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Chapter Five

Persuading

The art of persuading prevails throughout our daily lives and certainly within the school context. Persuading can involve influencing the thinking of others or convincing others to adopt a position or action. Persuasion takes a range of modes including oral, written, visual and **multimodal** and can occur in a range of forms from advertising and letters to editorials and **Tweets**. Of course, the continuing evolution of technology has enabled both individuals and institutions to cast a voice of persuasion and evaluation in multiple forms resulting in a prevalence of persuasion throughout many aspects of life. Thus a critical literacy approach is needed, as members of society are providers and receivers of such information at a rapid pace.

Persuasive texts have high status in school education. In Primary School they can often be described as expositions that present one point of view or discussions in which both sides of an argument will be represented. The high status of such texts can be seen in the national testing of persuasive writing in 2011, where persuasive writing and its purpose is described below.

The purpose of persuasive writing is to persuade a reader to a point of view on an issue. Persuasive writing may express an opinion, discuss, analyse and evaluate an issue. It may also entertain and inform. The style of persuasive writing may be formal or informal but it requires the writer to adopt a sense of authority on the subject matter and to develop the subject in an ordered, rational way. A writer of a persuasive text may draw on his or her own personal knowledge and experience or may draw on detailed knowledge of a particular subject or issue.
http://www.naplan.edu.au/verve/_resources/Marking_Guide_2011.pdf

Of note is the point that a speaker or writer needs to convey a sense of authority regardless of whether the text is informal or formal. By looking at the language and grammatical features and the shift from oral to written language we can support students in achieving this role of 'authority'.

Linking talking and listening to reading and writing

As has been explored in previous chapters, linking oral language to reading and writing can assist students in accessing and producing the texts valued in their educational progress. Acknowledging this relationship is particularly important when considering texts that persuade. In the early years of school students may be required to give personal opinions on familiar topics initially through the use of oral language, however, as students progress through school the focus can shift to written language and the topics move from the concrete to the abstract. The role of talk should not diminish, as talk is the bridge to writing. By talking about the subject matter of texts students begin to develop not only their knowledge of the topic but also the required 'authority'. In addition, as audiences widen beyond the familiar we need to use oral language to investigate the interpersonal choices that can be made with language which also convey a sense of authority.

Often when the teaching of persuasive texts is planned a focus on public speaking and/or debating may also be considered. This presents a logical link between speaking and listening and then moving into written texts, however, it must be acknowledged that public speaking and debating tends to fall along the mode continuum more into the realm of written-like texts as they are more monologic rather than dialogic. The language needs to work harder as there is no opportunity for an audience to interrupt and ask for clarification. In saