7.3.3.5). Moreover, the topic of the subordinate clause T5, 'reading papers', is unmotivated because the writer never develops it; the connection with watching TV is implicit. The contrast between watching TV and reading is an implied one. Despite the constant topic T3, which is badly disrupted by T4 and T5 in S4, the other topics change all the time. The writer seems to jump from one idea to another, which disturbs the reader.

The second paragraph is very complicated to analyse. The reference 'to some country' in C7 in S6 is ambiguous, and so is C8 in S7. The topic/comment relationship between T3-C9, T3-C10, and T9-C11 is well-functioning though. The analysis cannot reveal ambiguity of this kind. The T1-C12 pair in S8 is effective, and although C12 in S9 repeats the content of C12, it only seems to clarify the case. The rest of the paragraph looks messy although the topic/comment relationship in S10 seems to work well despite grammatical flaws such as 'news' and 'them'. In S10 the writer attempts to use a constant topic T10, but only for a short while. The word 'actors' in T11 in S11 looks strange, which is indicative of the writer's restricted command of vocabulary. Thinking of the title of the writing assignment, the T3-C17 pair in S12 and the T3-C18 relationship in S13 show the writer's difficulty in sticking to the point.

Only in the last paragraph does the writer approach the task that he was meant to deal with. The topic/comment development, and especially the constant topic 'we' in S14 and S15, make the information flow without any major problems but, unluckily, bad grammar and some vague expressions such as 'living and being here in the world' disturb the reader's task. The topic/comment development T14-C22 and T1-C23 in the conclusion that he draws in S16 is effective, especially because he returns to the idea of 'watching television' in it.

Low 7

(1) *Television is the most important part of our communication today.* (2) *People watch it more and more every year.* (3) *The television is the centre of community in many families.* (4) *It is used to day-caring children and family joint together around television on Sundays.*

(5) *The advertisements on TV try to influence on our subconscious.* (6) *In the same way television programs influence us.* (7) *Violence films make us our independently thinking useless, because everything has been*

TOPIC

COMMENT

(1)	T1	-	C1
(2)	T2	-	C2
(3)	T1!	-	C3
(4)	T1!	-	C4
	T3	-	C5
(5)	T4	-	C6
(6)	T5	-	C7
(7)	T6	-	C8
	T7	-	C9

thinking ready in the television. (8) <i>If we read books we has to use our imagination.</i> (9) <i>When we watch the set there isn't that problem.</i> (10) <i>The television kills our imagination because we watch and listen to it.</i> (11) <i>The independently thinking is based on our imagination.</i>	(8)	T2↓	-	C10
		T2↓	-	C11
	(9)	T2↓	-	C12
		T8	-	C13
	(10)	T1	-	C14
		T2	-	C15
	(11)	T9	-	C16
(12) <i>The development of the human race is always need a lot of thinking and imagination.</i> (13) <i>The development may change cause the power of the television.</i>	(12)	T10↓	-	C17
	(13)	T10↓	-	C18

Figure 7.20 The topic/comment development in Low 7

Low 7 is the shortest composition in the whole set. It comprises only 141 words. Maybe because of its brevity, the topic/comment progression in this composition is indicative of the writer's inability to develop what he wants to say. In the first paragraph (see Figure 7.20.) the writer attempts to maintain a constant topic, T1. A closer look at the topic/comment development in Low 7 reveals that right at the outset, the first comment C1 adds unclear information to the topic. The topic/comment relationship T2-C2 works, but the following comment portion C3 in S3 is poorly expressed, as are C4 and C5 in S4. In addition to the topic/comment development, the writer also has lexical problems such as 'the centre of community' and 'joint'.

In the second paragraph the writer gives his arguments for how television reduces TV viewers' ability to think independently. The topic/comment development in S5 and S6 seems to work. In S7 the writer restricts TV's bad influence on viewers to 'violence films'. In S8 he contrasts watching TV with reading books. Here the topic/comment pair seems to function well, but in S9 the comment C13 limps. In S10 the first topic/comment pair T1-C14 works, but again the writer has difficulties in combining the main clause with the subordinate clause. The comment C15 in S10 is empty of content. The topic/comment relationship does not explicate the reasons for TV killing viewers' imagination; it only creates false expectations in the reader. Thus the writer's argumentation is feeble.

The writer draws a pompous and loose conclusion by claiming that the power of television may even influence the development of the human race. Although the conclusion is based on the content of C16 in S11, it still sounds far-fetched. Moreover, there are certain lexical problems adding to the ambiguity of his reasoning such as 'is always need' and 'cause the power of the television'.

Low 8		TOPIC		COMMENT
(1) <i>Everybody watch television more or less, some people watch almost everything that comes out and some people just want to know what happens and they prefer watching news and weather.</i> (2) <i>Everybody: children, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged people,</i>	(1)	T1	-	C1
		T2	-	C2
		T3	-	C3
	(2)	T1↓	-	C4

old ones - *they all* watch tv. (3) *They all* do different kinds of work.

(4) I think *television* doesn't make anything if *you* watch it or not. (5) *It* gives you examples and ideas about everything and often *it* really gives how *you* should think about something but I doubt if *anybody* does as is said on TV. (6) *Most people* can think independently and *they* take ideas about what *they* have seen on television.

(7) *Children* and *teenagers* are a different thing. (8) *They* can't decide themselves. (9) *They* often think as is said on TV. (10) *Teenagers* are the worst thing. (11) *They* watch television and videos alone all days long and because *they* don't have a sense about right and wrong and *they* don't realize that violence films are bullshit. (12) *They* do the same things as *it's* on the films. (13) *They* smoke, use drugs, drink alcohol, fight with others just as *they* have seen on films.

(14) So *television* does make you think as *you* do. (15) *Teenagers* are a negative group in this subject.

(3)	T1↓	-	C5
(4)	T4	-	C6
	T5	-	C7
(5)	T4↓	-	C8
	T4↓	-	C9
	T5	-	C10
	T6	-	C11
(6)	T7↓	-	C12
	T7↓	-	C13
	T7↓	-	C14
(7)	T8	-	C15
	T9	-	C15
(8)	T10↓	-	C16
(9)	T10↓	-	C17
(10)	T9↓	-	C18
(11)	T9↓	-	C19
	T9↓	-	C20
	T9↓	-	C21
	T11	-	C22
(12)	T9↓	-	C23
(13)	T9↓	-	C24
	T9↓	-	C25
(14)	T8	-	C26
	T5	-	C27
(15)	T9	-	C28

Figure 7.21 The topic/comment development in Low 8

Figure 7.21. indicates that the writer of Low 8 attempts to maintain T1, T4, T7, and T9 as constant topics. As regards the comments in her composition, they vary. The first paragraph in its entirety keeps repeating the same information, and, besides, it also sounds very banal. The writer attempts to maintain a constant topic in the first paragraph. However, she uses a variety of words such as 'everybody', 'some people' and 'they' to refer to the viewer in the first paragraph, whereas in the second paragraph she uses words such as 'you', 'anybody', 'most people', and 'they'. To avoid redundancy and verbosity, the information in the first paragraph could have been condensed into a single sentence.

The topic/comment development in the second paragraph seems more solid than in the first, despite its bad grammar. The writer's tendency to maintain constant topics T4 and T7 strengthens the backbone of the paragraph. Her inconsistent way of focusing on the ideas, by using the pronouns 'you', 'anybody', 'they' and the expression 'most people', impairs the topic/comment development in the composition.

In the third paragraph the writer raises the question of children and teenagers as critical spectator groups. In this paragraph the writer is more consistent in her way of developing topics and comments. But there are some problems such as the information spread into two sentences S8 and S9, which could have been combined by beginning with 'Because they can't decide themselves, they . . .' The comments in S10-S13 add new information to the discussion of the other spectator group, teenagers. The writer's tendency to use a constant topic to refer to teenagers (T9) gives the reader a more solid impression

of the topic/comment development in the latter section of this paragraph. But grammatical problems such as 'as it's on the films' affect the readability of the composition negatively. The last paragraph remains obscure, because the comments of S14 and S15 are poorly expressed. Furthermore, there seems to be a contradiction between S4 and S14, which cannot be seen in the analysis.

Low 9	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) <i>Television</i> is the most effective medium on the Earth. (2) <i>It</i> reaches almost every man these days. (3) <i>This incredible machine</i> pushes out commercials, news from all over world, movies, everykind of music, sport and so on.	(1) T1↓ - (2) T1↓ - (3) T1↓ -	C1 C1 C2
(4) And of course now during the Olympic Games, <i>people</i> do even more sitting in front of the television screen. (5) I must say that <i>it</i> is just great. (6) <i>You</i> can always see the happenings in your own living-room from this little box.	(4) T2 - (5) T3 = T2 + C3 (6) T2↓ -	C3 C2
(7) <i>A man</i> watch television almost all his life. (8) <i>The programmes</i> only change when <i>he</i> gets older. (9) <i>Watching TV</i> is much more different than <i>reading books</i> is. (10) <i>You</i> don't have to use your energy for reading. (11) <i>It</i> is done for you. (12) I think that <i>this</i> is the reason why <i>people</i> should slow down watching TV. (12) It's not too late to <i>make things better</i> , but the increasing number of <i>videos</i> doesn't make the future seem so good.	(7) T2↓ - (8) T4 - (9) T5 - (10) T6 - (11) T6↓ - (12) T7 - T8 -	C4 C5 C6 C7 C8 C9 C10 C11 C12 C13

Figure 7.22 The topic/comment development in Low 9

This composition is one of the shortest in this category. It only comprises two paragraphs. The writer starts the first paragraph with a constant topic to describe television as the most effective means of communication (see Figure 7.22.). The comment parts C1, C2, and C3 add well-suited elements of new information to the topic. T3 in S5 picks up the entire proposition given in S4. In the following sentence, S5, the writer repeats the topic mentioned earlier in the fourth sentence. The comments C1-C3 in the first paragraph merely add to the description of the power of television.

The next paragraph consists of a variety of topics. The writer seems to jump from one idea to another without developing her ideas at all, e.g. T2-C4 in S7, T4-C5 and T2-C6 in S8, T5-C7 and T6-C8 in S9. In the comment portions C11 and C12 of S11, the writer becomes slightly more explicit as regards the title under which she is supposed to write. There is an end-weight in the writer's argumentation, which, however, is never made clearly explicit and which, unfortunately is aggravated by an undeveloped topic, T8.

This writer never appears to reach the stage that she is supposed to work at, that is, to answer the question expressed in the title of the writing task. In general, the writer's ability to produce an expository piece of writing is deficient.

Low 10

(1) *That* is right. (2) Nowadays it is more difficult to think independently when you are watching TV. (3) Because most of TV's programmes are given or try to give answers to questions. (4) And *this* is very wrong.

(5) Maybe the older people can analyse TV's programmes and they know what is right and what is wrong. (6) But *this* is not so easy when we are talking about a young people. (7) Some of TV's programmes are very good, news, for example. (8) News is given a lot of things that we can think independently and that is very good. (9) Everyone knows that it is very important to think ownself. opinion it is more useful to read than to watch the TV. (10) And I think we have to do it more than we do now.

(11) When we are watching TV it is so easy to read and many people doesn't want or don't try to think what the TV says.

(12) But when we are reading books or newspapers we have to think more. (13) And in my opinion it is more useful to read than watch the TV.

	TOPIC	COMMENT
(1)	T1	- C1
(2)	T2	- C2
	T3	- C3
(3)	T4	- C4
(4)	T5 = T4 + C4	
(5)	T6	- C5
	T6	- C6
(6)	T7 = T6 + C6	
	T8	- C7
(7)	T9	- C8
(8)	T10	- C9
	T8	- C10
	T11 = T10 + C9 + T8 + C10	
(9)	T12	- C11
	T13	- C12
(10)	T8↓	- C13
	T8↓	- C14
(11)	T8	- C15
	T14	- C16
	T15	- C17
	T16	- C18
(12)	T8↓	- C19
	T8↓	- C20
(13)	T17	- C21

Figure 7.23 The topic/comment development in Low 10

A first look at Figure 7.23. shows the reader that the topic/comment development in Low 10 gives an impression of constantly shifting focus. The composition begins with one of the attention-securing devices that, according to Scarcella (1984:677), skilful writers employ to orient their readers, e.g. a short, abrupt element, in the form of an exclamation. However, in S1 it does not seem to work, although the writer clarifies it in S2. Another deficiency in Low 10 appears to be the writer's inability to arrange the information being presented. The information in the second and third sentences should have been combined because S3, the subordinate clause, clearly clarifies why it is, according to this writer, more difficult to think independently. The comment portion C4 is grammatically poorly expressed and as regards the content, inadequately put. The writer should have further elaborated the reasons to make her claim better understood to the reader. As it is, some of the content remains unclear to the reader, e.g. '. . . are given or try to give answers to questions'. Topic T5 in S4 picks up the proposition in the previous sentence, which, as such, is an effective device. Other such cases appear in Low 2, Low 4, twice in Low 5, and Low 9.

Paragraph division seems to be problematic for the writer of this composition (see section 7.3.3.9). Contentwise S5 and S6 should belong to the first paragraph. T6 in S6 picks up a proposition mentioned in the previous sentence. The latter topic/comment pair T7-C8 is clumsy. S7 seems to be in balance as regards its topic/comment relationship. That is where the second paragraph ought to begin. T10 in S8 picks up a proposition given earlier in the same sentence. This type of topic/comment development is unusual in the present data. But the content of S8 not only shows poor thinking but is also indicative of the writer's poor command of grammar. C12-C15 in S9 and S10 show the writer's attempt to emphasize the

importance of thinking. The topic/comment development seems to remain very loose. The last paragraph shows an attempt to build to a conclusion. Despite the complex and messy S11, the comments in S12 and S13 add new information to the topics being discussed.

Low 11		TOPIC	COMMENT
(1) I think that <i>watching television</i> makes it more difficult to think independently in many cases. (2) If <i>young child</i> watch film about wild west and see how ugly screaming indian kills young white girl. (3) It is sure that he don't like indians after that. (4) <i>He</i> don't know say facts about indians and wild west, so it is natural that <i>he</i> believes what <i>he</i> sees. (5) When <i>he</i> gets older, <i>he</i> perhaps learns that <i>he</i> has some hard feelings against indians.	(1)	T1	- C1
	(2)	T2↓	- C2
	(3)	T2↓	- C3
	(4)	T2↓	- C4
		T2↓	- C5
		T2↓	- C6
	(5)	T2↓	- C7
		T2↓	- C8
		T2↓	- C9
(6) In situation like above, <i>television</i> makes it very difficult to think independently. (7) Of course, if <i>you</i> are a bit intelligent and civilized <i>it</i> have no effect on you, but <i>it</i> has on young child. (8) So it is important that <i>young children</i> don't watch television very much. (9) If <i>he</i> does then it is important that <i>he</i> can have many kinds of information from it. (10) So <i>we</i> have to get rid of those poor wildwest, ganster and soap opera programs and <i>we</i> have to get good programs to television.(11) Big TV companys, do <i>you</i> hear me?	(6)	T1	- C1
	(7)	T3	- C10
		T1↓	- C11
		T1↓	- C12
	(8)	T2↓	- C13
	(9)	T2↓	- C14
		T2↓	- C15
	(10)	T4↓	- C16
		T4↓	- C17
	(11)	T5	- C18

Figure 7.24 The topic/comment development in Low 11

Figure 7.24. shows that the topic development in this composition attempts to follow Daneš's (1974) topical progression of a constant topic. Each of the comments adds new information to the topics. After introducing the topic of watching television, the writer takes a stand as regards the question in the title of the writing task. He approaches the assignment by taking a young child as an example. All through the first paragraph he maintains the same topic, referring to it by 'young child' or 'he'. Thus the writer sticks to Daneš's second pattern of topical progression, that of a constant topic, throughout the rest of the first paragraph. The comment portions add new information to the topics, and unlike so many other writers in the low category, this writer does not employ repetitive comments. But to make the topic/comment relationship function more effectively, the content of S2 and S3 need to be combined. The text does not run smoothly from S3 to S4 either. S4 would have needed a sentence-initial conjunction such as 'because' to make the text run more clearly. These are features that the analysis does not reveal.

What strikes the reader's eye most is the writer's inability to form more complex sentences to make the information run smoothly in the text. Consequently, linking sentences to each other is the writer's major deficiency. In

addition to that lack, bad grammar also affects the poor quality of the composition, e.g. 'if young child watch' and 'he don't like'.

At the beginning of the second paragraph in S6, the writer sums up what he has claimed above. In S7 he addresses the influence of television from a different angle, from the point of view of a more intelligent and civilized person. In S7, the T1-C12 relationship indicates that the writer returns to the example that he discussed in the previous paragraph, which is somewhat repetitive, although it is here used to emphasize the contrast. In C13 of S8 the writer approaches something essential to discuss, although the poverty of his linguistic reasoning skills can be seen in S9 and S10. The writer gives suggestions as to how to improve the situation but he does not expound the suggestions. That is why 'many kinds of information' in C15 of S9 and 'good programs' in C17 of S10 remain obscure. The reader does not know what he means by them. In the last sentence, S11, the writer appeals to big TV companies. The sentence as such is an effective attention-securing device. On the basis of this analysis Low 11 is not the weakest composition in its quality category.

Section 7.1 above addressed the way in which EFL students organize information in their compositions representing three quality categories (High, Mid, and Low). The analysis observed the following procedure. First, some general remarks were made about the topic/comment development in a given composition and this was followed by a detailed descriptive analysis of the topic/comment flow in the composition. This thorough and detailed analysis appeared to bring out differences in the way these EFL writers develop topics and comments in their compositions. Interestingly enough, all the compositions within a certain quality category did not seem to be homogeneous (see, for instance, High 3, which was the weakest in the High category. Mid 4 and Mid 9 were better than the other compositions in the Mid category. Low 3 was the weakest, whereas Low 1 and Low 6 were the best compositions in the Low category).

7.2 Topic development in the High, Mid, and Low categories

This section discusses the findings of the present study in more quantitative terms. The discussion of the findings will be related to the three research questions presented in section 6.2. The second research task was to determine whether there is a relationship between rated essay quality (in three quality groups: High, Mid, and Low) and topic development in the EFL compositions (for the assessment procedure, see section 6.1.3).

Section 7.2 first addresses the findings regarding the topic development in the EFL compositions by relating them to the quality assessments given by the two experienced EFL teachers. The findings will be discussed in the following order. Section 7.2.1 illustrates the approach to the study of the topical depth dimension by looking at the percentages of the topics falling into separate depth levels in three sample compositions. Then, section 7.2.2 extends the exploration to the three quality categories, in which the means and standard deviations between the

groups will be analysed. The correlation between topical depth and writing quality will be tested by computing the coefficient of contingency as shown in section 7.2.3. The aim of section 7.2.4 is to illustrate the topical depth patterns in each quality category and try to relate them to writing quality. Section 7.2.5 relates the topic shift phenomenon to quality assessment. Section 7.2.6 sums up the findings concerning how the EFL writers develop topics in their compositions. Section 7.2.7 addresses some aspects related to the reliability and the validity of the analysis.

7.2.1 Illustrative comparison of topical depth in Texts A, B, and C

Table 7.1. shows the topical depth dimension in the three compositions that have been chosen to represent the corresponding quality categories: High (Text A), Mid (Text B), and Low (Text C). As will be recalled (see section 6.2.1.7), the topical depth dimension indicates the number of successive sequential progressions between sentence topics. The figures are expressed in percentages. The use of percentages made the compositions comparable with each other, irrespective of possible variations in length. Thus they provide directly comparable information about the topical depth in each composition. One of the purposes of this preliminary exploration was to illustrate the differences between the compositions in the different quality categories.

Table 7.1 Comparison of topical depth in Texts A, B, and C

TEXT A (High)	TEXT B (Mid)	TEXT C (Low)
TD 1 3/29 10.3%	TD 1 6/25 4.0%	TD 1 18/24 75.0%
TD 2 1/29 3.5%	TD 2 10/25 40.0%	TD 2 4/24 16.7%
TD 3 1/29 3.5%	TD 3 4/25 16.0%	TD 3 2/24 8.3%
TD 4 13/29 44.6%	TD 4 6/25 24.0%	(100.0%)
TD 5 1/29 3.5%	TD 5 3/25 12.0%	
TD 6 2/29 6.9%	TD 6 1/25 4.0%	
TD 7 1/29 3.5%	(100.0%)	
TD 8 1/29 3.5%		
TD 9 1/29 3.5%		
TD 10 2/29 7.0%		
TD 11 3/29 10.3%		
(100.0%)		

Table 7.1. indicates the differences of length in the three compositions fairly clearly. Text A represents the best quality category. Text B belongs to the mid-quality group, whereas Text C was judged as poor by the experienced ESL teachers. The best writer expands the composition over to eleven topical depth levels, whereas the topics in the mid-quality writer's composition go down to six topical depth levels. Text C remains at a very superficial level as regards topical depth, and in fact represents the lowest extreme in this dimension. The writer is only able to extend his topics to cover three topical depth levels. A more concrete idea of the percentages of the topics falling into the various topical depth levels

will be obtained by exploring the compositions analysed by topical structure analysis in Figures 6.2., 6.3., and 6.4., and by investigating topical progression in Figures 6.5., 6.6., and 6.7. in section 6.2.1.8.

The writer of Text A starts his composition by presenting the problem of whether watching TV is dangerous and whether it reduces one's ability to think independently. Already at the end of the first paragraph the writer already mentions some conditions on which watching TV does not reduce the viewer's independence. In the second paragraph the writer emphasizes the idea of choosing what you watch on TV. In the next paragraph the writer goes on clarifying his ideas as regards the choice of programmes. Finally in the last paragraph the writer sums up the solution. Text A seems to fall neatly into paragraphs.

The topical depth levels show how skilfully the writer develops his ideas. At TD 1 (10.3%) the writer discusses the dangers of watching TV. The next dominant topical depth level is TD 4 (44.6%), where the role of the selective TV viewer is dealt with. At TD 11 (10.3%) some TV programmes are criticized for not having to do with real life. In the continuation, after developing his ideas successfully, judging from the excellent grade that Text A was given, the writer returns to the TV viewer who chooses TV programmes carefully to avoid becoming 'a slave of the box'. On the basis of the previous discussion it is suggested that *the various functions of TV and the selective viewer* form the discourse topic of Text A.

In Text B almost half of the topics (44%) belong to the first two topical depth levels. The writer discusses the dangers of watching TV. There are several references to TV viewers. The fourth topical depth level comprises 24% of the topics. There the dangers that children have in watching TV are discussed in contrast to adults as TV viewers. The discourse topic of Text B could be *the power of TV as a means of communication and children's vulnerability to TV*.

Text B is shorter than Text A. The writer of Text B is not able to develop his ideas as thoroughly as the writer of Text A. Although it does not necessarily entail quality (see also Linnarud 1986; Lindeberg 1988) length tends to correlate with quality. Text B gives an impression of a rather rambling and haphazard structure of topic development as compared to Text A.

According to Table 7.1., the majority of the topics (75.0 %) in Text C fall into the first category (TD1), where the writer mainly deals with TV viewers by referring to them as 'we', 'people', and 'you'. The other two minor topical depth levels in Text C cover watching TV (TD 2 16.7 %), on the one hand, and people's normal life (TD 3 8.3 %), on the other. This finding corroborates the observation that poor writers develop ideas in depth much less than good writers (Shaughnessy 1977; Caplan and Keech 1980; Lindeberg 1985; Lindeberg 1988). The length of the composition may also prevent the writer from developing his thoughts as well as he might in a longer composition. As regards the length of a composition, there may be a certain threshold below which it is difficult to write a good essay (Takala, personal comment). Instead of developing any of the ideas put forth, the writer seems to offer a mere list of ideas (for Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987 on 'knowledge-telling strategies', see section 2.3.2). According to, for instance, Bander's (1978) definition of expository text (see section 2.2), its basic purpose is the exposition and the explanation of new concepts, facts or states

of things. This is where the writer of Text C fails to meet the requirements placed on an expository text. He is unable to follow the typical pattern of expository writing. The task was to explicate the effects of watching TV rather than only describe TV viewers or their actions. Thus the discourse topic of this composition could simply be *the TV viewer and TV*.

7.2.2 Topical depth in the High, Mid, and Low categories

This section studies the various topical depth levels in each quality in order to ascertain whether there is any correlation between the topical depth patterns and the grades given to the compositions by the ESL teachers. The methodological principles for the chosen procedure were discussed in section 6.2. Table 7.2. illustrates the means and standard deviations in the three different quality categories. In Figure 7.25. the means at TD 1, TD 2-3, TD 4-5, and TD 6+ are displayed by using diagrams. The means and standard deviations have been calculated on the basis of the percentages of the topics falling into the various topical depth levels in all the compositions of a given quality category. First, some general observations will be drawn from Table 7.2., where the means and standard deviations between the three categories are displayed. The means and standard deviations within the different topical depth levels will then be discussed separately.

On the left in Table 7.2. the topical depth levels have been kept apart except for TD 6, which is a merged category. On the right, TD 2 and TD 3 and, correspondingly, TD 4 and TD 5 have been combined to see whether the possible differences in the topical depth levels between the three quality categories would become more distinct.

The first thing that stands out at TD1 in Table 7.2. is the general upward trend of the means when moving from the highest quality group (High TD 1 M 16.4) to the mid-quality group (Mid TD 1 M 20.8), and finally to the lowest quality category (Low TD 1 M 28.5). The topics in the good writers' compositions extend beyond the highest depth levels more than the ones in the mid-quality writers' and the poor writers' essays. The poorer writers' compositions, in particular, show that the writers seem to place more of their topics at TD 1 than anywhere else except at the last topical depth level, which is a merged category.

The standard deviation figures also tend upwards when moving from the highest category towards the lowest category (High SD 6.1, Mid SD 17.7, and Low SD 21.8). At TD 2-3 the mean is the lowest among the better writers' compositions (High M 25.0). This means that the writers in the High category seem to be able to extend their writing deeper as regards the topical depth dimension than the mid-quality (TD 2-3 M 29.1) or poorer (TD 2-3 M 27.2) writers. At TD 4-5 the means show a descending trend (High M 18.4, Mid M 17.7, and Low M 15.0). The best and mid-quality writers' compositions are often longer than those of the poorest writers. Thus the more competent writers have more of their topics still left at this topical depth level.

A similar declining trend concerns the next merged category, TD 6+, (High M 40.2, Mid M 32.4, and Low M 29.3). Accordingly, the better the writers

the deeper they would seem to be able to penetrate in topic development. This indicates the better writers' ability to elaborate on the ideas put forth.

Table 7.2 The means and standard deviations at TD 1, TD 2-3, TD 4-5, and TD 6+ in the High (N=4), Mid (N=9), and Low (N=11) categories

High (N=4)					
	M	SD		M	SD
TD 1	16.4	6.1	TD 1	16.4	6.1
TD 2	9.9	9.5	}	TD 2-3	25.0
TD 3	15.1	15.3			
TD 4	9.8	4.0	}	TD 4-5	18.4
TD 5	8.6	7.4			
TD 6+	40.2	20.1	TD 6+	40.2	20.1
Mid (N=9)					
	M	SD		M	SD
TD 1	20.8	17.7	TD 1	20.8	17.7
TD 2	17.1	12.3	}	TD 2-3	29.1
TD 3	11.9	9.9			
TD 4	10.9	11.0	}	TD 4-5	17.7
TD 5	6.9	6.0			
TD 6+	32.4	11.3	TD 6+	32.4	11.3
Low (N=11)					
	M	SD		M	SD
TD 1	28.5	21.8	TD 1	28.5	21.8
TD 2	16.0	17.0	}	TD 2-3	27.2
TD 3	11.2	9.2			
TD 4	6.9	3.6	}	TD 4-5	15.0
TD 5	8.1	11.3			
TD 6+	29.3	17.9	TD 6+	29.3	17.9

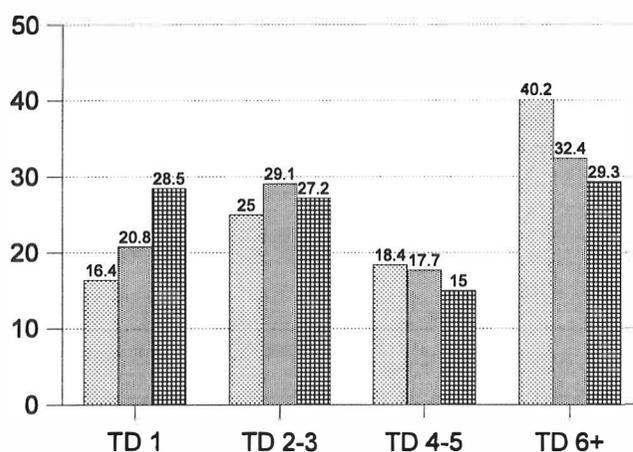


Figure 7.25 The means at TD 1, TD 2-3, TD 4-5, and TD 6+ in the High (N=4), Mid (N=9), and Low (N=11) categories

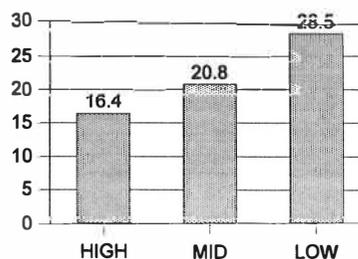
7.2.2.1 The means and standard deviations at TD 1 in the High, Mid, and Low categories

The clear upward trend in the means and standard deviations in the three quality categories is seen in Table 7.3. Figure 7.26 displays the means at TD 1 in the corresponding quality categories. The better the writers are, the relatively fewer of their topics they place at TD 1. The mid-quality writers (Mid M 20.8) place more topics at TD 1 than the best writers (High M 16.4) do. The corresponding mean in the poorer student writer category (Low M 28.5) is the highest, which indicates the poorer writers' inability to develop their ideas in depth. The writers in the low category seem to remain at a fairly superficial level in their topic development. Often it is the very length of their compositions that restricts the topic development. In Figure 7.26 the means in the different quality groups are illustrated.

Table 7.3 The means and standard deviations at TD 1 in the High, Mid, and Low categories

TD 1	M	SD
HIGH	16.4	6.1
MID	20.8	17.7
LOW	28.5	21.8

Figure 7.26 The means at TD 1 in the High, Mid, and Low categories



There is an increase in the standard deviation between compositions written by the better writers (High SD 6.1) and those written by the mid-quality students (Mid SD 17.7) and the poorer writers (Low SD 21.8). The low standard deviation figure in the high category (SD 6.1) shows that the better writers do not differ much in quantitative terms in how they handle topics at a higher depth level. Thus, at TD 1 their handling of the topics is more homogeneous than that of the mid-quality writers (Mid SD 17.7) or the poor ones (Low SD 21.8). In the Mid and Low categories there are much greater differences among the students in how they handle topics at this level.

7.2.2.2 The means and standard deviations at TD 2-3 in the High, Mid, and Low categories

As can be seen in Table 7.4., the writers in the High group (M 25.0) place relatively fewer topics at this level than the writers in the other quality categories. The poorer writers (M 27.2) occupy a mid-position at TD 2-3. In Figure 7.27. the means at TD 2-3 are displayed. Table 7.2. as well as Table 7.3. show that the poorer writers' compositions form the only group where the mean diminishes from TD 1 (M 28.5) to TD 2-3 (M 27.2). This may indicate that the weakest writers are meeting with difficulties in thematic elaboration beyond the base level. After the last merged category, TD 6+, (M 29.3), TD 1 receives most of the Low group topics (M 28.5).

Table 7.4 The means and standard deviations at TD 2-3 in the High, Mid, and Low categories

TD 2-3	M	SD
HIGH	25.0	13.6
MID	29.1	14.8
LOW	27.2	20.2

Figure 7.27 The means at TD 2-3 in the High, Mid, and Low categories

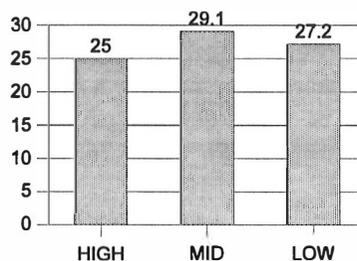


Table 7.4. indicates that the standard deviations grow consistently when moving from the best writers (SD 13.6) through the mid-quality writers (SD 14.8) to the poorest writers (SD 20.2). The handling of the topics at TD 2-3 in the better and mid-quality writers' compositions is more homogeneous than in the poorer writers' compositions. This observation corroborates the finding at the first topical depth level (see section 7.2.2.1).

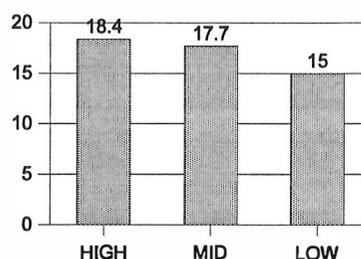
7.2.2.3 The means and standard deviations at TD 4-5 in the High, Mid, and Low categories

Unlike the two previous categories, the means at TD 4-5 indicate a decreasing tendency from the better writers' compositions down to the poorer writers' compositions (see Table 7.5). The better writers place relatively more topics at TD 4-5 (M 18.4) than do the mid-quality writers (M 17.7). The number of the topics in the weakest writers' compositions is clearly the smallest (M 15.0), which shows that the poorest writers' topic development does not extend as far as that of the writers in the other two quality groups. Figure 7.28. shows that there is not, however, a great difference between the means at TD 4-5 in the three categories.

Table 7.5 The means and standard deviations at TD 4-5 in the High, Mid, and Low categories

TD 4-5	M	SD
HIGH	18.4	8.0
MID	17.7	12.8
LOW	15.0	11.2

Figure 7.28 The means at TD 4-5 in the High, Mid, and Low categories



The standard deviation figures at TD 4-5 reveal that the mid-quality (Mid SD 12.8) and poorer writers' (Low SD 11.2) way of handling the topics is not as homogeneous as that of the better writers (High SD 8.0). The mid-quality group is also slightly more heterogeneous than the poor category.

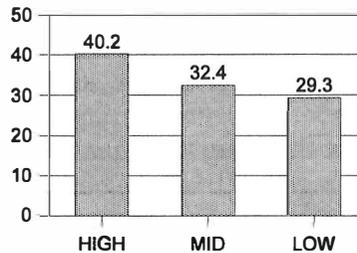
7.2.2.4 The means and standard deviations at TD 6+ in the High, Mid, and Low categories

As was mentioned above, the last topical depth level category is a merged one. Table 7.6. indicates that the means at TD 6+ diminish when moving from the High category (M 40.2) to the Mid (M 32.4), and finally to the Low (M 29.3) category, which again shows the better writers' talent for extending their topic development more than the writers in the other two quality groups are able to do. The better writers are capable of introducing new ideas in their compositions and elaborating on them as well. Figure 7.29. shows the means at TD 6+ in the three quality groups.

Table 7.6 The means and standard deviations at TD 6+ in the High, Mid, and Low categories

TD 6+	M	SD
HIGH	40.2	20.1
MID	32.4	11.3
LOW	29.3	17.9

Figure 7.29 The means at TD 6+ in the High, Mid, and Low categories



The standard deviation figures in Table 7.6. show that at TD 6+, unlike the previous topical depth levels, the better writers (High SD 20.1) seem to differ considerably from the mid-quality group (Mid SD 11.3) and far less from the poorer writers' category (Low SD 17.9) in their quantitative handling of topics at the lowest topical depth level.

7.2.3 The correlation between topical depth and writing quality

The correlation between the topical depth dimension (see Table 7.7. below and Table 7.2. in section 7.2.2 for the means of the various topical depth levels) and writing quality was checked by using the chi-square test and the coefficient of contingency (C). After these procedures the coefficient of determination was computed.

Table 7.7 χ^2 test of the means at TD 1, TD 2-3, TD 4-5, and TD 6+ in the High (N=4), Mid (N=9), and Low (N=11) categories

	High (N=4)	Mid (N=9)	Low (N=11)
TD 1	16.4 (21.9)	20.8 (21.9)	21.5 (21.9)
TD 2-3	25.0 (27.1)	29.1 (27.1)	27.2 (27.1)
TD 4-5	18.4 (17.0)	17.7 (17.0)	15.0 (17.0)
TD 6+	40.2 (34.0)	32.4 (34.0)	29.3 (34.0)
$\chi^2 = 7.298$ df = 5 p < .20			

The observed values are without brackets, and the expected values are in brackets in the table. Table 7.7. shows that the observed values and the expected values differ from each other more at TD 1, whereas at TD 2-3, and TD 4-5 they are

Figure 7.30. (see composition High 4 in Appendix 1) shows that in this composition belonging to the best quality category only 10.5 per cent of the topics fall into the first topical depth level, where the writer discusses on the one hand the fact that watching TV is voluntary and on the other hand TV's effect on our opinions and ways of thinking. At the next two topical depth levels (TD 2-3 31.5%) the writer refers to TV viewers' independence by claiming that we do not have to watch TV if we do not want to, nor do we have to think as the people on TV do.

Like TD 2-3, TD 4-5 also accounts for nearly one third of the topics (31.6%). There the writer describes the kinds of people who are in danger of losing their ability to think independently because of TV. Finally, the writer refers to young people and the difficulties they have in creating their own opinions independently, and the covert influence that watching TV can have on their attitude formation. On the basis of the topical depth levels discussed above the discourse topic might be *TV's influence on people and TV's programming policy*.

As can be seen in the Figure 7.30., there is a tendency for the graph to rise towards the end of the composition. The writer builds up to a 'closure', which is often considered to be an essential feature of a good composition.

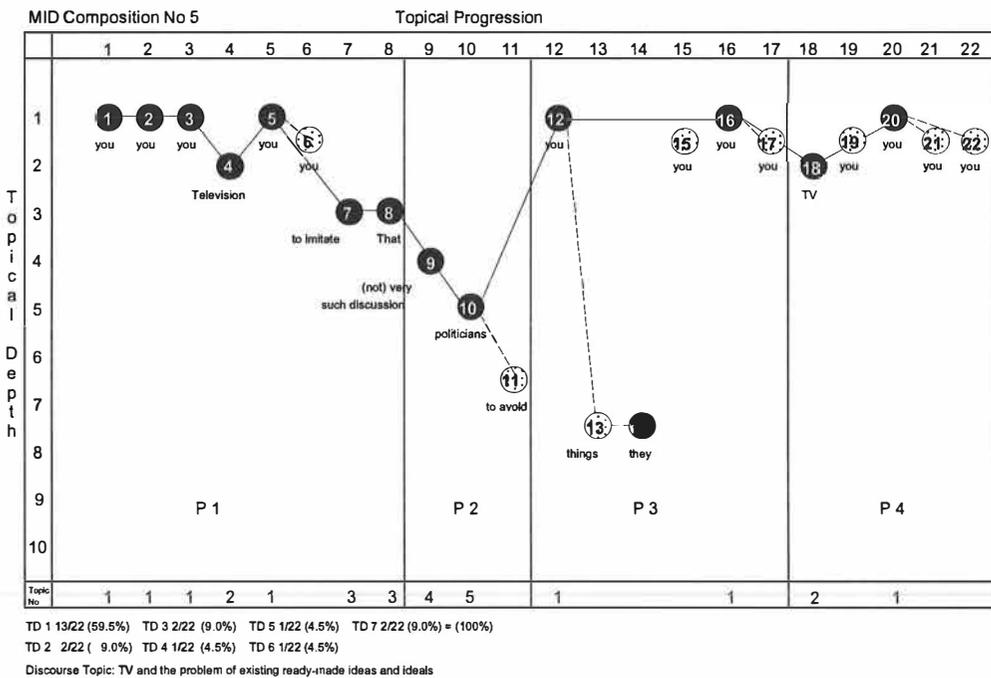


Figure 7.31 Topical progression in composition Mid 5

Figure 7.31. (see composition Mid 5 in Appendix 1) displays the topic development in composition 5, which represents the mid-quality category. Unlike the writer of the previous composition, this writer has placed a relatively high number of the topics (59.5%) at TD 1. The writer refers to the people who watch

thinking independently. TD 6+ (8.3%) comprises the writer's attempt to draw a conclusion, which, however, remains rather general and even somewhat ambiguous. The conclusion shows that the writer's reasoning ability is underdeveloped. This finding corroborates the observation made by Shaughnessy (1977:240f.) and Lindeberg (1988:164) that student writers seem to have difficulties in moving from a lower level to a higher level of generality. On the basis of the topical depth levels the inferred discourse topic could be *TV and the viewers' obligation to select the information they need*.

7.2.5 Topic shift and its relation to the quality of the compositions

This section explores topic shift by relating it to the grades given to the compositions. The topic shift dimension shows the movement of the topics, indicating how the various levels are realized in a linear text. Table 7.8. below illustrates the topic shift levels in the compositions of the High, Mid, and Low categories.

Table 7.8 The topic shift levels in the High, Mid, and Low categories

	High Mean %		Mid Mean %		Low Mean %	
0	4.3	15.9	3.6	17.5	5.3	22.3
0.5	8.3	30.7	5.9	26.5	5.4	22.6
1	4.6	17.8	3.7	16.5	3.7	15.8
1.5	2.0	3.7	3.0	10.5	2.8	11.9
2	2.5	4.7	1.6	5.5	1.6	5.0
2.5	1.0	1.9	2.0	2.0	1.6	4.2
3	1.0	2.8	1.0	1.0	1.5	1.2
3.5	1.0	1.9	1.0	2.0	1.3	1.5
4	2.5	4.7	1.0	1.5	1.2	2.3
4.5	1.5	2.8	1.5	3.0	1.3	1.9
5			1.2	3.0	1.3	3.1
5.5	2.0	5.6	1.3	2.5	2.5	1.9
6	1.0	1.9	1.3	2.5	1.5	1.2
6.5	1.0	1.9	1.3	2.0	1.0	0.4
7	1.0	1.9	1.0	1.9		
7.5			1.0	0.5	1.0	0.8
8	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.5		
8.5			1.5	1.5	1.0	0.8
9			1.0	0.5		
9.5				100 %	1.0	0.8
10	1.0	0.9				
10.5		100 %				
11					1.0	0.4
11.5						
12					1.0	0.4
						100 %

Table 7.8. shows that 68.1 per cent of the topic shifts are within the range of 0-1.5 in the higher category (N=4). In the mid-quality group (N=9) the corresponding

figure is 71.0%, and in the lowest quality category (N=11), 72.6 per cent. There does not seem to be any conspicuous difference in how the student writers in the various quality categories handle the topic shift levels. Only the upper section of the figures in Table 7.8. will be discussed because the instances get fewer and fewer towards the bottom of the table, and the data thus become less reliable.

To give a concrete illustration of the relation between topic shift and writing quality, two compositions will be analysed. One is from the High category, and the other one from the Low group. The two compositions have been chosen from among the highest and lowest quartiles to make the analysis more objective. As was mentioned earlier (see section 6.2.1.6), a topic shift takes place when the topic is different from the previous one. When the topic of one sentence is the same as the topic of the previous sentence, there is no topic shift. The topic shift in a good composition (see composition High 1 in Appendix 1) is shown in Table 7.9. The diagram of the topical structure of the same composition is in Figure 7.33.

Table 7.9 Topic shift levels in composition High 1

Topic shift level	Number of the cases	%
0	7	23.41
0,5	12	40.0 - 73.5 %
1	3	10.1
3.5	1	3.3
4.5	1	3.3
5.5	1	3.3
6	1	3.3
6.5	1	3.3
7	2	6.7
8	1	3.3
		100.0%

In composition High 1, 73.5 per cent of the topic shifts are between 0-1. Thus well over half of the topic shifts are not abrupt in this composition. First the writer puts forth two questions about the dangers of watching TV (see High 1 in Appendix 1). The first two topics are the same, thus there is no topic shift there. Then he gives his own opinion of the matter, and immediately after that starts to clarify his view. Next the writer emphasizes the role of the TV viewer in selecting the programmes. Both main and subsidiary clauses are used. On the whole the topic shifts in this composition are cautious. The only major topic shifts occur when discussing the various kinds of TV programmes and the TV viewer's role in making decisions on what to watch. The writer of this excellent composition seems to be able to introduce new ideas and states of affairs in a controlled manner. Besides, Figure 7.33. also shows the writer's topic development, which seems to form a 'closure'.

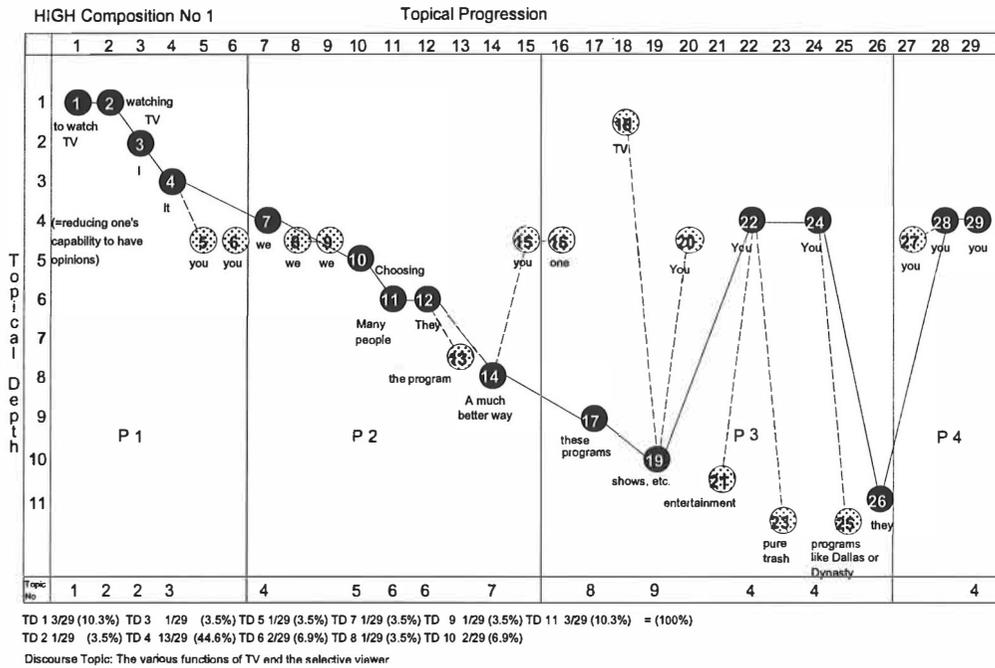


Figure 7.33 Topical progression in composition High 1

The other composition represents the Low category. As can be seen in Table 7.10., in composition Low 7 (see Appendix 1) 58.7 per cent of the topic shifts occur between 0-1. The writer begins the composition (see composition Low 7 in Appendix 1; Figure 7.34. shows the topical progression in the same composition) by stating that television is one of the most important means of communication today. After that he refers to the increasing number of people who watch it yearly. Then he discusses the role of television as something that unites families.

Table 7.10 Topic shift level in composition Low 7

Topic shift level	Number of	%
0	2	11.8
0,5	3	17.6
1	5	29.3
1,5	2	11.8
2	1	5.9
3	1	5.9
4	1	5.9
6.5	1	5.9
7	1	5.9
		100.0%

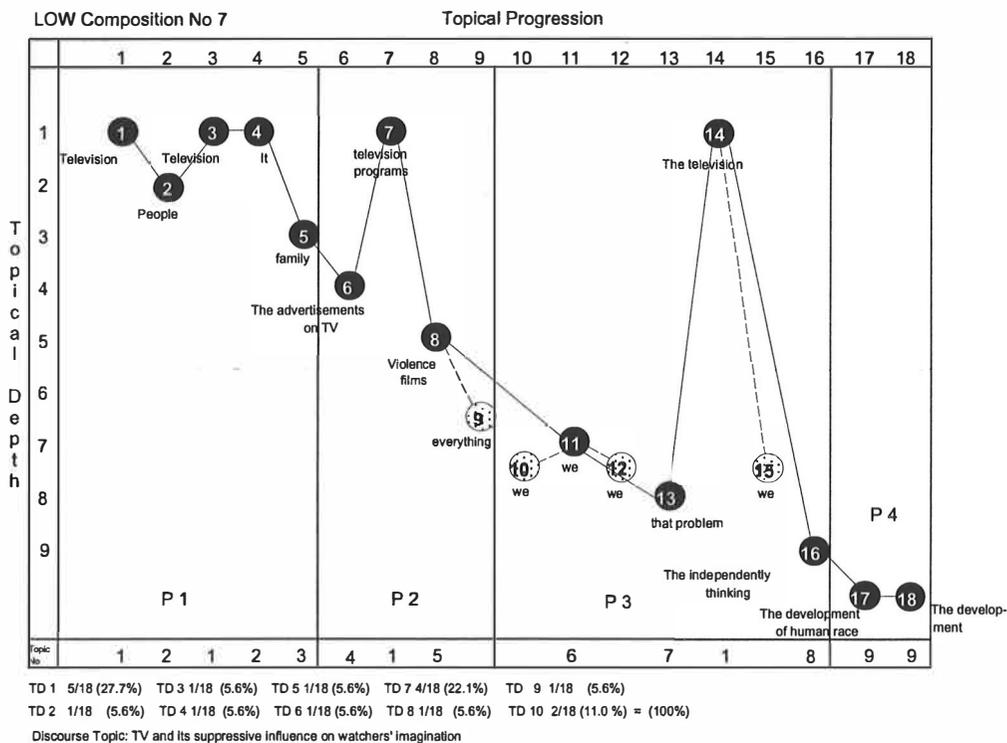


Figure 7.34 Topical progression in composition Low 7

In the second paragraph the dangers of watching television are dealt with. The third paragraph contains the greatest shifts. There the writer attempts to combine the idea of watching television and its numbing influence on the viewer's imagination. In the last paragraph the writer concludes that the development of the human race is based on being able to think independently and to use one's imagination. The contrast is not explicated. The composition could have improved if TV's role had been spelled out. The topic shifts at the end of the composition are minor.

As can be seen in Figure 7.34., and as was discussed above, this writer, like most of the other writers in the lowest quality category, is unable to raise the topics in his composition to form any kind of 'closure'. A closer look at the diagrams in Appendix 3 implies that the good writers (High N=4, c. 75%) tend to finish their compositions by returning to the topic mentioned at the beginning of the essay. This does not seem to happen so much in the compositions produced by the mid-quality writers (Mid N=9, c. 45%) or the poorer writers (Low N=11, c. 25%).

7.2.6 Summary of the findings related to topic depth and shift

The analyses undertaken for answering the second research question led to the following generalizations:

(1) The good writers were better able to develop the topics in their compositions more evenly across several topic levels than the mid-quality writers and especially the poor ones:

- the good writers did not place as many of their topics into the highest topical level (TD 1) as both the mid-quality and poorer writers did.

- the good writers also placed fewer topics at TD 2-3 than the writers in the other two quality groups.

- the good writers extended relatively more of their topics down to TD 4-5 than the mid-quality or poor writers. The figures of the last topical depth level TD 6+, combined though it is, also bear witness to the fact mentioned above.

(2) The good writers made smaller topic shifts than the poorer writers, whose topic shifts were somewhat more abrupt.

(3) The good writers tended to return to higher topic levels at the end of their compositions more often than the writers in the other categories.

(4) The good writers were more homogeneous as a group in handling topics at higher levels than the mid-quality and poor writers. The reverse is true of the lowest topical depths.

Although topic is only one factor affecting writing quality, this analysis showed that topic development in student compositions could be used to indicate quality in them. Thus, there seems to be a good reason for teaching EFL students how to develop topics in their compositions in order to achieve coherent writing and also do better in written tests.

7.2.7 The reliability and the validity of the topic development analysis

As regards the empirical reliability of the topic development analysis, the following observations can be made. The quality assessments were performed by two experienced EFL teachers who were trained for their task well in advance. The teachers had a long tradition in assessing compositions. The quality assessments were fairly consistent and unanimous. The assessment procedures that were used in this study were borrowed from the Written Study, which forms part of the large-scale IEA project. The measurement in that study was found to be sufficiently reliable.

The topical structure and topic shift analyses carried out by the researcher were also reviewed by another person who is an experienced writing researcher and very familiar with the method employed in this study. There was a high degree of agreement concerning the analyses. Only occasionally were there points that needed further discussion.

7.3 Topic/comment patterns in the High, Mid, and Low categories

Section 7.2 focused on the way in which the EFL writers in the present study develop topics in their compositions. As the review of relevant research literature in chapter 5 indicated, the topic and the comment are both essential factors affecting the flow of information in a text. Consequently, the present study includes the exploration of the comment development in the same compositions. There are very few models which take the comment into account. Since Daneš's (1974) patterns of topical progression are among those that also consider the comment, the present study used his model to trace the topic/comment development in the EFL essays (for Daneš's patterns of topic development, see section 5.1.4.3). Section 7.3 investigates the topic/comment patterns in the three quality categories: High, Mid, and Low. (For a detailed analysis of the topic/comment flow in these compositions, see section 7.1.)

The topical structure analysis undertaken to discover the patterns of topic development yielded the topical structures which can be seen in Appendix 2. The division of topics and comments (also markers, the attitudinal/informational frame, and the thematic frame) which was performed in connection with that analysis serves as the starting point for the present analysis of the topic/comment patterns in the essays. Section 7.3 presents the patterns of topic/comment development which were discovered after viewing it in the light of Daneš's (1974) patterns of topical progression.

Each of the sections discusses the writers' use of various patterns to advance the topic/comment development in their essays. The discussion is illustrated by a selection of extracts chosen to represent the patterns. The findings in the given quality categories will be summed up at the end of each sub-section, in 7.3.1, 7.3.2, and 7.3.3. Finally, section 7.3.4 summarizes the findings of the topic/comment analysis.

7.3.1 Topic/comment patterns in the High category

This section discusses the patterns of topic/comment development discovered in the best quality category. The analysis of the topic/comment development in these four compositions comprising the High quality category showed that they have some features in common.

First of all, the writers in the High quality category seemed to follow the same patterns regarding the topic development in them. These good writers appeared to introduce new topics, but, unlike the poorer EFL writers (see section 7.3.3), they elaborated on the topics in their compositions. The good writers did not fill their compositions with unconnected points, but they chose ideas to be explicated further. This indicates the fact that the better writers had grasped the character of the writing task which they were assigned to, and its demands. Consequently, their writing seemed to be in accordance with the requirements of the task. (For the expository text type, see section 2.2, and for the characteristic features of the reflective composition, see section 6.1.2).

Secondly, the better writers' tendency to use a constant topic, that is Daneš's (1974) second pattern of topical progression, seemed to contribute to strengthening the flow of information in their compositions. Although none of the writers used a constant topic throughout their essays, their attempt towards a constant topic generally appeared to give their essays a solid structure. The use of a constant topic provided writers with a specific angle from which to explore various phenomena in the surrounding world.

Let us then explore how differently the writers in the different quality categories begin their compositions. The difference between the opening paragraph in composition High 1 and the way the writer of composition Mid 7 and that of Low 8 begin their essays is striking. The following example is the first paragraph in composition High 1.

- Example 1.
- S1 *Is it dangerous to watch television?*
 S2 *Does watching TV reduce one's capability to have own, free opinions?*
 S3 *I don't think so.*
 S4 *It all depends on how much you watch and first of all how and why you watch.*
- | | | | |
|-----|-----|---|----|
| (1) | T1↓ | - | C1 |
| (2) | T1↓ | - | C2 |
| (3) | T2 | - | C3 |
| (4) | T3 | - | C4 |
| | T4↓ | - | C5 |
| | T4↓ | - | C6 |

In Example 1 the writer tends to elaborate on the topics. The comments in the first paragraph vary. The writer's firm grip on the writing task is seen right at the outset, in the first two sentences. The two questions show his ability to catch the reader's attention (Scarcella 1984). Moreover, the writer makes his own stand clear. After reading the first paragraph, the reader knows the writer's attitude to the issue at hand, because he makes it explicit in the last two sentences of the first paragraph. Due to this explicitness, the reader does not have to make guesses. This kind of reasoning is rare in the writing of these students, and generally occurs only at the very end of the essays, in the concluding remarks (cf. Mauranen 1992).

The following extract is taken from composition Mid 7. The spaces between the lines indicate paragraph divisions.

- Example 2.
- S1 *Your own nature* is the most important thing in affecting on your independence.
 S2 However, *you* are not the only thing affecting your nature.
 S3 *Your home* and *your friends* are also there in creating you.
-
- S4 *A great deal of people* think that *television* is a monster.
 S5 *These people* are often only thinking of television's negative influence on passive people.
- | | | | |
|-----|-----|---|----|
| (1) | T1 | - | C1 |
| (2) | T2 | - | C2 |
| (3) | T3 | - | C3 |
| | T4 | - | C3 |
| (4) | T5 | - | C4 |
| | T6↓ | - | C5 |
| (5) | T6↓ | - | C7 |

The writer of this mid-quality composition seems to start from very far away. All the topics as well as the comments in the first paragraph vary. Unlike the writer of High 1, this writer does not get down into the role of television until the second paragraph. The first paragraph in Mid 7 seems to be loosely connected with the rest of the composition. Let's now look at how the writer of Low 8 starts her composition.

Example 3. S1 *Everybody* watch television more or less, *some people* watch almost everything that comes out and *some people* just want to know *what* happens and *they* prefer watching news and weather.
 S2 *Everybody*: children, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged people, old ones - *they* all watch tv.
 S3 *They* all do different kinds of work.

(1)	T1	-	C1
	T2	-	C2
	T3	-	C3
(2)	T1↓	-	C4
(3)	T1↓	-	C5

Example 3 shows the writer's verbosity. Instead of waffling, the writer could have condensed the basic information in these three sentences into one single sentence.

Thirdly, the general trend of the comment development in the compositions of the higher quality category is that nearly all the comments seem to add new information to the sentences. But thanks to the better writers' tendency to use constant topics, the changing comments do not seem to disturb the even flow of information in these compositions. Example 4 comes from High 3.

Example 4. S17 *We* can choose what *we* want to watch from television.
 S18 In Finland *we* have three different channels and in Australia *they* have six different channels.
 S19 *We* don't have to watch the things *we* don't want to see because *we* can always change to the other channel.
 S20 *We* can get the new idea from television but *we* all are our own independent persons.

(17)	T6↓	-	C23
	T6↓	-	C24
(18)	T6↓	-	C25
	T11	-	C26
(19)	T6↓	-	C27
	T6↓	-	C28
	T6↓	-	C29
(20)	T6↓	-	C30
	T6↓	-	C31

Interestingly enough, there are exceptions to this general pattern. The writer of High 1 repeats the same comment three times, and additionally, includes it once as part of another comment, which, unlike in the compositions in the Low category (see section 7.3.3.5), does not sound redundant. On the contrary, his use

of the repetitive comment adds to the coherence of the composition by combining the topic/comment development even more tightly as can be seen in Example 5.

- Example 5. S6 That means that *we* should nomore watch every program but *we* should choose.³⁹
 S7 *Choosing* now is the keyword.
- S10 *A much better way* would be to watch only particularly interesting, prechosen programs and only if *you* dont have anything 'better' to do.
- S13 But *TV* should also entertain you: there are *shows*, etc. to choose from more than *you* can handle.
- S14 Even as *entertainment* should just relax you *you* should still choose carefully, because *pure trash* is always available.
- S16 So, if *you* just remember to choose your programs carefully, *you* will still be able to think for yourself and *you* won't become a slave of the 'box'.

(6)	T5↓	-	C8
	T5↓	-	C9↓
(7)	T6	-	C10
(10)	T9	-	C14
	T4	-	C15
(13)	T1	-	C18
	T11	-	C9
	T4	-	C19
(14)	T12	-	C20
	T4	-	C9
	T13	-	C21
(16)	T4↓	-	C9
	T4↓	-	C24
	T4↓	-	C25

The passage above shows that this writer develops the topics and the comments in his composition with skill. Example 5 indicates his tendency to employ a constant topic. This writer's talented manner of developing topics and comments in his essay is particularly evident in how he develops the idea of 'choosing', which eventually becomes part of the discourse topic in this composition (for discourse topics, see Appendix 3).

In addition to the well-functioning topic/comment development in his essay, the style of this writer is crisp and vigorous. His writing also bears witness to flexibility of thought and analytical skills (for a more detailed analysis of composition High 1, see section 7.1.1).

Example 6 presents an extract from composition High 3, in which the writer also uses repetitive comments.

³⁹ As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the compositions were used uncorrected in the present study.

Example 6. S5 *Television* gives us only one point of view and *we* must see the other one behind the screen.
 S6 *Television* gives us the one way of thinking.
 S7 *We* have to find the other one by ourselves.

(5)	T1	-	C6
	T6	-	C7
(6)	T1	-	C6
(7)	T6	-	C7

In fact, besides the repetitive comments C6 and C7, this writer also repeats the topics, as can be seen in Example 6. Although the information in S5 overlaps the information in S6 and S7, the repetitive topics and comments in this case clarify the writer's point of view. (For the disturbing effect of repetitive comments, see section 7.3.3.5.) Interestingly enough, a similar instance of the writer clarifying his statements comes from composition Low 1.

Example 7. S3 *I* am afraid of of the manipulation of the TV.
 S4 *I* am sure that *TV* selects and changes the information *it* gets.

(3)	T4	-	C6↓
(4)	T5↓	-	C6↓
	T5↓	-	C6↓

In S3 and S4 the comment C6 repeats the same information, which indicates the writer's attempt to elaborate on the idea mentioned in C6 in S3. Generally, the use of repetitive comments is characteristic of the poorer writers in the present study, in which case repetitive comments create an impression of redundancy.

Fourthly, Example 5 above also shows that C9 of the previous clause becomes the topic of S7, which indicates the writer's use of Daneš's (1974) first pattern of topical progression, the simple linear pattern. Another similar case comes from composition High 1 (Example 8). The third instance of the simple linear pattern of topical progression in the high category was found in composition High 3.

Example 8. S11 *I'm* still not saying that *one* should only watch educational programs like documents or news.
 S12 *Of course these programs* widen your knowledge on various things and by doing so increase your ability to judge things right.

(11)	T5	-	C16↓
(12)	T10	-	C17

Fifthly, in composition High 4 there are two instances (Examples 9 and 10) of the writer picking up a proposition expressed earlier in the composition as the topic of the following clause/sentence. This phenomenon is exceptional in the present data. It was also uncommon in the academic writers' texts, as reported by Mauranen (1992).

Example 9. S6 Those *who* watch telly all day and night long day in day out without any real hobbies are really in danger.
S7 I think that *that* is their own fault for letting it happen.

$$\begin{array}{l} (6) \quad T4 \quad - \quad C9 \\ (7) \quad T5 = \quad T4 + C9 \end{array}$$

The other example is also taken from composition High 4.

Example 10. S11 *The television* may influence on them without them even noticing it.
S12 *That* may sometimes be the purpose of TV produces.

$$\begin{array}{l} (11) \quad T1 \quad - \quad C14 \\ \quad \quad T8 \quad - \quad C15 \\ (12) \quad T9 = \quad T1 + C14 + T8 + C15 \end{array}$$

This method of developing topics and comments seems to contribute positively to the coherence of the text. The writer appears to collect the information before moving onwards in the text.

7.3.1.1 Summary

The findings based on the analysis of the topic/comment development in the High category can be summed up in the following manner. Firstly, the writers in the High quality category seem to introduce new topics into their compositions, but this is done gradually, by explicating the comment before introducing a new topic.

Secondly, their tendency to use a constant topic, which forms Daneš's second pattern of topical progression (44%), appears to consolidate their writing by giving it backbone, a kind of clear focus from which to explore various phenomena in the surrounding world.

Thirdly, they tend to add new comments to complement the topics in their compositions. The use of repetitive comments generally adds to the coherence of their writing by producing a more solid flow of information. There are three (3) instances of Daneš's first pattern of topic development, the simple linear pattern, two in High 1 and one in High 3.

7.3.2 Topic/comment patterns in the Mid category

This section explores the topic/comment patterns in the Mid quality category, which consists of nine compositions. As was mentioned before (section 7.3), this analysis attempts to trace Daneš's patterns of topical progression in the EFL compositions.

7.3.2.1 The use of a constant topic

The second pattern of Daneš's (1974) topical progression, the pattern of a constant topic, can be seen, for example, in an extract from composition Mid 2 (Example 11).

- Example 11. S10 Children are in an especially big danger to lose their independence when they are watching TV without their parents' control.
 S11 They don't find it only amusement.
 S12 They identify themselves to stars and other actors on the screen.

(10)	T11↓	-	C20
	T11↓	-	C21
(11)	T11↓	-	C22
(12)	T11↓	-	C23

The writer systematically develops T11, by adding new information to it in the comments. A similar strategy occurs in the extract taken from composition Mid 3 (Example 12).

- Example 12. S8 *Adults* are more realistic when *they* watch TV.
 S9 *They* might like some product that *they* see there but *they* usually don't hurry to buy it rightaway.

(8)	T8↓	-	C13
	T8↓	-	C14
(9)	T8↓	-	C15
	T8↓	-	C16

Although these two writers vary the comments in their compositions, their tendency to maintain the same topic in these passages results in increased coherence in them. These two extracts indicate that the use of a constant topic emphasizes the writer's focus (for similar findings in the High category, see section 7.3.1). Nearly half of the topics in the compositions of the Mid quality category (42%) were constant topics.

7.3.2.2 The simple linear pattern of topical progression

Daneš's first pattern of topical progression, the simple linear pattern, occurred nine (9) times in the compositions of the Mid quality category (N=9). The following extract from Mid 4 serves as an example of this pattern (Example 12):

- Example 13. S1 Television is like using drugs to some people.
 S2 They can't think independently or use their brains effectively.
 S3 That is a problem in countries with a large number of television channels . .

(1)	T1	-	C1↓
(2)	T2	-	C2
(3)	T3 =	T2 + C2	

In S2, C1, the comment of S1 becomes the topic of the following sentence S2. This is where the writer uses Daneš's simple linear pattern of topic development.

Composition Mid 3 serves as an illustrative example of a comment becoming the topic of another clause/sentence (Example 14). C1 in S1 becomes topic T6 in S4. Later the same comment is used as topic T6 in S10 and in S11.

Example 14. S1 I think that age has a strong effect in this matter . . .
S4 The effect is seen . . .

S10 The effects are also connected with . . .

S11 . . . the bigger the effects are.

(1) T1 - C1

(4) T6↓ - C7

(10) T6↓ - C18

T2 - C19

The way in which this writer addresses the effect of age in relation to the influence of television on its viewers is representative of coherent writing. (For the simple linear pattern of topical progression in the High category, see section 7.3.1, and in the Low category, see section 7.3.3.2)

7.3.2.3 The proposition of the previous sentence as the topic of the following sentence

In S3 (Example 13 in section 7.3.2.2 above) the writer picks up the proposition given in S2 and makes it the topic of S3. Example 15 below involves a similar case. The extract is taken from composition Mid 5.

Example 15. S5 It is very easy to imitate their sayings as your own opinions.
S6 That is not a very independent way of thinking.

(5) T3 - C7

(6) T4 = T3 + C7

7.3.2.4 Changing topics and comments

If the writer varies both the topics and the comments in his/her composition, the result can be seen in the analysis. The following extract (Example 16) from Mid 7 shows that the writer's focus seems to vary.

Example 16. S12 I don't think that television is a monster because my parents were quite clear in their opinions what I was allowed to watch.

(12) T6 - C14

T9 - C15

T10 - C16

Another instance of the writer changing topics without warning the reader comes from composition Mid 6. The extract consists of the first paragraph and the first two sentences from the second paragraph.

Example 17.

S1 Nowadays it is difficult to find a house without television.
 S2 Of course it gives us very important information like news and documents.

S3 But those programs take only couple of hours a day.

S4 We still watch many more hours and even from seven different channels.

S5 It's fine to talk about competition society and competition society really has taken many problems on it's shoulders.

S6 TV and it's enteerteim programs gives a possibility to think about something else than work.

(1)	T1	-	C1
(2)	T2	-	C2
(3)	T3	-	C3
(4)	T4	-	C4
(5)	T5	-	C5
	T6	-	C6
(6)	T2	-	
	T7	-	C7

Example 17 shows that the topic/comment development follows Daneš's second pattern of topic development. Suddenly, T5 in S5 in the second paragraph introduces a new topic, 'competition society', which is elaborated in the same sentence. But the information remains unclear to the reader. Although the writer starts another paragraph, which generally signals the introduction of a new idea (or new ideas), the transition from S5 to S6 is abrupt. The writer's message remains unclear and implicit; she does not clarify it to her reader. Implicitness was discovered to be a typical feature of Finnish academic writers in Mauranen's (1992) study.

7.3.2.5 Summary

The topic/comment analysis of the Mid category revealed the following patterns. Firstly, the writers in this quality category tend to use the second pattern of Daneš's topical progression (42%), which is that of developing the text from one angle by keeping the topic constant, and adding new information to it in each sentence.

Secondly, the writers in the mid-quality group use Daneš's first pattern of topical progression nine (9) times in their compositions, which means 10.5 per cent of the topics. The first pattern, that of simple linear topic development, develops by picking up comments in a sentence and using them as the topic of the next sentence. Only isolated occasions of the second type of topic/comment development are found in the present data. Consequently, the EFL writers in this quality category do not make it a rule to follow this pattern.

Thirdly, there are two (2) instances of the writer picking up a the proposition expressed earlier in the text and making it the topic of the following sentence. Fourthly, a great number of instances of the writer changing both the topics and the comments in his/her composition were found in this category. This shifting around in developing topics and comments in a composition results in less

coherent writing, and at times in obscurity. It also requires more effort from the reader to understand the text.

7.3.3 The topic/comment patterns in the Low category

Section 7.3.3 focuses on the analysis of the topic/comment development in the weakest EFL compositions (N=11) in this study. This section attempts to find out how common Daneš's patterns of topical progression are among the writers in the Low category.

7.3.3.1 The use of a constant topic

The use of a constant topic was found to be characteristic of the poorer writers' way of organizing the information in their compositions. Approximately 52 per cent of the topics in the compositions of the Low quality category represent Daneš's second pattern of topical progression. The extract from Low 3 exemplifies this type (for the same type in the High category, see section 7.3.1, and in the Mid category, see section 7.3.2.1).

Example 18.

S1 We have more free-time, holidays than before.
S2 People can go to the cinema, or watching video.

S3 If we have nothing to do we can watch Tv.
S4 It isn't always a good idea.
S5 When you are to often at home, you would come more lazy and passive.
S6 You need not think or move: you just be and watch.

(1)	T1↓	-	C1
(2)	T1↓	-	C2
	T1↓	-	C3
(3)	T1↓	-	C4
	T1↓	-	C5
(4)	T2↓	-	C6
(5)	T1↓	-	C7
	T1↓	-	C8
(6)	T1↓	-	C9
	T1↓	-	C10

According to the two EFL teachers' rating, this composition is the weakest in the present data. Let us now look at how the poor writing quality can be seen in the writer's topic/comment development. As Example 18 indicates, the writer tends to use a constant topic by referring to it by the words 'we', 'people', and 'you'. All the comments appear to add new information to the topics. Although the comments vary, a closer look at them indicates that the information in them is not new, but it appears to repeat itself; the topic/comment flow seems to stand still rather than move onwards, as in S3 and S6, for instance. Although the use of a constant topic often appears to strengthen the information structure in a composition (see sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2.1), the topic/comment development in composition Low 3 gives a monotonous and flat impression. The present analysis reveals the topic/comment development with a constant topic, but it is not able

to indicate the dullness and banality of the essay. It cannot show the inconsistency between S1 and S2 either.

The general impression is a list of loosely connected pieces of information instead of a coherent piece of writing. In Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987; see also section 2.3.2) terms, this writer, also like the inexpert writers in Cumming's (1988) study, 'tell' their 'knowledge' in their compositions. In Cumming's (1988) study the inexpert writers were however able to produce coherent writing despite their use of the 'knowledge-telling strategy'. The poorer writers in the present study cannot 'transform' what they know into effective writing (for the knowledge-telling model and the knowledge-transforming model, see Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987).

7.3.3.2 The simple linear pattern of topical progression

In the Low category there are three (3) instances of Daneš's first pattern of topical progression (for the High category, see section 7.3.1, and for the Mid category, see section 7.3.2.2). They appear in compositions Low 2 and Low 4. Example 19 comes from composition Low 2.

Example 19. S4 There is many good programs, animals and history programs on TV.
 S5 These are good because they help you to understand the world.

(4)	T6	-	C6↓
	T7	-	C7

Otherwise this writer's way of developing topics and comments varies. The other two cases of the simple linear pattern of topical progression come from composition Low 4. See Example 20 below.

Example 20. S11 When we see two reports about one thing: We see one on Worldnet. -
 S12 It is made in USA and we see the other on Moscow TV.
 S13 Those reports are certainly different.

(11)	T1↓	-	C9
	T1↓	-	C10↓
(12)	T4 +	C5	
	T1	-	C12↓
(13)	T6 +	C13	

The use of the simple linear pattern of topical progression consolidates the topic/comment flow in the composition.

7.3.3.3 The proposition of a previous sentence as the topic of the following sentence

The Low quality category comprises eight (8) instances of the writer picking up a proposition mentioned in the previous sentence. The instances appear in compositions Low 2, Low 4, Low 5 (twice), Low 9, and Low 10 (three times). Example 21 is derived from composition Low 4.

Example 21. S1 Today we have many TV channels to watch.
 S2 We get a lot of information from different corners of the world.
 S3 That is a good thing for our brains.

(1)	T1↓	-	C1
(2)	T1↓	-	C2
(3)	T2 =	T1 + C2	

The other two quality categories contained two such cases each (see sections 7.3.1.1 and 7.3.2.3).

7.3.3.4 Changing topics and comments

The extract from composition Low 6 indicates a common type of topic/comment development in the Low category, viz. switching topics and comments. This seems to be a special weakness of the poorer writers in the present data. The writers tend to add new, but also partly redundant, information all the time, as is the case in the extract from Low 6 below.

Example 22. S1 The television is today the largest medium in the world.
 S2 The news comes to our homes in few seconds.
 S3 People watch television more and more every day.
 S4 News and entertainment comes from TV.
 S5 They have to see it daily, because reading papers is more difficult.

(1)	T1	-	C1
(2)	T2	-	C2
(3)	T3	-	C3
(4)	T2		
	T4	-	C4
(5)	T3	-	C5
	T5	-	C6

Example 22 shows the writer changing his focus continuously by introducing both new topics and new comments into his writing. The writer's way of jumping from one idea to another in his composition gives an irritating impression. While developing the topics and the comments in this manner, the writer seems to parade all the pieces of information that happen to occur to him. He has not been able to choose a point of view from which to explain and explicate phenomena in the surrounding world.

In the example above the analysis does not reveal the repetitiveness of C2 and C4, because there is a slight difference between them. However, the information does not seem to flow onwards in S4. In addition to the lack of focus, which can be seen in the topic/comment development in Example 22, the writer's deficient knowledge of grammar disturbs the readability of the text.

The following extract from composition Low 2 gives an uneven impression, although the writer attempts to maintain 'you' as a constant topic. Besides, the writer of Low 2 appears to incorporate irrelevant information into her composition.

- Example 23. S11 It's much more important to think independently.
 S12 If you are not as all your friends are, I don't think that is a bad thing.
 S13 You have to say what you want to say though all the others will disagree with your idea.

(11)	T9	-	C20
(12)	T5	-	C21
	T10	-	C22
	$T11 = T5 + C21 + T10 + C22$		
(13)	T5	-	C23
	T5	-	C24
	T12	-	C25

As regards the topic/comment development in Example 23, the writer seems to introduce new topics and comments. Although she picks up the proposition mentioned earlier, which, as such, has a consolidating effect on the topic/comment development, at this point she appears to be badly wandering off the topic. The present analysis does not indicate this.

7.3.3.5 Repetitive comments

Example 24 shows the banality of the writer's thinking. The extract is taken from composition Low 8. (See also section 7.3.1 in which the different writers' ways of starting their essays was examined.) Mauranen (1992:152) discovered that the use of repetitive comments was a typical problem with the Finnish writers in her study. Native speakers of English also used comments which repeated much of the essential content of previous comments at times, but very infrequently, and not more than one at a time.

- Example 24. S1 Everybody watch television more or less, some people watch almost everything that comes out and some people just want to know what happens and they prefer watching news and weather.
 S2 Everybody: children, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged people, old ones -they all watch tv.
 S3 They all do different kinds of work.

(1)	T1	-	C1
	T2	-	C2
	T3	-	C3
	T3	-	C4
(2)	T1↓	-	C1
(3)	T1↓	-	C5

Although the writer attempts to maintain a constant topic, this paragraph in Low 8 keeps repeating the same information. The poorer writers' essays in Witte and Faigley's (1981) study also displayed a much higher degree of lexical and conceptual redundancy than the compositions written by the better writers. The comments are only slightly different from each other as regards the information they convey. Besides, the writer's thinking sounds banal. To avoid repetition and verbosity, the information in the first paragraph could be expressed in a single sentence. In this case, the writer uses both unmotivated topics and repetitive comments, which results in dullness. (For unmotivated topics, see 7.3.3.7.)

There are also empty comments such as C15 in composition Low 7 (Example 25). Example 24 comes from a writer who seems to draw an extreme

conclusion by claiming that the power of television may even influence the development of the human race.

- Example 25. S10 The television kills our imagination because we watch and listen to it.
 S11 The independently thinking is based on our imagination.
- S12 The development of the human race is always need a lot of thinking and imagination.
 S13 The development may change cause the power of the television.

(10)	T1	-	C14
	T2	-	C15
(11)	T9	-	C16
(12)	T10↓	-	C17
(13)	T10↓	-	C18

The writer attempts to convey a leading idea in his composition, but he seems to have various difficulties in making his message clear to the reader. The first two sentences S10-11 would have shown the writer's reasoning better, had they changed places. The problem with a flat comment was discussed above. In S13 the writer seems to draw a far-fetched conclusion, which again is indicative of his poor reasoning. Besides, there are lexical and grammatical problems, which cannot be seen in the analysis.

7.3.3.6 Implicitness of comments (and topics)

The extract in Example 26 is taken from composition Low 1 to indicate the writer's implicit way of expressing his message.

- Example 26. S5 So we maybe don't know anything about the other case that TV is sending us.
 S6 The Tv producer's view may be extremely different when it is compared to our attitude.
 S7 For example, there are many candidates in the elections and you don't know them very well.
 S8 From the TV news you will get information telling you that candidate three is the best.
 S9 I bet that your vote will be given to the candidate three.

(5)	T1	-	C8
	T5	-	C9
(6)	T6	-	C10
	T6	-	C11
(7)	T7	-	C12
	T1↓	-	C13
(8)	T1↓	-	C14
	T8	-	C15
(9)	T9	-	C16

The writer makes the reader infer or even guess a great deal of the information that he wants to convey. In this extract he is dealing with the way television manipulates its viewers (Example 26). Expressions like 'the other case and 'when it is compared to our attitude' make the information obscure, and consequently

render the reader's task difficult. Such obscurity or implicitness may irritate readers, especially when student texts are read. After all, writing is often used in a school context to test the students' creativity. (For multiple and even conflicting reader purposes and intentions, see section 2.4.) In addition to problems with topic/comment development, the writer seems to have problems in combining sentences and with vocabulary.

7.3.3.7 Unmotivated topics

In some of the compositions in the low category it is difficult for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought. In Example 27 the use of negatives together with constantly appearing new topics and comments and bad grammar disturb the reader. The extract comes from composition Low 1.

Example 27. S13 It is not easy to make opinions even if we don't have the media affecting us.
 S14 So it is not hard to understand that we are living in the crossfire of all kind of affects.
 S15 We have to watch television because it also gives us information.

(13)	T10	-	C20
	T1	-	C21
(14)	T11	-	C22
	T1↓	-	C23
(15)	T1↓	-	C24
	T6	-	C25

The analysis reveals the constantly shifting topic/comment development in the above extract. The topics in sentences 13-15 are all unmotivated, and the sentences therefore appear to form a list of loosely connected items rather than a developing text. This passage requires a sustained assumption of relevance by readers until they are rewarded by a confirmation in S15 that these sentences belong to a whole which is meant to hang together and lead to a conclusion.

7.3.3.8 Summary

This section sums up the main trends of the topic/comment development in the essays of the Low category. 52 per cent of the topics used by the writers in the poorest quality category showed a tendency towards Daneš's second pattern of topical progression, viz. the use of a constant topic.

The compositions in this category revealed three cases of Daneš's first pattern of topical progression, the simple linear pattern. Interestingly enough, the compositions in this category contained eight instances of the writer picking up a proposition mentioned earlier in the text.

Although so many of the writers in the Low category use a constant topic, which generally strengthens the topic/comment development in a text, their texts, however, gave a dull and monotonous impression to the reader. Another disturbing effect was created by continual changes of topic and comment in these essays. Unlike the previous case, this kind of topic/comment development creates a restless impression because the writer's focus keeps varying.

7.3.3.9 Problems in combining sentences and paragraphs

Some of the poorer writers seem to have problems in combining sentences with each other. For example, the writer of Low 10 appears to be unable to construct well-functioning sentences (Example 28).

Example 28. S1 That is right.
 S2 Nowadays it is more difficult to think independently when you are watching TV.
 S3 Because most of TV's programmes are given or try to give answers to questions.
 S4 And this is very wrong.
 S5 Maybe the older people can analyse TV's programmes and they know what is right and what is wrong.
 S6 But this is not so easy when we are talking about a young people.
 S7 Some of the TV's programmes are very good, news, for example.

(1)	T1	-	C1
(2)	T2	-	C2
	T3	-	C3
(3)	T4	-	C4
(4)	T5 =	T4 + C4	
(5)	T6↓	-	C5
	T6↓	-	C6
(6)	T7 =	T6 + C6	
	T8	-	C7
(7)	T9	-	C8

The analysis indicates that the topics and comments vary almost continuously. The only exceptions are T5 in S4 and T7 in S6, which pick up the propositions mentioned earlier in the text. (There are other such cases in Low 2, Low 4, two in Low 5, and Low 9.) As regards S1, the writer begins with a clear statement which does not quite match the title of the composition, but S2, however, goes some way towards clarifying this statement. A closer look at the text shows that the second and the third sentences should be combined, because S3, the subordinate clause, clarifies the claim made in S2. Furthermore, S5 and S6 seem to belong to the first paragraph. The analysis is not able to reveal these two deficiencies. Bad grammar must also affect the low grade of the composition.

The other extract showing a writer's difficulties in combining sentences comes from composition Low 11.

Example 29. S1 I think that watching television makes it more difficult to think independently in many cases.
 S2 If young child watch film about wild west and see how ugly screaming indian kills young white girl.
 S3 It is sure that he don't like indians after that.

(1)	T1	-	C1
(2)	T2↓	-	C2
	T2↓	-	C3
(3)	T2↓	-	C4

The analysis does not indicate the need to combine S2 and S3. This extract also involves instances of bad grammar, for example, the omission of the indefinite articles.

Example 30 from Mid 5 shows the writer's inability to combine sentences.

Example 30. S4 If you watch very famous people talking about things you are not very sure about.
S5 It is very easy to imitate their sayings as your own opinions.

(4)	T1!	-	C5
	T1!	-	C6
(5)	T3	-	C7

The present analysis does not show that these two sentences in Mid 5 should be put together. Later on in the same composition, the long sentence S9 would have served its purpose better if it had been split into two (Example 31). The analysis does not reveal this either.

Example 31. S9 TV does not make independent thinking more difficult but in today's world you are given ready opinions everywhere so you can watch TV as much as you want if you remember to think with your own brains as much as possible.

(9)	T2	-	C18
	T1!	-	C19
	T1!	-	C20
	T1!	-	C21
	T1!	-	C22

S9 is long and clumsy. The writer tends to maintain a constant topic in the sentence, which, as stated previously, is generally regarded as a sign of coherence in a composition. The clumsiness of this passage could have been avoided had the sentence been split into three separate sentences.

Another passage that shows the limitations of the present analysis is taken from composition Mid 8 (Example 32).

Example 32. S6 Watching television is often referred to watching movies.
S7 But we should remember that almost 50% of television' transmission time is news and documents.
S8 But still radio is more to listen than television.
S9 I think we should watch and listen news from television and listen radio plays instead of watching movies from television because by watching TV we cannot understand them wrongly and by listening radio plays we could form our own world of the play.

(6)	T5	-	C9
(7)	T6	-	C10
	T7	-	C11
(8)	T8	-	C12
(9)	T6!	-	C13
	T6!	-	C14
	T6!	-	C15

The writer's tendency to maintain the constant topic T6 in this extract is obvious. The comments seem to add new information, one after the other. But unlike some other compositions in this quality category, the above passage is difficult for the reader to follow. Even a closer look at the figure indicating the topic/comment development in this extract does not show the problems the reader meets when reading the text. The extract shows the writer's inability to form syntactically well-functioning sentences, for instance, S8. S9, as a complex sentence, again shows his inability to form comprehensible sentences. For the writer's difficulties with paragraph division in the High quality category, see section 7.3.1.

7.3.4 Summary of the findings related to topic/comment patterns in the High, Mid, and Low categories

The writers in the higher quality category employed Daneš's first pattern of topical progression, that is, the simple linear pattern of topical progression, three times (2.7%), ten times (10.5%) in the Mid category, and three times (1.1%) in the Low category. The better writers used Daneš's second pattern of topical progression, that is, a constant topic, in 44 per cent of the cases. In the mid-quality category the figure was slightly lower, 42 per cent, whereas in the lowest quality category it was 52 per cent. The writers in the High category and the Mid category picked up a proposition mentioned earlier in the text twice (2), and eight (8) times in the Low category.

The findings of the present study show that the poorer writers used a constant topic more often than the writers in the other two categories. As regards the first pattern of topical progression, the mid-quality writers favoured this strategy more than the writers in the higher and the poorer categories. What is interesting, is that the poorer writers picked up propositions mentioned earlier in the text more often than the writers in the other two categories.

The better writers incorporated new topics gradually, by developing a topic in their comments once after they had introduced it to the text. They attempted to explicate the phenomena they had elected to discuss in their compositions.

Like the writers in the High category, the writers in the Mid category used the above-mentioned patterns in their topic/comment development. But unlike the better writers, some of them also kept changing the topics and comments in their essays, which produced a staccato effect on the reader. Although the writers in the Low category used a constant topic, their essays gave a monotonous impression unlike the compositions in the High category in which it only strengthened the effect. Many of these writers changed both topics and comments in their essays, which showed a lack of focus in their writing.

Repetitive comments seemed to impede some of the compositions in the Low category. Some of these redundant comments were shown up by the analysis, others were not. Besides redundant comments, these writers also used unmotivated topics, which were abruptly introduced into the text without any further development.

Obscurity and implicitness made extra demands on the reader. In the present analysis this was discovered in the jerky way of introducing topics and comments. This may also be due, at least partly, to the writers' poor command of

vocabulary and grammar. Most of all, the present writer assumes, it is because of their poor command of text-structuring skills.

The present analysis could not reveal the problems that the poorer writers and also the writers in the mid-quality category had with combining sentences and constructing paragraphs. Despite an even flow of information in some of the essays, the compositions could, at least in places, be out of joint, that is, off the topic. The analysis was unable to show this defect.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Conclusions

This section summarizes the main findings of the present study. The present study set out to find answers to three research tasks. The first task was to find out how topics and comments representing three quality categories are developed in EFL compositions. The second task was to determine whether there is a relationship between topic development and rated essay quality in compositions representing the three quality categories: High, Mid, and Low. The third research task was to discover what kind of topic/comment development patterns occur in compositions representing three quality categories.

To answer the first and third research questions, a descriptive topic/comment analysis was performed. In addition to that, Daneš's (1974) two patterns of topical progression were traced in the same compositions. As concerns the first pattern of topical progression, the mid-quality writers favoured this strategy more than the higher and the poorer writers. With regard to the second pattern of topical progression, the poorer writers used a constant topic more often than the writers in the other two quality categories.

Topical structure analysis was employed to answer the second research question. As a result of the analysis several generalizations emerged. Firstly, the good writers were able to develop the topics in their compositions across several topical depth levels more evenly than the mid-quality writers and especially the poor ones. The good writers did not place as many of their topics at the highest topic level as both the mid-quality and the poorer writers did. The good writers placed fewer topics at topical depth levels 2-3 than the writers in the other two quality groups. The good writers extended relatively more of their topics down to topical depth levels 4-5 than the mid-quality or the poor writers. Secondly, the good writers made smaller topic shifts than the poorer writers, whose topic shifts

were somewhat more abrupt. Thirdly, the good writers tended to return to higher topic levels at the end of their compositions more often than the poor writers did. Fourthly, the good writers were more homogeneous as a group in handling topics at the higher levels than the mid-quality and the poor writers. The reverse was true of the lowest topical depths.

The findings of the present study concur with the findings of the Schneider and Connor study (1991:419-420) whose preliminary analysis of t-unit topics in the highest rated ESL essays suggests that sequential topic progression may elaborate on previous topics in the form of different, but related, t-unit topics which expand on previous ones. This interpretation finds support in the work of Firbas (1964; 1974), who used the term 'communicative dynamism' (for communicative dynamism, see section 5.1.4.2). Communicative dynamism refers to the amount of new information conveyed in a text, which usually appears in the comment part of the sentence. Thus, as Schneider and Connor (1991:420) suggest, sequential topics, when related to preceding topics and the discourse topic, can contribute to the coherence of a text. However, Witte (1983b; see section 5.1.4.4) associated a greater proportion of sequential topics in lower rated essays with less coherent L1 writing.

The findings of the present study suggest that topical structure analysis is a method that lends itself to checking coherence also in student writing. Thus this analysis could be expected to help students to consider the discourse level together with the surface level of their writing. If native speakers experience problems when revising their texts (cf. Sommers 1980), it can be assumed that similar problems occur, and probably even more acutely, with non-native speakers. Since topical structure analysis considers both global and local coherence of texts, it is a more satisfying method of analysing coherence than the early methods. Christensen's (1967) method, for instance, saw coherence as related to the structural unity of paragraphs. His model focused on the rhetorical roles of sentences, whereas topical structure analysis is concerned with the semantic meanings of sentences and the way they develop the overall discourse topic (cf. Connor and Farmer 1990).

As regards Daneš's (1974) patterns of topical progression, the first pattern of topical progression, the simple linear pattern was most common among the writers in the mid-quality category. The simple linear progression consists of a chain-like effect, in which the given information in each sentence topic refers anaphorically to the new information in the last occurring comment (see also Weissberg 1984). In Weissberg's (1984) study, this pattern was found to be the most common type, especially in introductory and discussion paragraphs. (For Weissberg's study, see section 5.1.4.3.)

Daneš's second pattern of topical progression, the pattern of a constant topic, was more common among the poorer writers than among the writers in the other two quality categories. In Weissberg's (1984) study this pattern occurred least frequently. It must be borne in mind that Weissberg's (1984) study focused on experimental research reports.

In Weissberg's (1984) study a relatively large proportion of paragraphs (over 21%) were however developed through a mixture of patterns. In this respect the findings of the topic/comment analysis are parallel with the findings of his

study. This should caution composition teachers against insisting that students strictly adhere to a given pattern throughout a composition (see also Weissberg 1984).

8.2 Implications for teaching writing in a foreign language

In this section several connections between the findings of the study and their pedagogical implications will be made. One implication of the present study is that if the importance of information structure is better understood, it can be better taught (for a similar conception concerning cohesion, see Witte and Faigley 1981). It is important to go beyond the instructions traditionally offered in composition textbooks which has often stopped at sentence boundary. In addition to exercises focusing on clause and sentence structure in isolation, larger discourse entities need to be taken into account in writing instruction.

The findings of the present analyses, together with the experiences of Connor and Farmer (1990) in using topical structure analysis as a revision tool for achieving more coherent writing, and Cerniglia et al. (1990), who used topical structure analysis in a computer-assisted writing instruction, could help increase second and foreign language teachers' and students' awareness of the significance of topic development as a noteworthy contributor to coherence in second or foreign language writing. The proliferation of word processors means that they offer an excellent means for students to see for themselves what text processing in practice means; in other words, what the recursive nature of the writing process entails.

Teaching second and foreign language learners the main ideas of functional sentence perspective so that the information in their compositions conforms to FSP would make their essays more readable and more memorable (cf. Vande Kopple 1982). A major benefit of teaching FSP to students is that doing so should help them improve the logical continuity of their essays. In working with students who leave logical gaps in their compositions, teachers would probably do better to have them check how many of their sentence topics are unrelated to previous topics or comments. Students could examine more closely whether they are jumping from one idea to another without adequate connection, and thus leaving their readers floundering.

Vande Kopple (1982) notes that as students use FSP to avoid logical gaps, they can also become more sensitive to the needs of their audiences. In crafting their sentence topics, they will have to decide what information their readers have derived from earlier sentences or from their world knowledge, and how much of that information they should express, or how much of it they should repeat. Making these decisions would prevent them from explaining already well-known terms, from introducing unknown terms without explanations, and from elaborating some ideas less and other ideas more than necessary. In addition, they need to be able to express in their comments appropriate amounts of new information (cf. section 7.3.3.5 above). Crafting their compositions in this manner

and simultaneously examining their peers' texts, students will develop their rhetorical sensitivity and skill.

The primary focus of writing pedagogy has long been on the instruction of writing English as L1 but because it has been found that writing expertise in a person's first and second languages are basically one and the same thing (see Cumming 1988; 1989), there is every reason to assume that instructional approaches which promote the development of mother tongue writing are also valid for teaching writing in a second or foreign language. Consequently, approaches to writing instruction evaluated in, for instance, de Beaugrande (1984), Hillocks (1986), Scardamalia and Bereiter (1986) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), would seem to be as appropriate for second or foreign language writing instruction as they are for mother tongue education. Conversely, as Cumming (1988) points out, there are no apparent reasons to assume that special approaches to writing instruction, such as controlled composition, for example, should have a validity for second language learners which it does not have for mother tongue speakers of a language.

More than has been customary in Finland and probably elsewhere as well, writing should be seen as a tool for learning and thinking, not as a separate skill (cf. Harste 1985; Lonka K. 1987). Writing contributes to learning and internalizing new information. With the help of writing complex information structures can be apprehended. Students' dialogue journals provide invaluable feedback to teachers, and thus enable more effective planning of teaching. Writing also intensifies the ability to remember things to be learned (cf. Perho 1994). Writing is also a means of learning about oneself and a means of belonging to a particular social group (Hildyard 1992; for the notion of a discourse community, see section 3.1.3).

The present researcher, after having experimented with it both at school and at university level, is an advocate of writing, and particularly of EFL writing, as a natural tool for learning. If writing in a foreign language is regarded as an activity in which writing and learning are closely intertwined, students will inevitably get useful practice in clarifying their thinking and their relationship with reality in a natural way. Writing logs together with dialogue journals, for instance, will enhance both writing and learning, because they will enable students to write a great deal during classes and afterwards. In this way, writing is seen as an inherent part of learning, not as a separate skill as is often the case. It is necessary to gradually familiarize students with practices like this at the lower level of the comprehensive school, right after they have acquired the basics of a foreign language. Only then would there be any hope of getting better writers and eventually better learners of foreign languages.

The prevalent writing practice in second or foreign languages in Finland has been the product-centered approach, in which writing tends to converge towards a predefined goal. In practice, this has meant that students struggle with a set of topics assigned by the teacher for an hour or two, after which their work is handed in for appraisal by the teacher. But this kind of writing practice appears to be insufficient, and consequently, the teaching of writing in a second or a foreign language needs to be seen from a wider perspective.

The compositions in the present data were first drafts. They were written as part of normal school work at a time when the process approach was quite

unknown to most teachers of second or foreign languages. The findings of the present study show the need for a second draft of the compositions analysed in them. The process approach with its various stages would certainly ease the EFL writer's burden. Since there is generally a limited number of lessons that can be used in teaching a second or a foreign language, only restricted processing can take place. Thus it would be practical to vary the emphasis at various stages of the writing process according to the time available.

The present study lends support to the view that the poor quality of student writing tends to result in lists of ideas (cf. Bereiter and Scardamalia 1983 on the 'knowledge-telling strategy'; Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987; Shaughnessy 1977 on 'basic writers; the inexpert writers in Cumming's 1988 study) that have not been digested, and where the topical relations have not been worked out or clearly expressed. The poorer writers are not able to take the readers' needs adequately into account, and thus they omit from the reasoning process various stages, which would have been necessary for the uninterrupted awareness of coherence (Flower 1981 makes a contrast between 'writer-based prose' and the mature writer's 'reader-based prose'; see also Lindeberg 1988). These problems show that poor writers, especially, would need some concrete help in constructing their texts.

As regards writing instruction in L1, Applebee (1981) found that most writing in high school consisted of brief written responses produced for the purpose of displaying knowledge. Consequently, students received plenty of encouragement in knowledge telling, but little experience with the problems of text production. Teachers of writing need to take other activities than the display of knowledge into consideration, and not foster that one aspect excessively.

Weaker writers in particular require more time as well as more guidance in preparing their compositions. There is a definite need for more planning and revision of compositions. In the teaching of writing in a second or foreign language class, the significance of various prewriting activities should be recognized. It is especially important for second and foreign language writers to be able to recall observations, experiences and information from their long-term memory to generate ideas to be used as material for their texts.

At present, there are quite a few sources available from which teachers can obtain ideas and advice for improving their teaching practices, starting from didactic guidelines offered to teachers of second and foreign languages to books on teaching process-oriented writing (see e.g. Flower 1981; White and Arndt 1991; Mäkinen 1994; Björk et al. 1988; Björk and Blomstrand 1994). These books contain various suggestions for, for instance, generating ideas, organizing text, revising text, and taking the reader into consideration.

Moreover, there are several heuristics for generating ideas and information, for 'inventio'. Such modern versions as the 'cubing' suggested by Cowan and Cowan (1980) and the questions recommended in handbooks like Axelrod and Cooper (1985) build on Aristotelian rhetoric revived for modern use. These questions largely resemble those suggested by Laurinen (1985) and Hoey (1983). The former used them principally to help students generate text and the latter to clarify the functional relations between text segments in processing text.

Some other techniques such as *mind-mapping* or *clustering* (cf. Buzan 1974; Rico 1983) may help student writers who find it difficult to generate text,

particularly when they are suffering from 'writing blocks'. Both of these techniques can be usefully complemented by an awareness of topic/comment development, when the first idea-generating stage is finished, and the organising phase begins.

In *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing* (1989) Flower suggests two major revision/editing techniques such as the *key-word editing technique* and the *issue tree*. The purpose of the former technique is to ensure that cohesive linking exists between sentences and/or clauses. This technique shows the mapping of cohesive links regardless of the position of the items in the information structure; however, as Lindeberg (1988:205) points out, it may leave deficiencies in coherence undetected. The latter technique, the issue tree, addresses the items that are in focus in a sentence or a clause. These items are arranged in a hierarchical tree. If a tree structure does not form, the writer has digressed or omitted to place the key items in a focal position (cf. Kaplan 1983). This method uncovers deficiencies in the coherence of those paragraphs which are hierarchically organisable but it does not specify in what way key items which do not fit into the tree are inappropriate. However, it is important that teachers of writing take the different needs of students into consideration also during the pre-writing stage, because students vary as to how much help they need at a certain stage of the writing process.

Besides the stage of 'inventio', it is especially important for inexperienced writers to be familiar with various ways of revising their texts, because there are very few writers who can produce a polished composition on their first attempt. Although the process of revision gives writers unlimited opportunities to reshape their compositions, revision is frequently confused with cosmetic editing (Emig 1971). Revision is the crucial point in the writing process when discovery and organization come together, when writers refine what they have written and shape it into a coherent text (Taylor 1981; see Spack 1984 for relevant heuristics for organizing discourse and gist; for the use of FSP as a revision strategy, see Vande Kopple 1982). Revision can take place at different stages of the writing process, not only at the last stage.

Teaching students how to revise is not easy. Lacking native-like intuitions about organizational patterns, syntax, vocabulary, formality and style, for instance, students often cannot see problems in their own writing. According to Taylor (1981), showing students where their own arguments are weak or where their logic breaks down appears to be an effective approach. It is necessary for students to be their own critics and to be able to revise without extensive outside input.

Taylor (1981) suggests that one of the most crucial skills enabling self-revision is critical reading. Cumming (1988) claims that writing instruction in a second (or foreign language) needs to be supplemented by the development of students' second language acquisition, especially through reading. Extensive reading and other purposeful uses of a second or foreign language appear necessary to facilitate the long-term development of writing (Elley and Mangubhai 1983; Krashen 1984; Havola 1987; Cumming 1988). It can help students acquire the critical reading skills required for revision. Extensive reading fosters vocabulary growth and the acquisition of syntax, all in context. In addition to content, its value stems from the exposure it gives students to a diversity of culturally relevant

rhetorical and stylistic writing patterns, organizational options, and patterns of logic and support (Taylor 1981; see also Krashen 1984).

The comprehensibility of the text from the reader's point of view and interaction between the writer and the reader also need to be stressed. Being as explicit as possible when writing in a foreign language is a virtue that will be appreciated in students' later professions, because readers pressed with time will certainly appreciate writers who are able to present their ideas explicitly (cf. Lindeberg 1988; Mauranen 1992).

Another way would be to coach learners through conferences about their writing, so that they can question and find out what more experienced writers think about their personal work (Urzua 1987). Conferencing can also provide students with an opportunity to get valuable feedback for their writing, and thus widen the readership of their texts, and simultaneously make EFL writers see their writing from a reader's point of view. An alternative approach, implemented during the writing process, is to provide appropriate prompts to guide students' thinking when they are stuck or are reevaluating writing they have produced (Scardamalia and Bereiter 1986).

The findings of the present study show that some of the weaker compositions were banal and monotonous to read. This observation raises the question of how to encourage students to consider the complexity of their composing in the ways required to develop more expert performance. The findings of the present study are parallel with those of several other studies (e.g. Lindeberg 1985; Taylor 1981; Zamel 1982; 1983; Urzua 1987) which claim that ESL students should be instructed to focus on 'meaning' in their compositions. Drawing on the findings of Cumming's (1988:198) study, it would be sensible to encourage students to focus on the gist of their writing in relation to other aspects of their writing, such as language use, discourse organization, or intentions.

It was mentioned in section 4.1.4 that portfolio assessment in second and foreign language teaching is gaining an increasing foothold in Finland. In line with the general rationale for portfolio use in teaching and assessment, the assessment of writing ability needs to be re-examined so that it is congruent with current conceptions of learning and teaching. Since students are increasingly seen as self-directed learners who are responsible for their own learning and, to a certain degree, for assessing their own learning, writing teachers' traditional corrections with red pens will no longer do. The process-centered approach with its feedback from both the teacher and peers will expand the number of readers and thus focus the writer's attention on multiple reader needs.

Teaching second and foreign language writers how to arrange the information in a written piece would raise students' awareness of the significance of topic/comment development in writing as a means of achieving more coherent writing. The process approach with multiple writing samples would certainly motivate writers to produce better and more coherent texts.

Although there is an urgent need for empirical investigations into the effects of portfolio assessment on the writing performance of non-native students compared to native students, portfolios provide a novel and promising method of assessing student writing. They offer a broader measure of what students can do,

because of the elimination of the timed writing context, which has long been claimed to be particularly discriminatory against non-native writers.

Hamp-Lyons (in press) mentions two reasons for this view: firstly, students have time to revise. They do not have to turn in papers that are full of fossilized errors that pop up under the pressures of time, but are able to take the time to find and correct their own errors, to get help from the teacher and their peers, to write using a word processor, and use the spelling check, and so on. These are strategies that any writer is free to use in normal writing environments, and that are denied them in the setting of a timed impromptu exam.

A second reason, according to Hamp-Lyons, for eliminating the timed exams, may be that ESL students would be encouraged to try harder, not just to produce a quick, short, skinny text but to work on getting it correct in language. Any paper may be the one they choose to include in their portfolios, to represent them to outside readers. In the portfolio assessment context, ESL writers can be convinced that concentrating on ideas, content, support, text structure and so on, are worthwhile because they need not fear that this will be at the cost of attention to technically correct language — which most of them have been conditioned to believe that teachers value first and foremost.

Hamp-Lyons claims that portfolios can reveal differences between 'novice' and 'skilled' writers. In narrow writing contexts, novice writers always have the excuse of the pressure of time to account for their single-draft writing approach, for sticking to simple ideas and simple sentences, for editing instead of revising — all those features of novice writing identified by Perl, Emig and others in L1 and confirmed by Zamel, Raimes and others in L2. Novice writers, or experienced ESL writers who have chosen novice strategies for their ESL writing survival, have time to see that their teachers expect more, and that those expectations are reasonable given the time available. Hamp-Lyons maintains that when we find a portfolio that displays novice writing skills, we know that the writer is truly there, at that point in growth toward writing excellence, rather than driven there by time and context pressures.

But, as Hamp-Lyons notes, the portfolio may be a concept rather than an entity to some, and its chameleon nature may appear confusing to others. For a portfolio to be the best possible tool, it is important to decide on the type of portfolio best suited to the needs of the context in which it is used. It must also be remembered, as Hamp-Lyons points out, that evidence for the benefits of portfolios for non-native writers is more rational and anecdotal than empirical. However, current empirical research by a colleague (Pollari 1994) suggests that portfolios are, indeed, a promising approach in the EFL context.

8.3 Suggestions for further research

The main focus of the present study was on the relationship between topic/comment development and writing quality in EFL compositions. Topic/comment development as an indicator of coherence was used to explain the

writing quality in them. In addition to the topic/comment development in the compositions, the present researcher also attempted to use lexical density and lexical variation as other indicators of coherence but they showed no significant contribution to it. The present study has its limitations in terms of methodological scope and quantitative representativeness. Thus a few suggestions about some novel research avenues are advanced.

Firstly, since the compositions written for the study represented the expository text type, a new research avenue would concern the wider applicability of the model by expanding its use into other text types, for instance, into essays written in the argumentative mode. This kind of expansion together with a larger number of subjects would demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of the model more conspicuously.

Secondly, the investigation of the relationship between topic/comment development and writing quality could also be applied to the students' mother tongue, Finnish. In other words, establishing a contrastive research design, in which the participants' way of developing topics and comments would be studied in two languages, would certainly yield valuable insights into the subject matter to be explored, because Finnish and English are quite different from each other. Finnish belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family, and is unrelated to the Indo-European languages. As Finnish is surrounded by Indo-European languages, it has been influenced by them both lexically and structurally over the centuries. However, it retains features which are clearly different from those of the Indo-European languages, and which can affect Finnish writers' perceptions of what kinds of choices are available for developing the flow of information when writing in English.

The role that composition length plays in affecting topic/comment development would be an important research task in such a contrastive research design (for the effect of essay length in this study, see section 7.2.2.1). The suggested length when writing in a foreign language is about 150-200 words, whereas in L1 no such limitations exist. Compositions written in L1 are likely to be at least four to five times longer. Summaries used as part of the foreign language test in the matriculation examination will also provide a point of comparison in the future as regards topic/comment development in writing.

A more ambitious research design would be to expand the study in the direction of including compositions written by native speakers of English. This research design would enable a cross-cultural exploration of the subject. Another interesting task would be to extend the study of topic/comment development to compositions written by university students who are majoring in English. This extension would could reveal trends of topic/comment development in near-native writing.

As banality and monotony were discovered to characterize most of the compositions in the low category, weaknesses which the present analysis did not, at least, directly reveal, the exploration of logical argumentation in EFL compositions might disclose such flaws and thus contribute to quality assessment. Another possibility of discovering the logical relationships in student texts would be the meaning-relations analysis developed by Laurinen and Kauppinen (1986) or

Toulmin's (1958) model of informal logic, which has been found successful in the teaching of argumentative/persuasive writing (cf. Connor and Lauer 1988).

And finally, since the researcher is also a practising teacher — and a teacher educator — and since pedagogical improvement is one of the most rewarding aspects of both teachers' and teacher educators' work, empirical studies informed by the ideas developed and to some extent tested in this study would be an obvious direction in which to continue this field of research.

YHTEENVETO

Tavoitteet

Kirjoitetulla kielellä on tärkeä asema koulussa. Kirjoitustaidon hankkimista pidetään peruskoulutuksen keskeisimpänä tehtävänä. Kirjoitustaito on myös edellytys muiden päämäärien saavuttamiseksi (Olson 1976; Olson 1977a; Olson 1977b; Takala 1988; Vähäpassi 1988). Vieraalla kielellä kirjoittaminen on välttämätön taito yhä kansainvälistyvämässä maailmassa.

Opetussuunnitelman mukaan vieraan kielen kirjoittamista harjoitetaan läpi lukion, mutta sen osuus opetuksessa painottuu lukion viimeiselle luokalle. Oman funktionsa lisäksi kirjoittaminen tukee muiden kielitaidon osa-alueiden oppimista. Erityisen kiinteästi sen tulee tukea rakenteiden oppimista. Kirjoitelma kuuluu ylioppilastutkinnon vieraan kielen kokeeseen yhtenä osana kuullunymmärtämistä- ja luetunymmärtämistä sekä rakenteiden hallintaa mittaavien kokeiden ohella. Vieraan kielen ylioppilaskokeessa kirjoitettavan kirjoitelman pituus on 150-200 sanaa. Sanamäärään lasketaan kaikki sanat kuten artikkelit ja prepositiot, joten kirjoitelman pituusvaatimus tuntuu kohtuulliselta. Hyvien kirjoittajien ongelmana voi suorastaan olla kuinka mahduttaa sanottavansa näinkin pieneen sanamäärään.

Jokainen vieraan kielen opettaja joutuu harjoituttamaan kirjoitelman laatimista sekä myöskin arvioimaan oppilaittensa vieraskielisiä tuotoksia. Kirjoittamisen arviointi objektiivisesti on vaativaa, koska kirjoittamisessa on kyse monimutkaisesta taidosta. Ei ole myöskään yksimielisyyttä siitä, mikä on hyvää kirjoittamista. Asiaa vaikeuttaa se, että me kaikki tiedostamme ympäröivän maailman eri tavoin ja siksi ymmärrämme asiat eri tavoin (ks. myös Perho 1994).

Ylioppilaskokeeseen kuuluva kirjoitelma arvioidaan impressionistisesti tai holistisesti Ylioppilastutkintolautakunnan antamien arvosanakuvauksen mukaan asteikolla 0-99 pistettä. Viime aikoina näitä arvosanakuvauksia on kehitetty

analyttisemmiksi. Tässä tutkimuksessa käytettiin analyttistä ja yleisvaikutelmaan perustuvaa arviointitapaa.

Opetussuunnitelman määritelmä siitä, minkälaista tekstiä abiturientin pitää pystyä tuottamaan, on hyvin niukka. Määritelmän mukaan heidän tulee pystyä tuottamaan loogista ja sidoksista tekstiä. Joidenkin vieraan kielen opettajien mielestä opetussuunnitelman teksti saattaa tuntua sopivan väljältä, joten se antaa opettajalle vapaat kädet omalle toiminnalle kirjoittamisen opetuksessa. Toiset se taas niukkuutensa takia voi jättää pikemminkin pulaan.

Tämän tutkimuksen avulla pyrittiin tarkastelemaan, kuinka eritasoiset suomalaiset abiturientit kehittelevät topiikkeja ja kommentteja englanninkielisissä kirjoitelmissaan. Topiikki ja kommentti muodostavat tekstin informaatorakenteen. Niiden kehittelyn oletettiin vaikuttavan tekstin koherenssiin, toisin sanoen siihen, kuinka kiinteästi kirjoittaja pystyy liittämään tekstin eri osat yhdeksi loogiseksi kokonaisuudeksi. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli saada selville, kuinka topiikkien ja kommenttien kehittäminen ilmentää kirjoitelmien laatua, toisin sanoen, onko niiden kehittäminen ja kokeneiden vieraan kielen opettajien antamalla arvioinneilla yhteyttä.

Abiturienttien kirjoitelmia on jonkin verran tutkittu Suomessa. Aikaisemmat tutkimukset ovat lähinnä kohdistuneet esimerkiksi abiturienttien A-venäjän kirjoitelmiin (Perho 1994), missä tarkasteltiin abiturienttien venäjän kielen taitoja ja tasoa. Meriläinen (1982; 1984; 1989) on tarkastellut abiturienttien ruotsinkielisten kirjoitelmien syntaktisia, leksikaalisia ja semanttisia virheitä. Jaakkola (1976) ja Railas (1984) ovat tutkineet sanastollisia ja syntaktisia seikkoja abiturienttien englanninkielisissä kirjoitelmissa. Niittyinen (1992) on tutkinut englannin kielen ylioppilaskokeen kielioppiosuuden virheitä. Riikonen (1994) on tarkastellut virheanalyysin avulla englannin ylioppilaskokeen rakenneosaa.

Kontrastiivisia tutkimuksia, jotka ovat kohdistuneet sekä ammattilaisten että koululaisten ekspositorisiin kirjoitelmiin on tarjolla runsaasti (esim. Kaplan 1966; Connor & McCagg 1983; Carrell 1984a; Carrell 1984b; Connor 1984; Eggington 1987; Grabe 1987; Hinds 1987; Ostler 1987; Bickner & Peyasantiwong 1988). Myös muita tekstilajeja edustavia kirjoitelmia on tutkittu, kuten kertomuksia (esim. Söter 1985) sekä kirjoitelmia, jotka edustavat argumentatiivista tekstityyppiä (esim. Connor 1987, Isaksson-Wikberg 1992 ja Mauranen 1992). Kaksi viimeaikaista antologiaa (Connor & Kaplan 1987; Purves 1988) sisältävät kontrastiivista retoriikkaa käsitteleviä tutkimuksia. Laaja kansainvälinen kirjoitelmatutkimus (the IEA Study of Written Composition) on antanut runsaasti uutta tietoa kirjoittamisesta (Purves et al. 1988). Sellaisia aikaisempia tutkimuksia ei kuitenkaan ole tehty suomalaisten abiturienttien englanninkielisistä kirjoitelmista, joissa päähuomio olisi kiinnitetty kirjoitelmien informaatorakenteeseen. Tutkimukseni avulla pyrin myös saamaan lisätietoa vieraskielisen kirjoitelman opettamiseen.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys

Tutkimuksessa perehdyttiin joukkoon diskurssianalyysimalleja. Tämän pohjalta määriteltiin tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys. Analyysimallien joukosta valittiin funktionaalinen lauseperspektiivi-teoria kuvaamaan tekstin

informaattiorakennetta. Tämä teoria on peräisin 1840-luvulta. Mathesius (1975) ja useat muut Prahan koulukunnan kielitieteilijät (Firbas 1974; Daneš 1974) alkoivat kiinnittää huomiota informaation kulkuun lauseissa. Halliday (1967) on tehnyt sen tunnetuksi läntisen maailman kielitieteilijöiden keskuudessa. Mathesius jakoi lauseen kahteen osaan: teemaa ja reemaan. Tämä jako oli jo tosin tuttu esimerkiksi Platonille, joka käytti teemasta ja reemasta nimityksiä *onoma* ja *rhema*. Kuvaavaa Prahan koulukunnan jäsenille on, etteivät he kaikki ole samaa mieltä esimerkiksi siitä, minkä nimisistä ja kuinka monesta osasesta lause koostuu (ks. esim. Firbas 1986). Tutkimuksessani käytin termejä topiikki ja kommentti.

Tutkimusaineisto

Aluksi tutkimukseen valittujen abiturienttien määrä oli 89. Heillä oli mahdollisuus kirjoittaa englanninkielinen kirjoitelma kuudesta eri aiheesta. Jotta tutkimuksessa mahdollinen aiheen vaikutus saatiin vähäiseksi, tutkimusaineistoksi valittiin 49 abiturienttien kirjoitelmaa, jotka oli kirjoitettu aiheesta '*Does watching television make it difficult to think independently?*'. Kirjoittajat olivat Jyväskylän Normaalikoulun ja Jyväskylän Lyseon oppilaita. He kirjoittivat kirjoitelmat osana tavallista koulutyötä. Kirjoitelman aihe edustaa ekspositorista tekstityyppiä. Ekspositorinen tekstityyppi valittiin siksi, että abiturientit todennäköisesti myöhemmin elämässään joutuvat kirjoittamaan juuri ekspositorista (myös argumentoivaa) tekstityyppiä edustavia tehtäviä. Kirjoitelmien aiheet, niihin kuuluvat tarkat kirjoitusohjeet ja myöskin kirjoitelmien arviointiohjeet otettiin laajasta kansainvälisestä kirjoitelmatutkimuksesta (the IEA Study of Written Composition).

Kuten yllä todettiin, vieraan kielen ylioppilaskokeeseen kuuluvat kirjoitelmat arvioidaan impressionistisesti tai holistisesti. Koska tässä tutkimuksessa käytetty analyyttisen ja yleisvaikutelmaan perustuvan arviointimentelmän yhdistelmä oli näin ollen outo vieraan kielen opettajille, tutkimukseen arvioitsijoiksi valitut viisi kokenutta opettajaa jouduttiin kouluttamaan arviointitehtävään. Kouluttamalla arvioitsijat huolellisesti sekä lisäksi turvautumalla ns. maamerkkiainesiin voidaan lisätä arvioinnin luotettavuutta. Kaksi englannin kielen opettajaa arvioi kunkin kirjoitelman käyttäen arviointiasteikkoa yhdestä viiteen. Arvioitavat piirteet olivat sisältö, rakenne, tyyli ja sävy sekä käsiala. Yksi oli alin annettu pistemäärä kustakin erikseen arvioitavasta piirteestä ja viisi korkein. Lopuksi opettajat arvioivat kirjoitelmat yleisvaikutelman perusteella. Tähän tutkimukseen valittiin 24 kirjoitelmaa keskiarvon ja keskihajonnan perusteella. Kirjoitelmat jakautuivat näin muodostuneisiin kolmeen laatuluokkaan seuraavasti: High (N=4), Mid (N=9) ja Low (N=11). Kiinnostavaksi tutkimuskysymykseksi nousi se, löytyisikö eroja eritasoisten abiturienttien tavassa kehittää topiikkeja ja kommentteja englanninkielisissä kirjoitelmissa.

Menetelmät

Tämän tutkimuksen avulla pyrittiin saamaan selville suomalaisten lukiolaisten tapa kehittää informaatorakennetta lyhyissä englanninkielisissä kirjoitelmissa. Tutkimuksessa keskityttiin kolmeen tutkimustehtävään. Menetelmät valittiin tutkimustehtävien mukaan. Ensimmäisenä tutkimustehtävänä oli kuvailla, kuinka eritasoiset abiturientit kehittelevät topiikkija ja kommentteja englanninkielisissä kirjoitelmissaan. Toisena tutkimustehtävänä oli selvittää mahdollinen suhde arvioidun laadun ja topiikkisyvyyden sekä topiikinvaihdon välillä eritasoisissa kirjoitelmissa. Kolmannen tutkimustehtävän avulla pyrittiin löytämään, minkälaisia topiikkien ja kommenttien kehittelymalleja ilmenee eritasoisissa kirjoitelmissa. Kaikki kirjoitelmat analysoitiin aluksi käyttämällä Lautamatin (1978) *topical structure analysis*-nimistä menetelmää, jota Noh (1985) on kehittänyt edelleen. Tämä analyysimalli erittelee topiikit kommentteista. Topiikkien määrittelyssä käytettiin sekä positionaalisia että tekstuaalis-kontekstipohjaisia kriteereitä. Topiikin ja kommentin muodostamasta alueesta käytettiin nimitystä *topical unit*. Käsitettä topiikkisyvyys (*topical depth*) käytettiin ilmaisemaan peräkkäisten lausetopiikkien progressio syvyysuunnassa.

Aluksi kartoitettiin kirjoittajien tapa kehittää topiikkeja ja kommentteja mainituissa kolmessa eri laatuluokassa. Tämä analyysi oli luonteeltaan deskriptiivinen. Sen avulla jokainen kirjoitelma analysoitiin yksityiskohtaisesti. Analyysissa keskityttiin kuvailemaan kirjoittajan tapaa kehittää topiikkeja ja kommentteja. Analyysi osoitti, että sen avulla pystyttiin tunnistamaan ja kuvaamaan eroja eritasoisten kirjoittajien topiikkien ja kommenttien kehittälyssä.

Seuraavaksi tarkasteltiin, kuinka eritasoiset abiturientit kehittivät topiikkeja kirjoitelmissaan. Tässä analyysissa pääpaino oli topiikkisyvytydessä ja topiikkien vaihdossa. Erityisesti topiikkisyvytydessä todettiin eroja eritasoisissa kirjoitelmissa. Kolmantena ja viimeisenä tutkimuskohteena oli tarkastella, minkälaisia topiikin ja kommentin kehittelymalleja eritasoiset vieraankielen kirjoittajat käyttävät. Tämän viimeisen tutkimustehtävän avulla pyrittiin tarkastelemaan, mitä Prahan koulukuntaa edustavan kielitieteilijän Danešin (1974) kehittämiä teemankehittelymalleja ilmenee abiturienttien englanninkielisissä kirjoitelmissa. Näiden kolmen eri analyysin avulla pyrittiin saamaan selville suomalaisten lukiolaisten tapa kehittää informaatorakennetta lyhyissä englanninkielisissä kirjoitelmissa.

Tulokset

Abiturienttien tavasta käyttää Danešin (1974) teemaprogressiomalleja voidaan todeta seuraavat päätulokset. Keskitasoiset kirjoittajat käyttivät Danešin ensimmäistä tapaa kehittää topiikkeja ja kommentteja useimmin kuin hyvät ja heikot kirjoittajat. Tosin hyvien ja heikkojen kirjoittajien kirjoitelmissa esiintyvien tapausten välillä ei ollut kovin suurta eroa. Heikoimmat kirjoittajat näyttivät käyttävän Danešin toista mallia enemmän kuin kahden muun laatuluokan kirjoittajat. Kiinnostava seikkana nousi esiin se, että heikoimmat vieraan kielen kirjoittajat käyttivät kirjoitelmissaan edellä esiintyviä propositioita topiikkeinaan tuntuvasti useammin kuin hyvät ja keskitasoiset kirjoittajat. Vaikka heikot

kirjoittajat käyttivät pysyvää topiikkaa useimmin kuin hyvät ja keskitasoiset kirjoittajat, heidän kirjoitelmansa vaikuttivat useimmiten monotonisilta. Heikot kirjoittajat näyttivät vaihtavan topiikkeja ja kommentteja eneemmän kuin hyvät ja keskitasoiset kirjoittajat. Topiikkien ja kommenttien jatkuva vaihtuminen luo epäyhteinäisen vaikutelman. Uusien topiikkien yhtäkkinen ilmaantuminen tekstiin tekee siitä hajanaisen. Informaation toistuminen kommenttiosuudessa oli tunnusomaista heikoille kirjoittajille.

Odotusten mukaisesti tutkimuksen yhtenä päätuloksena oli, että hyvät kirjoittajat kehittävätkin topiikkeja tasaisemmin yli useiden topiikkisyvyyksien kuin kahden heikomman tasoryhmän kirjoittajat. Hyvät kirjoittajat eivät ahda niin monta topiikkaa ylimmälle topiikkitasolle kuin muiden tasoryhmien kirjoittajat, vaan he pystyvät ulottamaan niitä suhteellisesti enemmän syvemmille tasoille. Hyvien kirjoittajien tekemät topiikkien muutokset ovat pienempiä kuin heikompien kirjoittajien, joiden topiikkien muutokset ovat jonkin verran jyrkempiä. Hyvät kirjoittajat pyrkivät palaamaan takaisin ylimpään topiikkisyvyyteen useammin kuin muiden tasoryhmien kirjoittajat. Hyvät kirjoittajat ovat homogeenisempia käsitellessään topiikkeja ylimmillä topiikkisyvyyksillä kuin keskitasoiset ja heikot kirjoittajat. Topiikkien ja kommenttien kehittelyn lisäksi varsinkin heikoilla kirjoittajilla oli sekä sanastollisia että kieliopillisia ongelmia.

Saadut tutkimustulokset nostavat esiin uusia, kiinnostavia jatkomahtollisuuksia. Yksi jatkotutkimuksen kohde on verrata, kuinka samat kirjoittajat kehittävätkin topiikkeja ja kommentteja sekä äidinkielellä kirjoittaessaan että kirjoittaessaan vieraalla kielellä. Tällä tavoin saataisiin arvokasta tietoa samojen kirjoittajien kyvystä kehittää informaatorakennetta kahta hyvin erilaista alkuperää olevalla kielellä. Toinen huomion arvoinen seikka verrattaessa samojen kirjoittajien äidinkieliä sekä englanninkielisiä tuotoksia on kirjoitelman pituuden vaikutus topiikkien ja kommenttien kehittelyyn. Koska äidinkielen kirjoitelmat ovat tuntuvasti pitempiä kuin vieraalla kielellä tuotetut kirjoitelmat, olisi mielenkiintoista tutkia, kuinka oppilaat kehittävätkin niissä topiikkeja ja kommentteja. Yhtenä tutkimuskohteena voisivat olla Englantia pääaineenaan opiskelevien topiikkien ja kommenttien kehittäminen. Pääaineen opiskelijat edustavat lähes syntyperäisiä kielenoppijoita. Kolmas, edellisistä tutkimustehtävistä poikkeava jatkotutkimus on tarkastella, mitkä muut tekijät kuin tekstin informaatorakenne (ts. topiikki ja kommentti) vaikuttavat arvioituun laatuun. Esiin nousee kysymys saada selville kirjoitelman looginen rakenne. Tämän tutkimiseen soveltuu esimerkiksi merkityssuhdeanalyysi (Laurinen ja Kauppinen 1986) tai Toulminin (1956) kehittämä analyysimalli.

APPENDIX 1

The Compositions (High N=4, Hid N=9, and Low N=11).
The compositions are printed uncorrected.

High Composition No 1

Is it dangerous to watch television? Does watching TV reduce one's capability to have own, free opinions? I don't think so. It all depends on how much you watch and first of all how and why you watch.

In Finland we have now three national TV-channels. That means that we should nomore watch every program but we should choose. Choosing now is the keyword. Many people watch television in a completely wrong way. They just turn the TV-set on and start watching no matter what the program is. A much better way would be to watch only particularly interesting, prechosen programs and only if you don't have anything 'better' to do.

I'm still not saying that one should only watch educational programs like documents or news. Of course these programs widen your knowledge on various things and by doing so increase your ability to judge things right. But TV should also entertain you: there are shows, etc. to choose from more than you can handle. Even as entertainment should just relax you you should still choose carefully, because pure trash is always available. You should always remember too that programs like Dallas or Dynasty are pure fantasy and imagination and they have got nothing to do with real life.

So, if you just remember to choose your programs carefully, you will still be able to think for yourself and you won't become a slave of the 'box'.

High Composition No 2

'Television has become drug for the American nation,' my Psychology teacher in Indiana said to me. He is truly worried and for a good reason. Young American people watch TV five to seven hours every day. There are over a hundred channels to choose from and broadcasting through day and night in the States. Older people, especially mothers who don't go to work, watch their 'lovely big eye'. You also have to remember how good babysitter TV is. Children just sit and watch TV like angels.

It seems that television has become a habit for too many of us. It is so easy open TV and get some snack with Dynasty and Dallas. Beautiful people have no worries, no wars, no unemployment. Soon you start dreaming like your favorite actor and acting like him. You start to live like him. You can't anymore realize what reality is. If you are honest to yourself, you have to admit that you would like to live in your idol's way.

TV is not a very good friend. Only the news and some documentaries tell you the truth. You don't have to think or make your own decisions with TV. It is true that TV can offer very good and educating programs. But isn't there any other way to experience them yourself with your own eyes, ears and hands? After all we should live our life not just watch the others live.

High Composition No 3

In this world the television has a great influence to our life and to our way of thinking. Almost every family in so called 'rich' countries has one or two televisions in their homes. People and especially children are watching much more television now than earlier. Even though these are the facts that does not mean that watching TV makes it more difficult to think independently.

Television gives us only one point of view and we must see the other one behind the screen. Television gives us the one way of thinking. We have to find the other one by ourselves. We can find different opinions in different programmes. This depends about the producer of the program. It has all the opinions that the producer of the program has. We have to think carefully what we see in the television and choose our own opinions.

Watching TV too much can make it too difficult to think independently. They are so young that they can't understand what is right or wrong and they can't think so independently as adults can. Television can give the wrong expression to the children.

It's important that the parents are about their so much that they don't let their children to watch too much television. Parents can also lead their children to the right way of thinking.

We can choose what we want to watch from television. In Finland we have three different channels and in Australia they have six different channels. We don't have to watch the things we don't want to see because we can always change to the other channel. We can get the new idea from television but we all are our own independent persons.

High Composition No 4

Watching TV is voluntary. We wouldn't have to watch it if we didn't want to. We don't have to think as the people on TV do. But I admit that watching TV may have an influence on our opinions and all our way of thinking. I think that we are able to resist the TV's influence if we want to.

Those who watch telly all day and night long day in day out without any real hobbies are really in danger. I think that that is their own fault for letting it happen. TV is very much full of crap and everything not important. TV also gives us a great deal of useful information and news of what is going on in this world of ours.

Young people may have some difficulties in creating their opinions independently. The television may influence on them without them even noticing it. That may sometimes be the purpose of TV producers. In the same way the producers and creators of political programmes are trying to influence adults, the voters in the elections. I think that TV can make it more difficult to think independently - at least for some of us.

Mid Composition No 1

In my opinion there is a great danger nowadays in watching TV. We don't maybe realize how much we really watch television. It is a powerful medium and it can change our attitudes and thinking. There is no use to argue that we can choose what we want to watch because we sometimes watch programmes which we don't like.

Children are more in danger than adults are. They haven't seen the world as much as their parents have. If they watch television hours and hours every day they get bored, impatient and tired. It is very easy to give thoughts, opinions and answers to that kind of person through TV. That is a very good way to affect people.

I think that making opinions is not so easy even if we don't have the media affecting us. So it's not hard to understand that we are living in the crossfire of all kind of bad things. We have to watch television because it also gives us some kind of machine that knows everything. We can think independently enough by watching around us without sitting in front of television every evening.

Mid Composition No 2

Television is a machine which is easy to switch on and off. This usually happens if one has not anything special to do. Channels are many and everyone can find something interesting.

Television is often watched just for fun. It is a good entertainer but it has some other effects, too. People lose their independence of thinking when they watch films and programs in which everything tend to be perfect. Problems come up if they are easily solved and life is smiling in every turn. When one watches these kind of programs he sucks them into mind and starts thinking that his life is also dancing on roses. Reality is often forgotten and one becomes a prisoner of imagination. Children are in an especially big danger to lose their independence when they are watching TV without their parents' control. They don't find it only amusement. They identify themselves to stars and other actors on the screen.

Instead of watching TV we should get hobbies that improve thinking and help to find an own personality.

Mid Composition No 3

I think that age has a strong effect in this matter. The younger you are the stronger the power of TV and commercials are. Of course we have to exclude those small children who don't even understand what is said on TV.

The effect is seen more often among teenagers than adults. Young people want to look and act same way with their friends. When they see a certain kind of model on TV they forget common sence and start acting like the people on TV. They want to be like the guys in Miami Vice.

Adults are more realistic when they watch TV. They might like some product that they see there but they usually don't hurry to buy it rightaway. The effects are also connected with the time that you spend by watching TV. The more often you watch the bigger the effects are. I do think that in the end to let the TV affect to your opinions is always your choice.

Mid Composition No 4

Television is like using drugs to some people. They can't think independently or use their brains effectively. That is a problem in countries with a large number of television channels, for example in the USA.

The television affects people in many ways. It gives you entertainment just by the touch of the button. You start to watch TV and nothing or nobody can disturb you. The television gives you the right answers: Rambo could have won the Vietnam-army by himself; it was Iran's fault that their plane carrying passengers was shot down by the US.-army. That was all true, right? If you think so, you are a slave of the television.

The younger you start watching television many hours a day it is obvious that you won't be able to think independently and you will believe everything on TV. I don't mean that everyone would become dependent on TV. But it is a problem among children and teenagers. Parents should let their children read good books and they should learn them to play like children.

Mid Composition No 5

Do you have any opinion of your own or have you just heard some well-based opinions. In TV and newspapers you are given lots of information. Television is a very good thing to make us change our opinions. If you watch very famous people talking about things you are not very sure about. It is very easy to imitate their sayings as your own opinions. That is not a very independent way of thinking.

Luckily, there isn't very much discussion in television except before election and politicians do speak so strange that it's better for an ordinary person to avoid that sort of speaking.

In TV serials you are given lots of ideas how things should be if they are going fine that means that ugly hat you are wearing looks great and you will give as smart impression as Don Johnson if you smoke the same way than he does.

TV does make independent thinking more difficult but in today's world you are given ready opinions everywhere so you can watch TV as much as you want if you remember to think with your own brains as much as possible.

Mid Composition No 6

Nowadays it's very difficult to find a house without television. Of course it gives us very important information like news and documents. But those programs take only couple of hours a day. We still watch many more hours and even from seven different channels.

It's fine to talk about competition society and competition society really has taken many problems on its shoulders. TV and its entertainment programs gives a possibility to think about something else than work. But sometimes it has its influence on people. We'll forget our own opinions. We are very sad if someone dies in a love story or if somebody is treated with injustice. If something like this happens in a real life we don't feel anything. It's maybe easier to hire an actress who does all those difficulties for us. But is life then worth living? Are we then independent? What would happen if we would destroy every television in the world? Maybe we will start listening to radio and after some years we are at the same stage - not by watching but by listening.

But if you are watching television many hours every day it's sure that you are soon looking at yourself in TV -instead of the filmstar.

Mid Composition No 7

Your own nature is the most important thing in affecting on your independence. However, you are not the only thing affecting your nature. Your home and your friends are also there in creating you.

A great deal of people think that television is a monster. These people are often only thinking of television's negative influence on passive people. A passive viewer is taking his ideas straight from this monster. They identify with JR in Dallas and with Alexis in Dynasty. Sometimes they cannot even chance these roles fitting to the world in which they are living right now. Television can also have a positive influence on people. It can teach independent teaching by showing us good people and bad people. Together with a safe home and a suitable amount of good TV programs a young people learn to wonder what is right and what is wrong.

I don't think that television is a monster because my parents were quite clear in their opinions what I was allowed to watch.

Mid Composition No 8

Television has become one of the most common methods to transmit information. It has all the advantages of a well informing equipment. It transmits sound and at the same time a picture is connected to sound. Television does not let us form our own image from the things that the sound tells us. So it offers 'ready made' information forcing us to think more and more in the ways that the information is given.

Watching television is often referred to watching movies. But we should remember that almost 50% of television' transmission time is news and documents. But still radio is more to listen than television. I think we should watch and listen news from television and listen radio plays instead of watching movies from television because by watching TV we cannot understand them wrongly and by listening radio plays we could form our own world of the play.

Mid Composition No 9

Television is one of the most important inventions made in this country. Despite atomic energy, space-flights etc, television has more than anything else affected the lives of individual persons. In Finland an average person watches TV approximately two hours every day. Therefore TV has become an authority in our lives. We believe what a TV-commentator says to us in the news. We believe that in no doubt. We can't check that ourselves.

TV influences us. We know that commercials don't tell us the other side of the things they promote. We also know that American police-series are not the whole picture of America. It, however, affects us sub-consciously. Many fear to go to the USA, because they believe to get robbed or killed immediately. The crime situation may be bad in big cities, but that bad it is nowhere.

Now you may think that TV is bad. You wouldn't be alone, many other feel like that. However, that is not the whole story. News are the same in the papers, too. So TV is not the only one to blame if they are not true. In fact watching foreign TV channels via Cable-TV gives us more choice. We can often see things happening in this world from the other side as well. We get more independence in making our decisions when we receive information from several sources.

I'm proud to say that at least I'm quite independent in my thinking. I hope that many others are, too.

Low Composition No 1

People watch TV a lot nowadays. It maybe difficult to make decisions and think independently for a person who is a TV freak and who believes everything that he has been told on the TV.

I am afraid of the manipulation of the TV. I am sure that TV selects and changes the information it gets. So we maybe don't know anything about the other case that TV is sending us. The TV producer's view may be extremely different when it is compared to our attitude. For example, there are many candidates in the elections and you don't know them very well. From the TV news you will get information telling you that candidate three is the best. I bet that your vote will be given to the candidate three.

You must have a strong self-confidence. Don't trust everything that you have been told. Use your own brains and don't sink to the world of TV lies. It is not easy to make opinions even if we don't have the media affecting us. So it is not hard to understand that we are living in the crossfire of all kind of affects. We have to watch television because it also gives us information. But we must not think it as some kind of machine that knows everything. By watching around us and living full life without sitting in front of television every evening we can think independently enough.

Low Composition No 2

The TV is a quite new machine and almost every family has got it. Today it's hard to live without television. The time flies when you are watching TV.

There is many good programs, animals and history programs on TV. These are good because they help you to understand the world.

But there is also programs that don't learned anything for you, Dallas and Dynasty, for example. They just give you a model how you should live and dress and how you can be a very rich businessman.

So these films will show you what kind of people you should have to be. If you don't have enough money, you are nothing. You can't buy the finest clothes because you haven't got money to move your hairstyle and you don't have such a nice hobbies as they in those films have.

It's much more important to think independently. If you are not as all your friends are, I don't think that is a bad thing. You have to say what you want to say though all the others will disagree with your idea.

Be critical when you are watching TV because television can't really make you a good busenessman.

Low Composition No 3

We have more free-time, holidays than before. People can go to the cinema, or watching video.

If we have nothing to do we can watch TV. It isn't always a good idea. When you are too often at home, you would come more lazy and passive. You need not think or move: you just be and watch.

There is many kind of film on TV. If we watch too much adventure films, normal live is boring. It is only normal live.

Another point is that if you have some TV heroes you give up your own way of think and you only think what you want to be and you live like your stars-unreal world. It's good that many families can talk and criticize about TV programs.

If we take good care of our own thinking and are critical TV is not dangerous, and it make not difficult to think independently.

Low Composition No 4

Today we have many TV channels to watch. We get a lot of information from different corners of the world. That is a good thing for our brains. We have to use them.

Every TV channel does give us a modell of thinking. It in a way tells us what we should think. But nowadays we have lot of TV channels and every channel has its own point of view. We must choose. We must use our brains and select the information. We must produce our own opinion on each matter.

When we see two reports about one thing: We see one on Worldnet - It is made in USA and we see the other on Moscow TV. Those reports are certainly different. We must make up our minds and choose what believe. We cannot one-eyedly just believe in one and forget the other report. We must think and decide. And we must do in ourselves.

So in my opinion TV doesn't make it more difficult to think independently. It makes it a must.

Low Composition No 5

Television is maybe the most effective machine that a human being has developed. You can hear sounds on the radio and see pictures on the paper. On television sound and picture are together and that makes television so effective.

Almost everybody has own TV. People watch all kind of programmes from serious documents and news to soapoperas like Dallas ans so on. The news is the most effective programme. Almost everybody watch the news. They want to know what is going on here.

Six blacks died and several injured when the army suddenly began to shoot. At the same time pictures are rushing into your minds. White soldiers are shooting black kids. People are crying for help. Television not only give you information but also tries, depending on situations, to change your own opinions. You can find

a good example of this in politics. You haven't really thought about voting anybody. But though you curiously watch that evenings programme which shows candidates' interviews, some of them might effect you that you rush out of your room to vote just him. And you could be very disappointed of your decision afterwards.

Television also give you everything ready: in a nice waterproof packet. You can get every details of Irak and Irans war, year by year. But it also makes you think and that is the most important thing.

There is no real answer to this question. I think that everybody should have own independent ideas about all kind of matters. TV gives information and ready-made opinions. But what you are going to do with it is up to you. Everyone has to make its own decisions.

Low Composition No 6

The television is today the largest medium in the world. The news comes to our homes in few seconds. People watch television more and more every day. News and entertainment comes from TV. They have to see it daily, because reading papers is more difficult.

It's easy to the TV companies to make watchers think about the information that is useful to some country. People lost their independence of their king and they just become slaves of television, who can't live without it. TV is like a drug. People have to get it and always more. TV reporters are heroes in watchers' minds, although they only pick up some news and read them. Actors become youth idols. People don't anymore go to the theater. They rather stay at home and watch soapoperas like Dallas and Dynasty.

In Finland we must change TV programs into higher level. We could have less commercial rubbish and we could use the money for programs which make people think about living and being here in the world. If the style don't change, I am sure that watching TV makes it more difficult to think independently.

Low Composition No 7

Television is the most important part of our communication today. People watch it more and more every year. The television is the centre of community in many families. It is used to day-caring children and family joint together around television on Sundays.

The advertisements on TV try to influence on our subconscious. In the same way television programs influence us. Violence films make us our independently thinking useless, because everything has been thinking ready in the television. If we read books we has to use our imagination. When we watch the set there isn't that problem. The television kills our imagination because we watch and listen to it. The independently thinking is based on our imagination.

The development of the human race is always need a lot of thinking and imagination. The development may change cause the power of the television.

Low Composition No 8

Everybody watch television more or less, some people watch almost everything that comes out and some people just want to know what happens and they prefer watching news and weather. Everybody: children, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged people, old ones - they all watch tv. They all do different kinds of work.

I think television doesn't make anything if you watch it or not. It gives you examples and ideas about everything and often it really gives how you should think about something but I doubt if anybody does as is said on TV. Most people can think independently and they take ideas about what they have seen on television.

Children and teenagers are a different thing. They can't decide themselves. They often think as is said on TV. Teenagers are the worst thing. They watch television and videos alone all days long and because they don't have a sense about right and wrong and they don't realize that violence films are bullshit. They do the same things as it's on the films. They smoke, use drugs, drink alcohol, fight with others just as they have seen on films.

So television does make you think as you do. Teenagers are a negative group in this subject.

Low Composition No 9

Television is the most effective medium on the Earth. It reaches almost every man these days. This incredible machine pushes out commercials, news from all over world, movies, everykind of music, sport and so on. And of course now during the Olympic Games, people do even more sitting in front of the television screen. I must say that it is just great. You can always see the happenings in your own living-room from this little box.

A man watch television almost all his life. The programmes only change when he gets older. Watching TV is much more different than reading books is. You don't have to use your energy for reading. It is done for you. I think that this is the reason why people should slow down watching TV. It's not too late to make things better, but the increasing number of videos doesn't make the future seem so good.

Low Composition No 10

That is right. Nowadays it is more difficult to think independently when you are watching TV. Because most of TV's programmes are given or try to give answers to questions. And this is very wrong.

Maybe the older people can analyse TV's programmes and they know what is right and what is wrong. But this is not so easy when we are talking about a young people. Some of TV's programmes are very good, news, for example. News is given a lot of thinks that we can think independently and that is very good.

Everyone knows that it is very important to think ownself. And I think we have to do it more than we do now.

When we are watching TV it is so easy to read and many people doesn't want or don't try to think what the TV says. But when we are reading books or newspapers we have to think more. And in my opinion it is more useful to read than to watch TV.

Low Composition No 11

I think that watching television makes it more difficult to think independently in many cases. If young child watch film about wild west and see how ugly screaming indian kills young white girl. It is sure that he don't like indians after that. He don't know say facts about indians and wild west, so it is natural that he believes what he sees. When he gets older, he perhaps learns that he has some hard feelings against indians.

In situation like above, television makes it very difficult to think independently. Of course, if you are a bit intelligent and civilized it have no effect on you, but it has on young child. So it is important that young children don't watch television very much. If he does then it is important that he can have many kinds of information from it. So we have to get rid of those poor wildwest, ganster and soap opera programs and we have to get good programs to television. Big TV companys, do you hear me?

High Composition No 1

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. to watch television?	//Is it dangerous
			2. Does watching TV	reduce one's capability to have own, free opinions?
how much and how and why		first of all	3. I 4. It 5. you	don't think so. all depends on watch
		In Finland	6. you 7. we	watch. have now three national TV-channels.
that		That means	8. we 9. we 10. Choosing 11. Many people	should nomore watch every watchable program should choose. is now keyword. watch television in a completely wrong way.
what		no matter	12. They 13. the program 14. A much better way	just turn the TV-set on and start watching is. would be to watch only particularly interesting, prechosen programs
and only if			15. you	don't have anything 'better' to do.
that	I'm still not saying		16. one	should only watch educational programs like documents or news.
		Of course	17. these programs	widen your knowledge on various things and by doing so increase your ability to judge things right.
But			18. TV	should also entertain you:
Even as		there are more than	19. shows, etc. 20. you 21. entertainment 22. you	to choose from can handle. should just relax you, should still choose carefully,
because			23. pure trash 24. You	is always available. should always remember too

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
that			25. programs	like Dallas or Dynasty are pure fantasy and imagination
and			26. they	have nothing to do with real life.
So, if			27. you	just remember to choose your program carefully,
			28. you	will still be able to think for yourself
and			29. you	won't become a slave of 'the box'.

High Composition No 2

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. 'Television	has become drug for the American nation,'
			2. my Psychology teacher	in Indiana said to me.
			3. He	is truly worried and for a good reason.
			4. Young American people	watch TV five to seven hours every day.
		There are	5. over a hundred channels	to choose from and broadcasting through day and night in the States.
		especially	6. Older people,	don't go to work,
			7. mothers	watch their 'lovely big eye'.
			8. You	also have to remember
			9. TV	is. // how good babysitter
			10. Children	just sit and watch TV like angels.
that		It seems	11. television	has become a habit for too many of us.
and		It is so easy	12. open TV	
			13. get some snack	with Dynasty or Dallas.
			14. Beautiful people	have no worries, no wars, no unemployment.
		What a life.	15. you	start dreaming like your favourite actor and acting like him.
		Soon	16. You	start to live like him.
what			17. You	can't anymore realize
If			18. reality	is.
			19. you	are honest to yourself.

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
that			20. you 21. you	have to admit would like to live in <u>your idol's way.</u>
			22. TV	is not a very good friend.
and		Only	23. the news 24. some documentaries 25. You	tell you the truth. don't have to think or make your own de- cisions with TV.
that	It is true		26. TV	can offer very good and educating programs.
But		isn't there	27. any other way to experience	them yourself with your own eyes, ears and hands?
	There should be. After all		28. we	should live our life not just watch the others live.

High Composition No 3

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
		In this world	1. the television	has a great influence to our life and to our way of thinking.
		Almost	2. all the families	is so called 'rich' countries have one or two televisions in their homes.
and		especially	3. People 4. children	are watching much more television now than earlier.
Even though			5. these	are the facts
that		that does not mean	6. watching TV	makes it more difficult to think <u>independently.</u>
			7. Television	gives us only one point of view and must see the other one behind the screen.
			8. we	
			9. Television	gives us the one way of thinking.
			10. We	have to find the other one by ourselves.

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			11. We	can find different opinions in different opinions in different programmes.
			12. This	depends about the producer of the programs.
			13. It	has all the opinions
that			14. the producer of the program has.	
			15. We	have to think carefully
what			16. we	see in the television and choose our own opinions.
			17. Watching TV	too much can make it too difficult to think independently.
that			18. They	are so young
			19. they	can't understand what is right or wrong
and			20. they	can't think so independently
as			21. adults	can.
			22. Television	can give the wrong expression to the children.
	It's important		23. the parents	are about their so much
that			24. they	don't let their children to watch too much television.
that			25. Parents	can also lead their children to the right way of thinking.
			26. We	can choose
what			27. we	want to watch from television.
	In Finland		28. we	have three different channels
and	in Australia		29. they	have six different channels.
			30. We	don't have to watch the things
(that)			31. we	don't want to see
because			32. we	can always change to the other channel.

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			33. We	can get the new idea from television
but			34. we	all are our own independent persons.

High Composition No 4

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Watching TV	is voluntary.
			2. We	wouldn't have to watch it
if			3. we	didn't want to.
			4. We	don't have to think do.
as But that	I admit		5. the people on TV	
			6. watching TV	may have influence on our opinions and all our way of thinking.
		I think	7. we	are able to resist the TV's influence
that			8. we	want to.
if			9. Those who watch telly all day and night long day in and day out without any real hobbies	are really in danger.
		I think	10. that	is their own fault for letting it happen.
			11. TV	is very much full of crap and everything not important.
			12. TV	also gives us real deal of useful information and news of what is going on in this world of ours.
			13. Young people	may have some difficulties in creating their opinions independently.
			14. The television	may influence on them
		without	15. them	noticing it.
			16. That	may sometimes be the purpose of TV producers.
		In the same way	17. the producers	

<u>MARKER</u>	<u>ATT./INF.FR.</u>	<u>THEMATIC FR.</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>COMMENT</u>
and			18. creators of political programmes	are trying to influence adults, the voters in the elections.
that	I think		19. TV	can make it more difficult to think independently - at least for some of us.

Mid Composition No 1

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
	In my opinion	there is	1. a great danger	nowadays in watching TV.
how much			2. We 3. we	don't maybe realize really watch television.
and			4. It 5. it	is a powerful medium can change our attitudes and thinking.
that what because	There is no use to argue		6. we 7. we 8. we	can choose want to watch sometimes watch programmes don't like.
which			9. we	
than			10. Children 11. adults	are more in danger are.
as much as If			12. They 13. their parents 14. they 15. they 16. to give thoughts, opinions and answers	have not seen the world have. watch television hours and hours every day. get bored, impatient and tired. // It is very easy to that kind of person through TV.
			17. That	is a very good way to affect people.
that even if	I think		18. making opinions 19. we	is not so easy don't have the media affecting us.
So that			20. to understand 21. we	//it's not hard have the media affecting us.
because			22. We 23. it 24. that 25. We	have to watch television also gives us some kind of machine knows everything. can think independently enough by watching around us without sitting in front of television every evening.

Mid Composition No 2

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
if			1. Television	is a machine
			2. witch	is easy to switch on and off.
			3. This	usually happens
			4. one	has not anything special to do.
and			5. Channels	are many
			6. everyone	can find something special to do.
but			7. Television	is often watched just for fun.
			8. It	is a good entertainer
			9. it	has some other effects, too.
when in which			10. People	lose their independence of thinking
			11. they	watch films and programs tend to be perfect.
if and (if) When			12. everything	come up
			13. Problems	are easily solved
that			14. they	is smiling in every turn.
			15. life	watches these kind of programs
			16. one	sucks them into mind and starts thinking
			17. he	is also dancing on roses.
and			18. his life	is often forgotten
			19. Reality	becomes a prisoner of imagination.
when			20. one	are in an especially big danger to lose their independence
			21. Children	are watching TV without their parents' control.
			22. they	don't find it only amusement.
			23. They	identify themselves to stars and other actors on the screen.
		Instead of watching TV	24. They	
			25. we	should get hobbies
			26. that	improve thinking and help to find an own personality.

Mid Composition No 3

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
that	I think		1. age	has a strong effect in this matter-
			2. you	are
and		The younger the stronger	3. the power of TV	are.
			4. commercials	have to exclude those small children
			5. we	don't even understand
			6. who	is said on TV.
			7. what	

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
When			8. The effect	is seen more often among teenagers than adults.
			9. Young people	want to look and act same way with their friends.
			10. they	see a certain kind of model on TV
			11. they	forget common sence and start acting like the people on TV.
			12. They	want to be like the guys in Miami Vice.
when			13. Adults	are more realistic
that			14. they	watch TV.
but			15. They	might like same product
			16. they	see there
			17. they	usually don't hurry to buy it rightaway.
that			18. The effects	are also connected with the time
		The more often the bigger	19. you	spend by watching TV.
			20. you	spend by watching TV.
			21. the effects	are.
that	I do think	in the end	22. to let	the TV affect to your opinions is always your choice.

Mid Composition No 4

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Television	is like using drugs to some people.
			2. They	can't think independently or use their brains effectively.
			3. That	is a problem in countries with a large number of television channels, for example in the USA.
			4. The television	affects on people in many ways.
			5. It	gives you entertainment just by the touch of the button.
and			6. You	start to watch TV
or			7. nothing	
			8. nobody	can disturb you.
			9. The television	gives you the right answers: could have won the Vietnam-army by himself;
			10. Rambo	//it was
that			11. Iran's fault	their plane carrying passengers was shot down by the U.S.- army.
			12. That	was all true, right?
If			13. you	think so,
			14. you	are a slave of the television.

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
		The younger	15. you	start watching television many hours a day
that	it is obvious		16. you	won't be able to think independently
and			17. you	will believe everything on TV.
that	I don't mean		18. everyone	would become dependent on TV.
But			19. it	is a problem among children and teenagers.
			20. Parents	should let their children read good books
and			21. they	should learn them to play like children

Mid Composition No 5

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Do you	have my opinion of your own
or			2. have you	just heard same well-based opinions.
		In TV and newspapers	3. you	are given lots of information.
			4. Television	is a very good thing to make us change our opinions.
If			5. you	watch very famous people talking about things
			6. you	are not very sure about.
			7. to imitate	//It's very easy their sayings as your own opinions.
			8. That	is not very independent way of thinking.
	Luckily,	there isn't	9. very much discussions	in television
except and that	it's better	before election	10. politicians	do speak so strange
		for an ordinary person	11. to avoid	that sort of speaking.
how if		In TV serials	12. you	are given lots of ideas
			13. things	should be
	that means		14. they	are going fine
			15. you	//that ugly hat
and			16. you	are wearing looks great will give as smart impression as Don Johnson
if			17. you	smoke same way than he does.
			18. TV	does make independent thinking more difficult

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
but		in today's world	19. you	are given ready opinions everywhere
so			20. you	can watch TV
as much as			21. you	want
if			22. you	remember to think with your own brains as much as possible.

Mid Composition No 6

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
	it's very difficult	Nowadays	1. to find	a house without television-
		Of course	2. it	gives us very important information like news and documents.
But			3. those programs	can only couple of hours a day.
			4. We	still watch TV many more hours and even from seven different channels.
	It's fine		5. to talk	about competition society
and			6. competition society	really has taken many problems on its shoulders-
			7. TV	
and			8. entertainment programs	gives a possibility to think about something else than work.
But	sometimes		9. it	has its influence on people.
			10. We	'll forget our own opinions.
if			11. We	are very sad
or if			12. someone	dies in a love story
			13. somebody	is treated with injustice.
If			14. something	like this happens in a real life
	It's maybe easier		15. we	don't feel anything.
			16. to hire	an actress
			17. who	does all those difficulties for us.
But			18. is life	then worth living?
			19. Are we	then independent?
if			20. What	would happen
			21. we	would destroy every television in the world?

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
	Maybe		22. we	will start listening to radio
and		after some years	23. we	are at the same stage - not by watching but by listening.
But if			24. you	are watching television many hours every day
that	it's sure		25. you	are soon looking at yourself in TV - instead of the filmstar.

Mid Composition No 7

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Your own nature	is the most important thing in affecting on your independence.
However,			2. you	are not the only thing affecting your nature.
and			3. Your home 4. your friends	are also there in creating you.
that			5. A great deal of people think 6. television 7. These people	is a monster. are often only thinking on television's negative influence on passive people.
			8. A passive viewer	is taking his ideas straight from this monster.
			9. They	identify with JR in Dallas and with Alexis in Dynasty.
		Sometimes	10. they	cannot even change these roles fitting to the world
in wich			11. they 12. Television	are living right now. can also have a positive influence on people.
			13. It	can teach independent thinking by showing us good people and bad people.
		Together with a safe home and a suitable amount of good TV programs	14. a young people	learn to wonder what is right and what is wrong.

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
	I don't think			
that			15. television	is a monster
because			16. my parents	were quite clear in their opinions
what			17. I	was allowed to watch.

Mid Composition No 8

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Television	has become one of the most common methods to transmit information.
			2. It	has all the advantage of a well informing equipment.
and		at the same time	3. It	transmits sound
			4. a picture	is connected to sound.
			5. Television	does no let us form our own image from the things
that			6. the sound	tells us.
So			7. it	offers 'ready made' information
			8. (it)	//forcing us to think more and more in the ways is given.
that			9. the information	is given.
			10. Watching television	is often referred to watching movies.
But			11. we	should remember
that		almost	12. 50% of television transmission time	is news and documents.
But		still	13. radio	is more to listen than television.
(that)	I think		14. we	should watch and listen news from television
and			15. (we)	listen radio plays //instead of watching movies from television
because		by watching TV	16. we	cannot understand them wrongly
and		by listening radio plays	17. we	could form our own world of the play.

Mid Composition No 9

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Television	is one of the most important inventions made in this country.
		Despite atomic energy, space-flights etc,	2. television	has more than anything else affected the lives of individual persons.
		In Finland	3. an average person	watches TV approximately two hours every day.
		Therefore	4. TV	has become an authority in our lives.
what			5. We	believe
			6. a TV-commentator	says to us in the news.
			7. We	believe that in no doubt.
			8. We	can't check that ourselves.
			9. TV	influences us.
that			10. We	know
(that)			11. commercials	don't tell us the other side of the things promote.
that			12. they	also know
			13. We	are not the whole picture of America.
			14. American picture police-series	however, affects us sub-consciously.
			15. It,	fear to go to the USA, believe to get robbed or killed immediately.
because			16. Many	may be bad in big cities,
			17. they	
			18. The crime situation	
but		that bad	19. it	is nowhere.
		Now	20. you	may think
that			21. TV	is bad.
			22. You	wouldn't be alone,
		However,	23. many other	feel like that.
			24. that	is not the whole story.
			25. News	are the same in the papers, too.
So			26. TV	is not the only one to blame
if			27. they	are not true.
		In fact	28. watching foreign TV-channels via Cable-TV	gives us more choice.
			29. We	can often see things happening in this world from the other side as well.

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			30. We	g e t m o r e independence in
when			31. we	making our decisions receive information from several sources.
that		at least	32. I	'm proud to say
			33. I	'm quite independent in my thinking.
that			34. I	hope
			35. many others	are, too.

Low Composition No 1

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. People	watch TV a lot nowadays.
and			2. to make decisions	//It maybe difficult
			3. think independently	for a person
and			4. who	is a TV freak
that			5. who	believes everything
			6. he	has been told on the TV.
			7. I	am afraid of the manipulation of the TV.
	I am sure			
that			8. TV	selects and changes the information
(that)			9. it	gets.
So			10. we	maybe don't know anything about the other case
that			11. TV	is sending us.
			12. The TV producer's view	may be extremele different
when			13. it	is compared to our attitude.
		For example, there are		
and			14. many candidates	in the elections
			15. you	know them very well.
		From the TV news	16. you	will get information
that			17. candidate three	telling you is the best.
that	I bet			
			18. your vote	will be given to the candidate three.
			19. You	must have a strong self-confidence.
		Don't trust everything		
that			20. you	have been told.
		Use your own brains and don't sink to the world of the TV lies.		
			21. to make opinions	//It is not easy
even if			22. we	don't have the media affecting us.
So			23. to understand	//it is not hard
that			24. we	are living in the crossfire of all kind of affects.
			25. We	have to watch television
because			26. it	also gives us information.
But			27. we	must not think it as some kind of machine

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			28. that	knows everything.
		By watching around us and (by) living full life without sitting in front of television every evening	29. we	can think independently enough.

Low Composition No 2

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. The TV	is a quiet new machine
and		almost Today	2. every family	has got it.
	it's hard		3. to live	without television.
			4. The time	flies
when			5. you	are watching TV.
		There is	6. many good programs,	
			7. animals	
and			8. history programs	on TV.
because			9. These	are good
			10. they	help you understand the world.
But		there is also	11. programs	that don't learned anything for you, Dallas and Dynasty, for example.
			12. They	just give you a model
how			13. you	should live and dress
and how			14. you	can be a very rich businessman.
So			15. these films	will show you what kind of people should have to be.
If			16. you	don't have enough money,
			17. you	are nothing.
			18. you	can't buy the finest clothes
because			19. You	haven't got money to move your hairstyle
and			20. you	don't have such a nice hobbies
as			21. you	in those films have.
			22. they	//It's much more important
			23. to think independently.	are not
If			24. you	are,
as	I don't think		25. all your friends	is a bad thing.
			26. that	have to say
what			27. You	want to say
though			28. you	will disagree with your idea.
			29. all the others	

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
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		Be critical		
when			30. you	are watching TV
because			31. television	can't really make you a good busenessman.

Low Composition No 3

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. We	have more free-time, holidays than before.
			2. People	can go to the cinema, or
			3. (people)	watching video.
If			4. we	have nothing to do
			5. we	can watch TV.
			6. It	isn't always a good idea.
When			7. you	are too often at home,
			8. you	would come more lazy and passive.
			9. You	need not think or move:
			10. you	jus be and watch.
		There is	11. many kind of film	on TV.
If			12. we	watch too much adventure films, is boring.
			13. normal live	is only normal live.
			14. It	
		Another point is		
that if			15. you	have some TV heroes
			16. you	give up your own way of think
and			17. you	only think
what			18. you	want to be
and			19. you	live like your stars- unreal world.
		It's good		
that			20. many families	can talk and criticize about TV programs.
If			21. we	take good care of our own thinking
and (if)			22. (we)	are critical
			23. TV	is not dangerous,
and			24. it	make not difficult to think independently.

Low Composition No 4

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
		Today	1. we	have many TV channels to watch.
			2. We	get a lot of information from different corners of the world.
			3. That	is good thing for our brains.
			4. We	have to use them.
			5. Every TV channel	does give us a modell of thinking.
what			6. It	in a way tells us should think.
But		nowadays	7. we	have a lot of TV channels
			8. we	have a lot of TV channels
and			9. every channel	has its own point of view.
			10. We	must choose.
			11. We	must use our own brains and select the information.
			12. We	must produce our own opinion on each matter.
When			13. we	see two reports about one thing:
			14. We	see one on Worldnet -
			15. It	is made in USA
and			16. we	see an other on Moscow TV.
			17. Those reports	certainly are different.
			18. We	must make up our minds and choose
what			19. (we)	believe.
			20. We	cannot one-eyedly just believe in one and forget the other report.
			21. We	must think and decide.
And			22. we	must do it ourselves.
So		in my opinion	23. TV	doesn't make it more difficult to think independently.
			24. It	makes it a must.

Low Composition No 5

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Television	is maybe the most effective machine
that			2. a human being	has developed.
			3. You	can hear sounds on the radio and see pictures on the paper.
		On television	4. sound	

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
and and			5. picture 6. that	are together makes television so effective.
	Almost		7. everybody 8. People	has own TV. watch all kind of programmes from serious documents and news to soapoperas like Dallas and so on.
	Almost		9. The news 10. everybody 11. They	is the most effective programme. watch the news. want to know what is going on here.
and when			12. Six blacks 13. several 14. the army	died injured suddenly began to shoot.
	At the same time		15. pictures 16. White soldiers 17. People 18. Television	are rushing into your minds. are shooting black kids. are crying for help. not only give you information
but also			19. (it) 20. You 21. You	tries, depending on situations, to change your own opinions. can find a good example of this in politics. haven't really thought about voting anybody.
But though			22. you 23. which 24. some of them 25. you	curiously watch that evenings programme shows candidates' interviews, might effect you rush out of your room to vote just him.
that And			26. you 27. Television 28. You	could be very disappointed of your decision afterwards. also give you everything ready: in a nice waterproof packet. can get every details of Irak and IRans war. year by year.
But and			29. it 30. that	also makes you think is the most important thing.

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
		There is	31. no real answer	to this question.
that	I think		32. everybody	should have own independent ideas about all kind of matters.
			33. TV	gives information and ready-made opinions.
But what			34. you	are going to do with it is up to you.
			35. Everyone	has to make its own decision.

Low Composition No 6

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. The television	is today the largest medium in the world.
			2. The news	comes to our homes in few seconds.
			3. People	watch television more and more every day.
			4. News and	
			5. entertainment	comes from TV.
because			6. They	have to see it daily,
			7. reading papers	is more difficult.
	It's easy to		8. the TV companies	to make watchers think about the information that
			9. (that)	is useful to some country.
			10. People	lost their independence of their king
and			11. they	just become slaves of television,
			12. who	can't live without it.
			13. TV	is like a drug.
			14. People	have to get it and always more.
			15. TV reporters	are heroes in watchers' minds,
although			16. they	only pick up some news and read them.
			17. Actors	become youth idols.
			18. People	don't anymore go to the theater.
			19. They	rather stay home and watch soapoperas like Dallas and Dynasty.
		In Finland	20. we	must change TV programs into higher level.
			21. We	could have less commercial rubbish
and			22. we	could use the money for programs

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
(which)			23. wich (programs)	make people think about living and being in the world.
If	I am sure		24. the style	don't change,
that			25. waching TV	makes it more difficult to think independently.

Low Composition No 7

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Television	is the most important part of your communication today.
			2. People	watch it more and more every year.
			3. The television	is the centre of community in many families.
			4. It	is used to day-caring children
and			5. family	joint together around television on Sundays.
			6. The advertisements on TV	try to influence on our subconscious.
		In the same way	7. television programs	influence us.
			8. Violence films	make us our independently thinking useless,
because			9. everything	has been thinking ready in the television.
If			10. we	read books
			11. we	has to use our imagination.
When			12. we	watch the set
		There isn't	13. that problem.	
because			14. The television	kills our imagination
			15. we	watch and listen to it.
			16. The independently thinking	is based on our imagination.
			17. The development of the human race	is always need a lot of thinking and imagination.
			18. The development	may change cause of the power of the television.

Low Composition No 8

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Everybody	watch television more or less,
			2. some people	watch almost everything that comes out
and			3. some people	just want to know what happens
and			4. they	prefer watching news and weather.
			5. Everybody: children, teenagers, young adults, middle-aged people, old ones - they all	watch tv.
			6. They all	do different kinds of work.
if	I think		7. television	doesn't make anything watch it or not.
			8. you	gives you examples and ideas about everything
			9. It	really gives
and often			10. it	should think about something
how			11. you	does as is said on TV.
if			12. anybody	can think independently
			13. Most people	take ideas about
and			14. they	have seen on television.
what			15. they	
			16. Children and teenagers	are a different thing.
			17. They	can't decide themselves.
			18. They	often think as is said on TV.
			19. Teenagers	are the worst thing.
			20. They	watch television and videos alone all days long
and because			21. they	don't have a sense about right and wrong
and			22. they	don't realize
that			23. violence films	are bullshit.
			24. They	do the same things as it's on the films.
			25. They	smoke, use drugs, drink alcohol, fight with others
just as			26. they	have seen on films.
So			27. television	does make you think do.
as			28. you	
			29. Teenagers	are a negative group in this subject.

Low Composition No 9

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. Television	is the most effective medium on the Earth.
			2. It	reaches almost every man these days.
			3. This incredible machine	pushes out commercials, news from all over the world, movies, everykind of music, sport and so on.
And		of course now during the Olympic games,	4. people	do even more sitting in front of the television screen.
that	I must say		5. it 6. You	is just great. can always see the happenings in our own living-room from this little box.
			7. A man	watch television almost all his life.
			8. The programmes	only change
when			9. gets older. 10. Watching TV	is much more different than
			11. reading books	is.
			12. You	don't have to use your energy for reading.
			13. It	is done for you.
that why	I think		14. this 15. people	is the reason should slow down watching TV.
		It's not too late	16. to make things better, 17. the increasing number of videos	doesn't make the future seem so good.
but				

Low Composition No 10

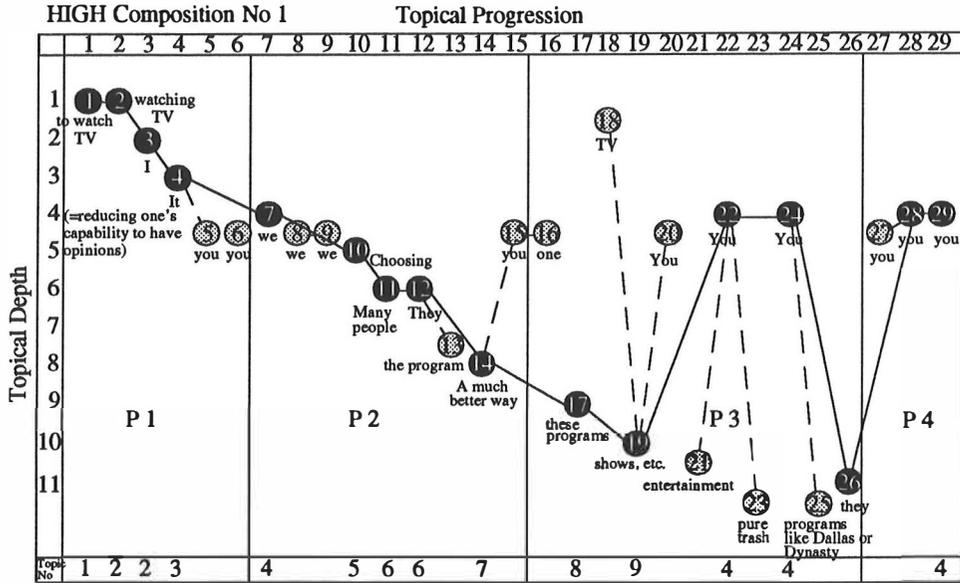
MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			1. That	is right.
		Nowadays it is more difficult	2. to think	independently
when			3. you	are watching TV.
Because			4. most of TV's programmes	are given or try to give answers to questions.
And			5. this	is very wrong.
	Maybe		6. the older people	can analyse TV's programmes
and			7. they	know what is right and what is wrong.

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
But when			8. this 9. we	is not so easy are talking about a young people.
			10. Some of TV's programmes	are very good, news for example.
that and			11. News 12. we 13. that 14. Everyone	is given a lot of thinks can think independently is very good. knows
that	it is very important		15. to think ownself.	
And	I think		16. we 17 we	have to do it more than do now.
When			18. we	are watching TV
and	it is so easy		19. to read 20. many people	doesn't want or don't try to think
what But when			21. the TV 22. we	says. are reading books or newspapers
And	in my opinion it is more useful		23. we 24. to read	have to think more. than watch TV.

Low Composition No 11

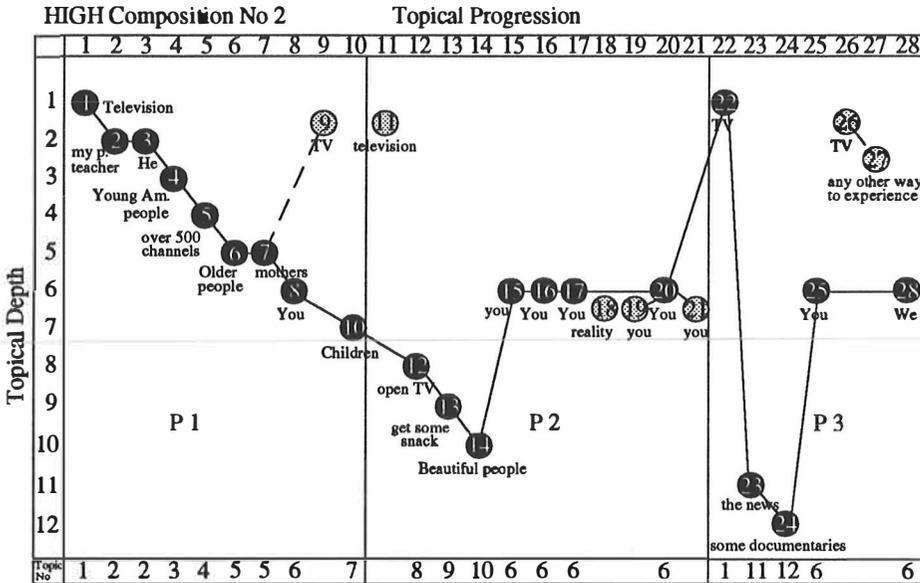
MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
that	I think		1. watching television	makes it more difficult to think independent- ly in many cases.
If			2. young child	watch film about wild west and see how ugly screaming indian kills young white girl.
that	It is sure		3. he 4. He	don't like indians after that. don't know say facts about indians and wild west,
so that what When	it is natural		5. believes 6. he 7. he 8. he 9. he	sees. gets older, perhaps learns has some hard feelings against indians.
		In situation like above,	10. television	makes it very difficult to think independent- ly.
if		Of course	11. you	are a bit ir:teligent and civilized

MARKER	ATT./INF.FR.	THEMATIC FR.	TOPIC	COMMENT
			12. it	have no effect on you,
but			13. it	has on yuung child.
So	it is important			
that			14. young children	don't watch TV very much.
If			15. he	does
then	it is important		16. he	can have many kinds of information from it.
that			17. we	have to get rid of those poor wild-west. ganster and soap opera programs
So			18. we	have to get good programs to television.
and			19. you	Big TV companys, //do hear me?



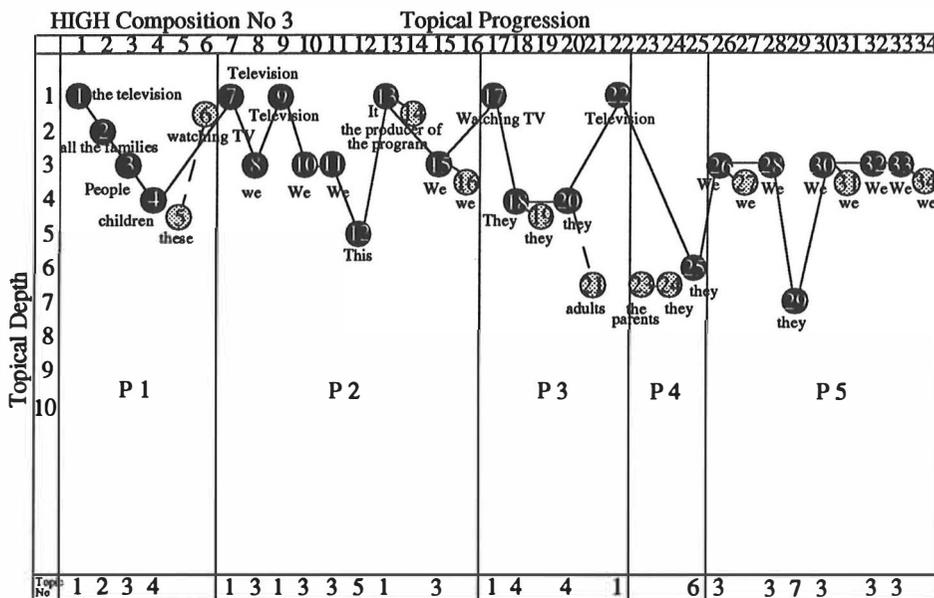
TD 1 3/29 (10.3%) TD 3 1/29 (3.5%) TD 5 1/29 (3.5%) TD 7 1/29 (3.5%) TD 9 1/29 (3.5%) TD 11 3/29 (10.3%) = (100%)
 TD 2 1/29 (3.5%) TD 4 13/29 (44.6%) TD 6 2/29 (6.9%) TD 8 1/29 (3.5%) TD 10 2/29 (6.9%)

Discourse Topic: The various functions of TV and the selective viewer

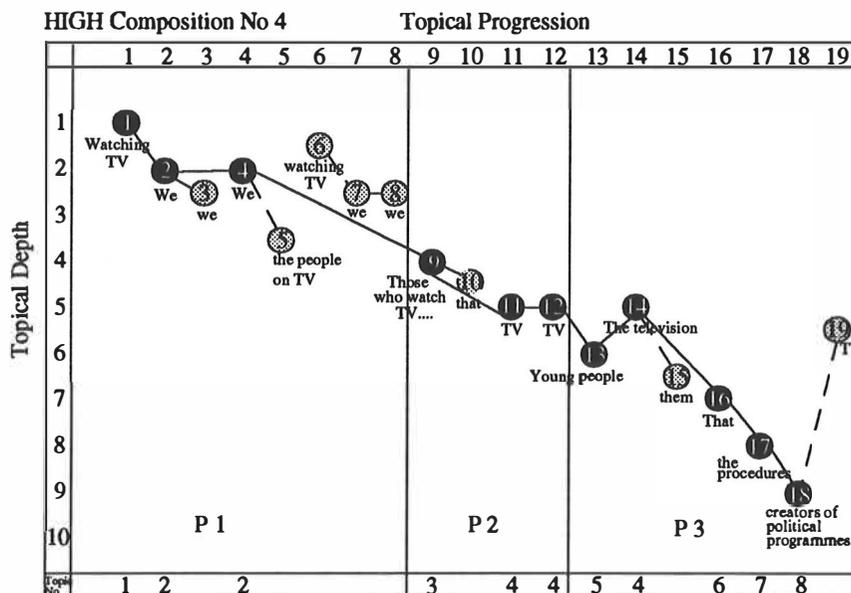


TD 1 6/28 (21.4%) TD 3 1/28 (3.6%) TD 5 2/28 (7.1%) TD 7 1/28 (3.6%) TD 9 1/28 (3.6%) TD 11 1/28 (3.6%)
 TD 2 2/28 (7.1%) TD 4 1/28 (3.6%) TD 6 10/28 (35.6%) TD 8 1/28 (3.6%) TD 10 1/28 (3.6%) TD 12 1/28 (3.6%) = (100%)

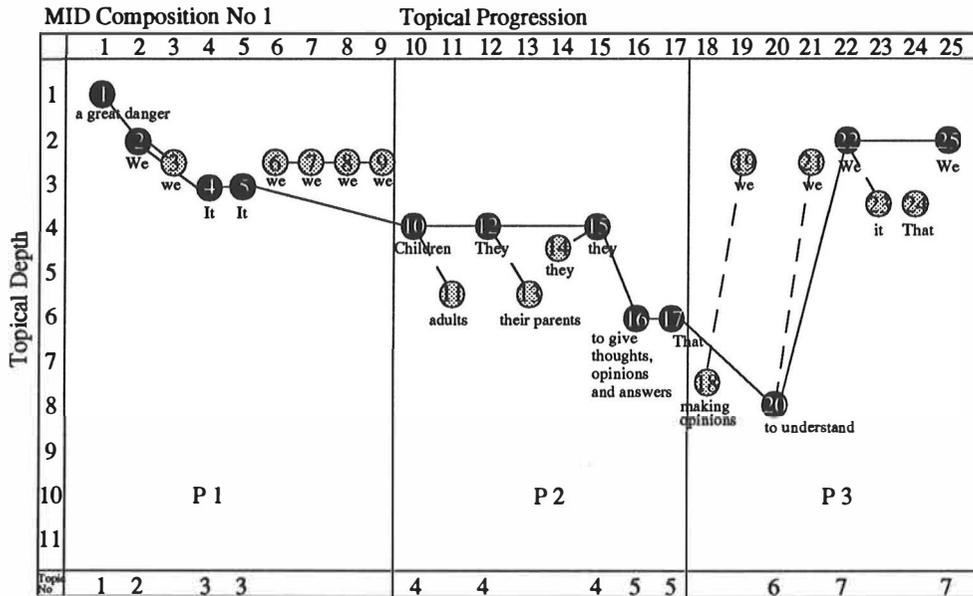
Discourse Topic: TV's many functions and its dangers



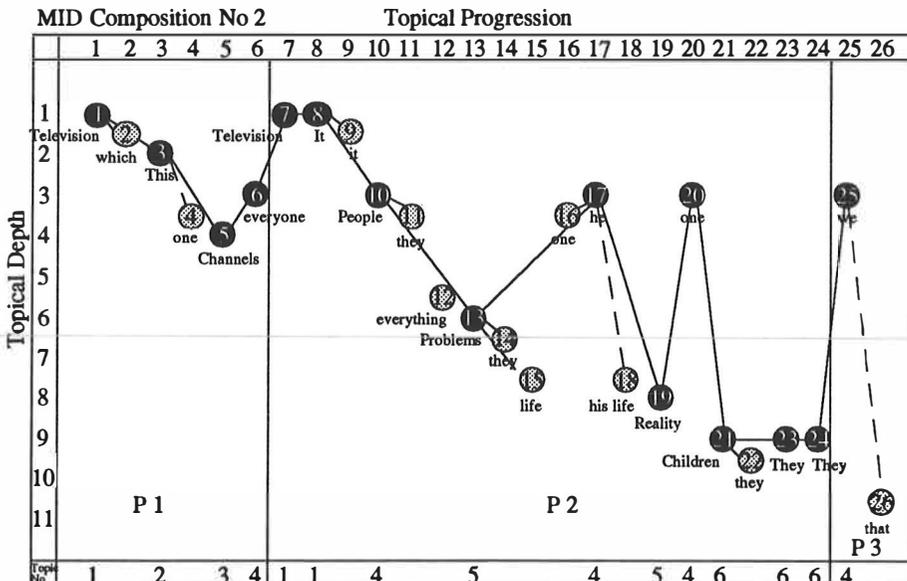
TD 1 8/34 (23.5%) TD 3 14/34 (41.3%) TD 5 1/34 (2.9%) TD 7 1/34 (2.9%) = (100%)
 TD 2 1/34 (2.9%) TD 4 5/34 (14.7%) TD 6 4/34 (11.8%)
 Discourse Topic: How people can avoid the unique influence of TV



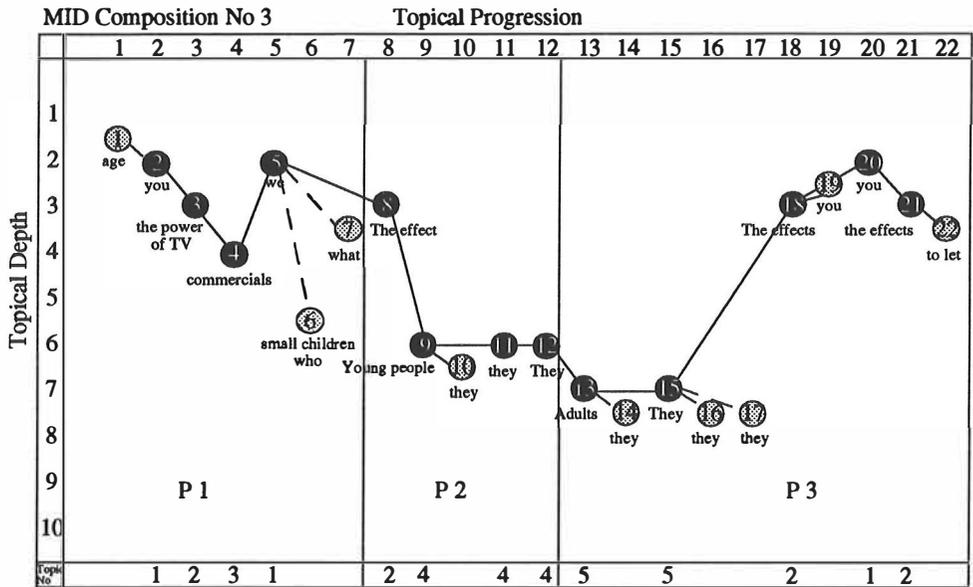
TD 1 2/19 (10.5%) TD 3 1/19 (5.3%) TD 5 4/19 (21.1%) TD 7 1/19 (5.3%) TD 9 1/19 (5.3%) = (100%)
 TD 2 5/19 (26.2%) TD 4 2/19 (10.5%) TD 6 2/19 (10.5%) TD 8 1/19 (5.3%)
 Discourse Topic: TV's influence on people and TV's programming policy



TD 1 1/25 (4.0%) TD 3 4/25 (16.0%) TD 5 2/25 (8.0%) TD 7 1/25 (4.0%)
 TD 2 10/25 (40.0%) TD 4 4/25 (16.0%) TD 6 2/25 (8.0%) TD 8 1/25 (4.0%) = (100%)
 Discourse Topic: The dangers people, especially children, have in watching TV

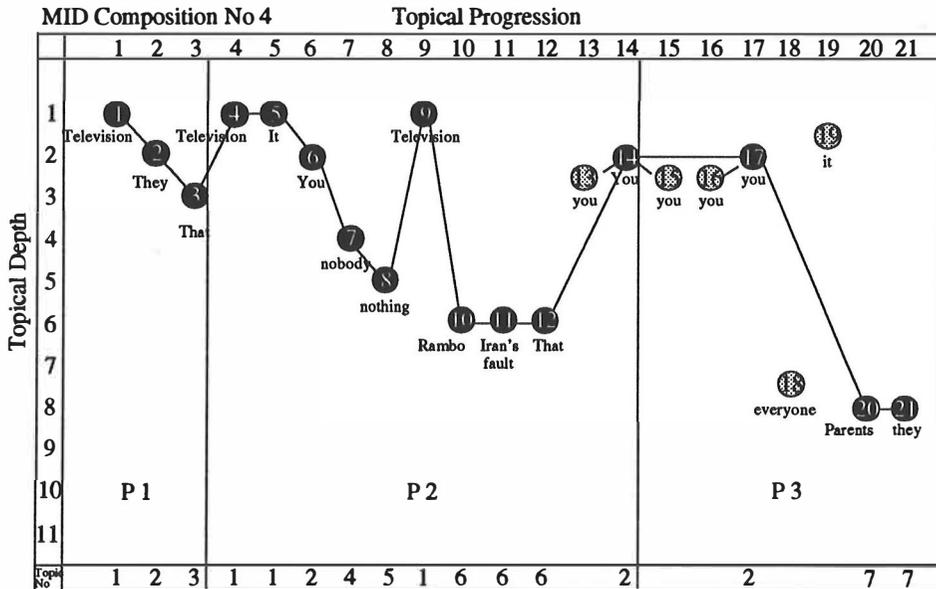


TD 1 5/26 (19.3%) TD 3 8/26 (30.9%) TD 5 1/26 (3.8%) TD 7 2/26 (7.7%) TD 9 4/26 (15.4%)
 TD 2 1/26 (3.8%) TD 4 1/26 (3.8%) TD 6 2/26 (7.7%) TD 8 1/26 (3.8%) TD 10 1/26 (3.8%) = (100%)
 Discourse Topic: The seductiveness and distortions of TV
 TV and the danger of losing grip on reality



TD 1 1/22 (4.5%) TD 3 6/22 (27.4%) TD 5 1/22 (4.5%) TD 7 5/22 (22.7%) = (100%)
 TD 2 4/22 (18.2%) TD 4 1/22 (4.5%) TD 6 4/22 (18.2%)

Discourse Topic: The differential effect of TV on young people

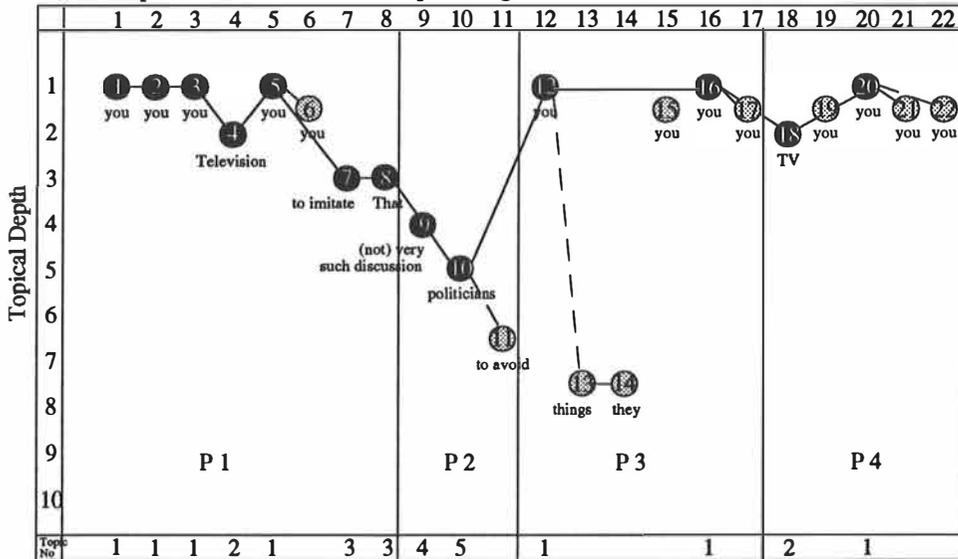


TD 1 5/21 (23.7%) TD 3 1/21 (4.8%) TD 5 1/21 (4.8%) TD 7 1/21 (4.8%)
 TD 2 7/21 (33.3%) TD 4 1/21 (4.8%) TD 6 3/21 (14.3%) TD 8 2/21 (9.5%) = (100%)

Discourse Topic: The power of TV to influence people and parents' responsibilities

MID Composition No 5

Topical Progression

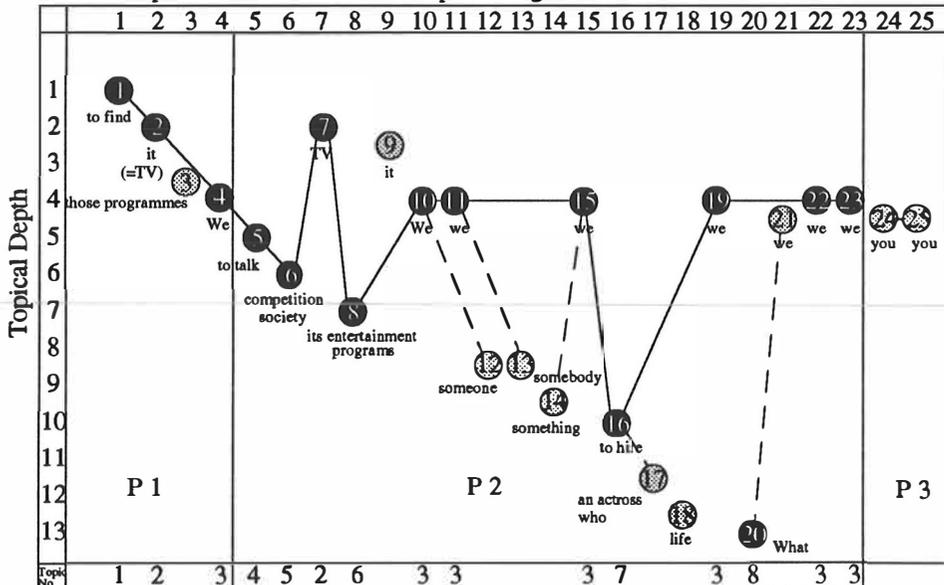


TD 1 13/22 (59.5%) TD 3 2/22 (9.0%) TD 5 1/22 (4.5%) TD 7 2/22 (9.0%) = (100%)
 TD 2 2/22 (9.0%) TD 4 1/22 (4.5%) TD 6 1/22 (4.5%)

Discourse Topic: TV and the problem of existing ready-made ideas and ideals

MID Composition No 6

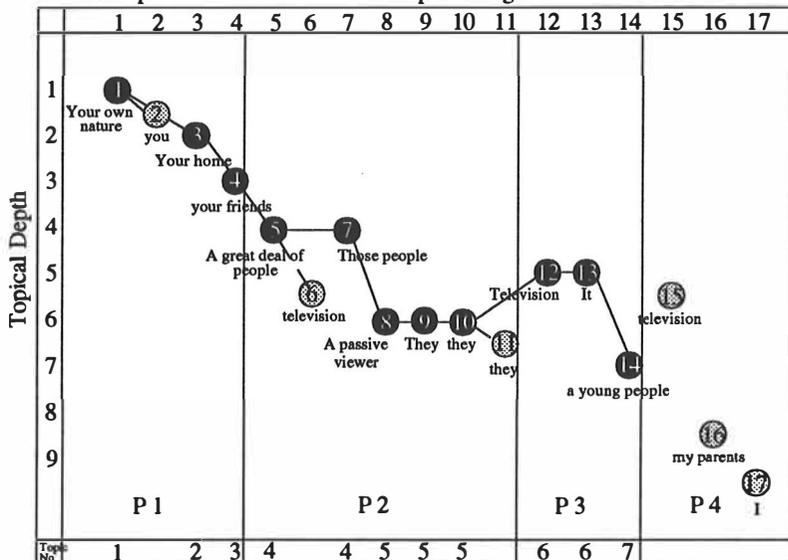
Topical Progression



TD 1 1/25 (4%) TD 3 1/25 (4%) TD 5 1/25 (4%) TD 7 1/25 (4%) TD 9 1/25 (4%) TD11 1/25 (4%) TD13 1/25 (4%) = (100%)
 TD 2 3/25 (12%) TD 4 10/25 (40%) TD 6 1/25 (4%) TD 8 2/25 (8%) TD10 1/25 (4%) TD12 1/25 (4%)

Discourse Topic: Television and the danger of the viewer's getting too much identified with TV personalities

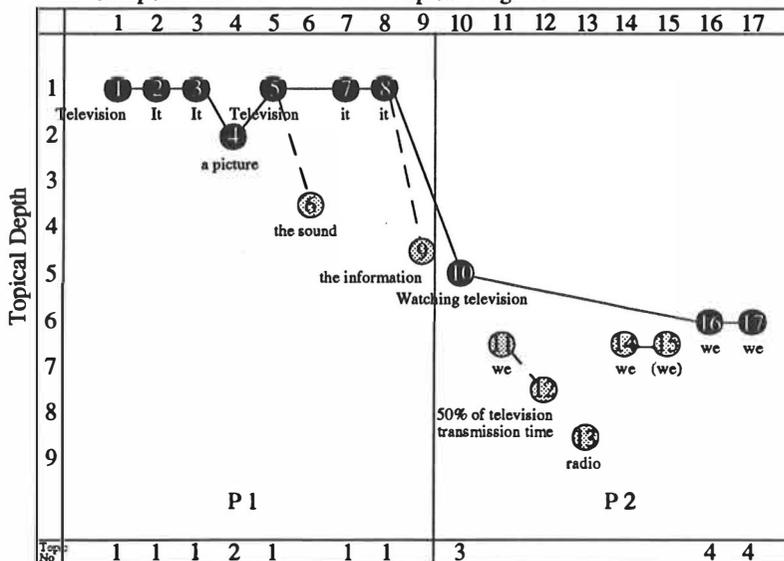
MID Composition No 7 Topical Progression



TD 1 2/17 (11.8%) TD 3 1/17 (5.9%) TD 5 4/17 (23.5%) TD 7 1/17 (5.9%) TD 9 1/17 (5.9%) = (100%)
 TD 2 1/17 (5.9%) TD 4 2/17 (11.8%) TD 6 4/17 (23.4%) TD 8 1/17 (5.9%)

Discourse Topic: Television and its negative as well as positive influence on viewers

MID Composition No 8 Topical Progression

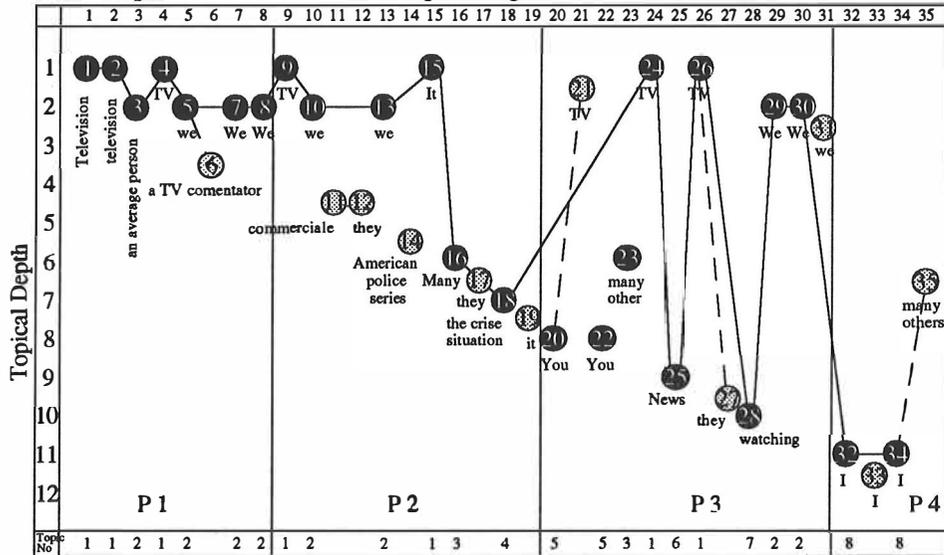


TD 1 6/17 (35.2%) TD 3 1/17 (5.9%) TD 5 1/17 (5.9%) TD 7 1/17 (5.9%)
 TD 2 1/17 (5.9%) TD 4 1/17 (5.9%) TD 6 5/17 (29.4%) TD 8 1/17 (5.9%) = (100%)

Discourse Topic: Television as a transmitter of information and contrasted with the radio

MID Composition No 9

Topical Progression

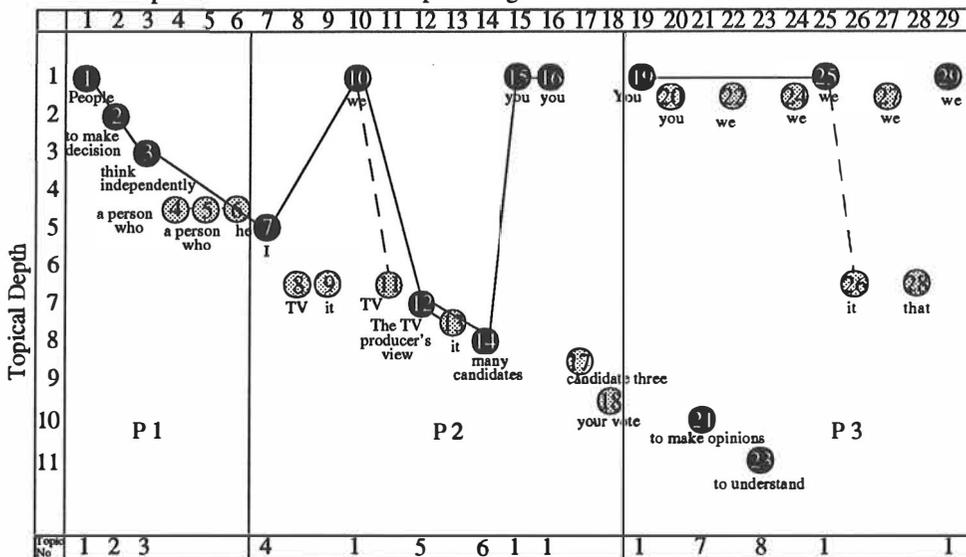


TD 1 8/35 (22.9%) TD 3 1/35 (2.9%) TD 5 1/35 (2.9%) TD 7 2/35 (5.7%) TD 9 2/35 (5.7%) TD 11 3/35 (8.6%) = (100%)
 TD 2 9/35 (25.6%) TD 4 2/35 (5.7%) TD 6 4/35 (11.4%) TD 8 2/35 (5.7%) TD 10 1/35 (2.9%)

Discourse Topic: The influence of various TV programmes on the viewers' thinking

LOW Composition No 1

Topical Progression

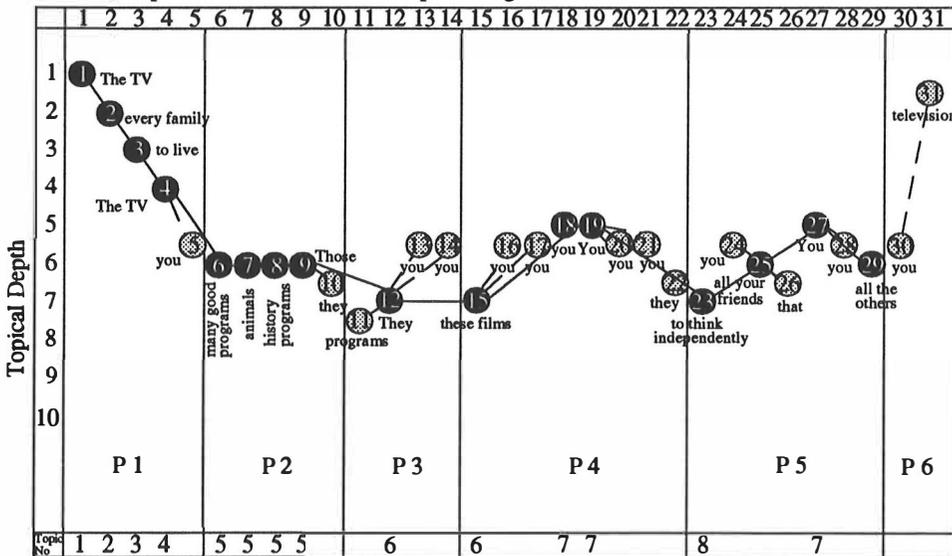


TD 1 11/29 (38.4%) TD 3 1/29 (3.4%) TD 5 1/29 (3.4%) TD 7 2/29 (6.8%) TD 9 1/29 (3.4%) TD 11 1/29 (3.4%) = (100%)
 TD 2 1/29 (3.4%) TD 4 1/29 (3.4%) TD 6 5/29 (17.3%) TD 8 2/29 (6.8%) TD 10 1/29 (3.4%)

Discourse Topic: Understanding and resisting TV's influence on personal opinion making

LOW Composition No 2

Topical Progression

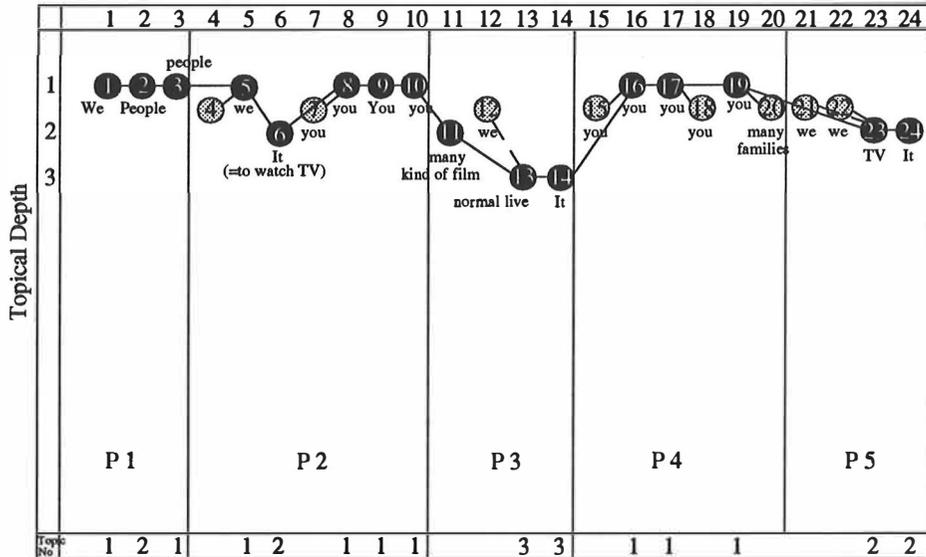


TD 1 2/31 (6.5%) TD 3 1/31 (3.2%) TD 5 13/31 (42.0%) TD 7 4/31 (12.9%) = (100%)
 TD 2 1/31 (3.2%) TD 4 1/31 (3.2%) TD 6 9/31 (29.0%)

Discourse Topic: The choice of TV programmes and how to avoid the negative influence of TV

LOW Composition No 3

Topical Progression



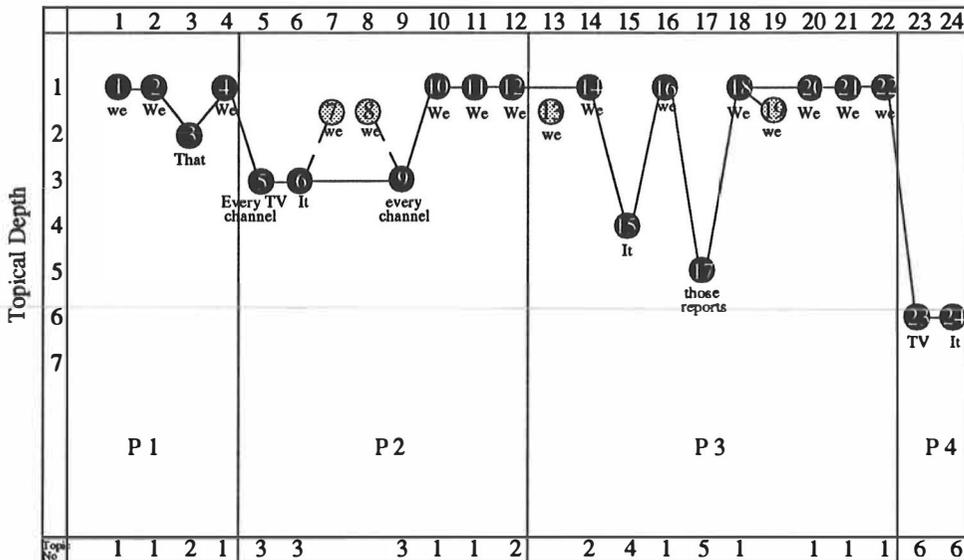
TD 1 18/24 (75.0%) TD 3 2/24 (8.3%) = (100%)

TD 2 4/24 (16.7%)

Discourse Topic: We (people) and TV

LOW Composition No 4

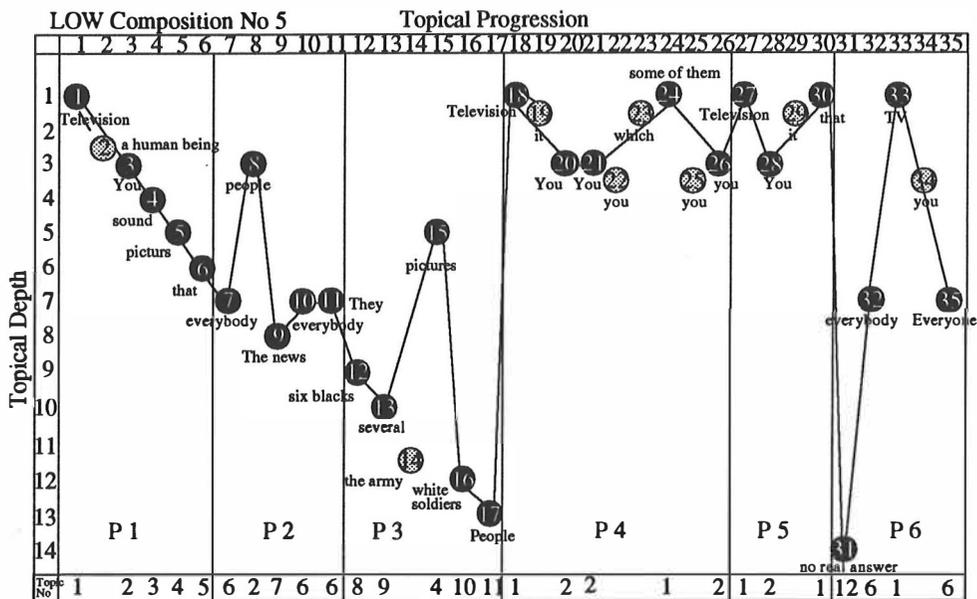
Topical Progression



TD 1 16/24 (66.6%) TD 3 3/24 (12.5%) TD 5 1/24 (4.2%)

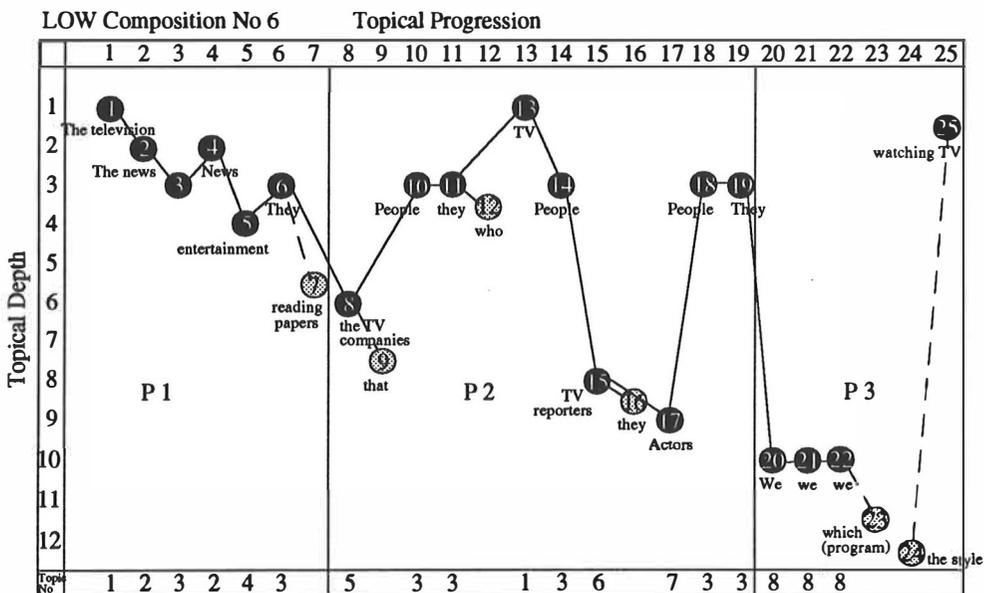
TD 2 1/24 (4.2%) TD 4 1/24 (4.2%) TD 6 2/24 (8.3%) = (100%)

Discourse Topic: TV and the viewers' obligation to select the information they need



TD 1 9/35 (25.6%) TD 3 9/35 (25.6%) TD 5 2/35 (5.7%) TD 7 5/35 (14.2%) TD 9 1/35 (2.9%) TD 11 1/35 (2.9%) TD 13 1/35 (2.9%)
 TD 2 2/35 (5.7%) TD 4 1/35 (2.9%) TD 6 1/35 (2.9%) TD 8 1/35 (2.9%) TD 10 1/35 (2.9%) TD 12 1/35 (2.9%) = (100%)

Discourse Topic: TV offering ready-made opinions to its viewers

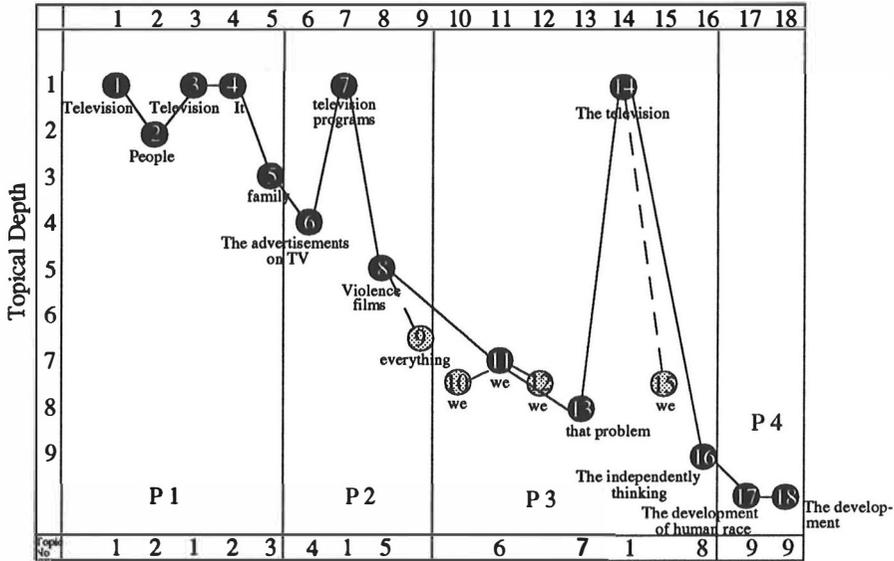


TD 1 3/25 (12.0%) TD 3 8/25 (32.0%) TD 5 1/25 (4.0%) TD 7 1/25 (4.0%) TD 9 1/25 (4.0%) TD 11 1/25 (4.0%)
 TD 2 2/25 (8.0%) TD 4 1/25 (4.0%) TD 6 1/25 (4.0%) TD 8 2/25 (8.0%) TD 10 3/25 (12.0%) TD 12 1/25 (4.0%) = (100%)

Discourse Topic: The dominance of TV over people's lives

LOW Composition No 7

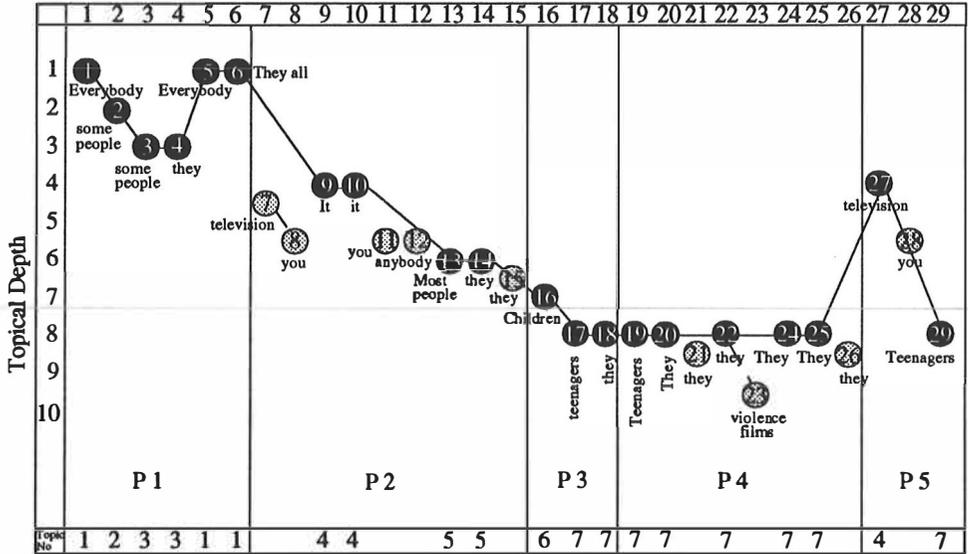
Topical Progression



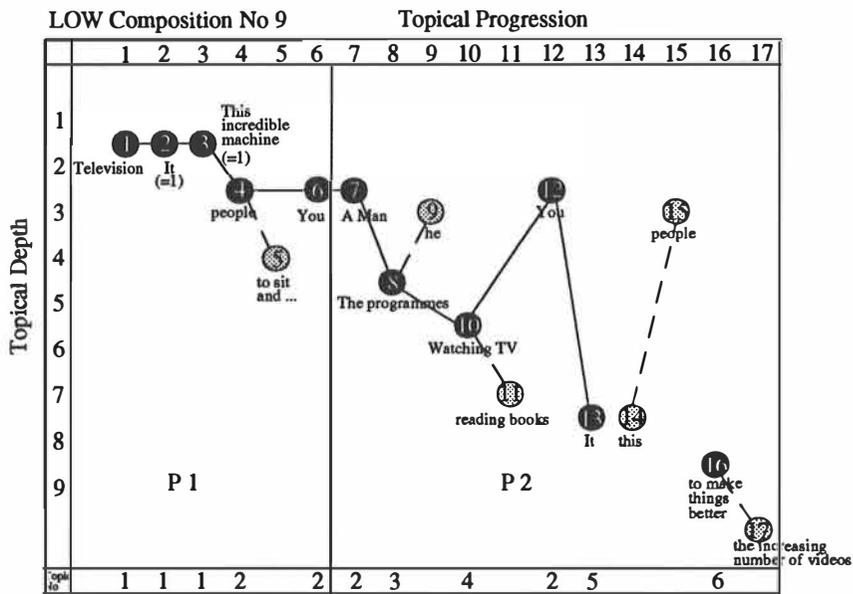
TD 1 5/18 (27.7%) TD 3 1/18 (5.6%) TD 5 1/18 (5.6%) TD 7 4/18 (22.1%) TD 9 1/18 (5.6%)
 TD 2 1/18 (5.6%) TD 4 1/18 (5.6%) TD 6 1/18 (5.6%) TD 8 1/18 (5.6%) TD 10 2/18 (11.0%) = (100%)
 Discourse Topic: TV and its suppressive influence on watchers' imagination

LOW Composition No 8

Topical Progression

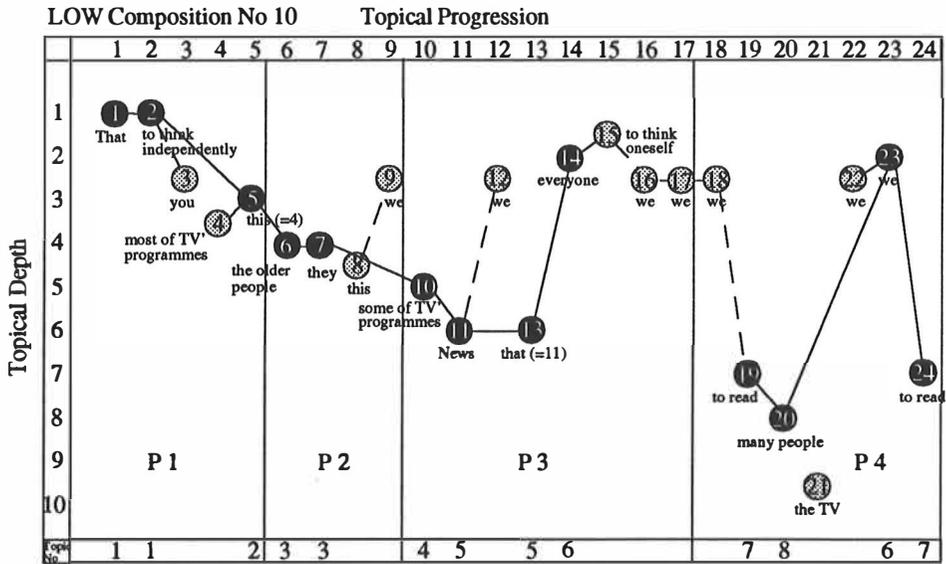


TD 1 3/29 (10.3%) TD 3 2/29 (6.9%) TD 5 4/29 (13.8%) TD 7 1/29 (3.4%) TD 9 1/29 (3.4%) = (100%)
 TD 2 1/29 (3.4%) TD 4 4/29 (13.8%) TD 6 3/29 (10.3%) TD 8 10/29 (34.7%)
 Discourse Topic: Television and its dangerous effect on children and teenagers



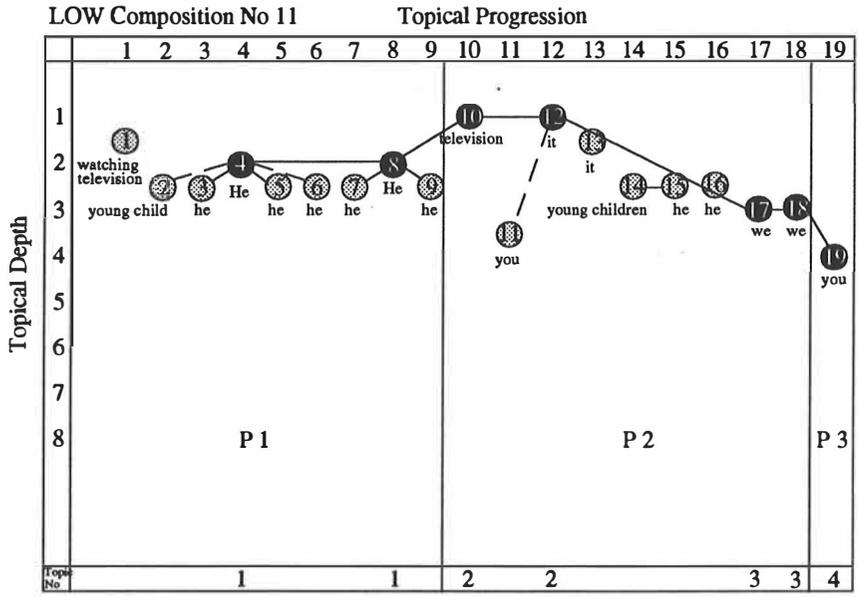
TD 1 3/17 (17.6%) TD 3 1/17 (5.9%) TD 5 1/17 (5.9%) TD 7 2/17 (11.8%) TD 9 1/17 (5.9%) = (100%)
 TD 2 6/17 (35.2%) TD 4 1/17 (5.9%) TD 6 1/17 (5.9%) TD 8 1/17 (5.9%)

Discourse Topic: TV's strong influence on people



TD 1 3/24 (12.5%) TD 3 2/24 (8.3%) TD 5 1/24 (4.2%) TD 7 2/24 (8.3%) TD 9 1/24 (4.2%) = (100%)
 TD 2 9/24 (37.5%) TD 4 3/24 (12.5%) TD 6 2/24 (8.3%) TD 8 1/24 (4.2%)

Discourse Topic: Television and its negative influence on viewers' thinking independently
 Television vs radio



TD 1 4/19 (21.1%) TD 3 3/19 (15.8%)
 TD 2 11/19 (57.8%) TD 4 1/19 (5.3%) = (100%)
 Discourse Topic: TV and the defenceless young child

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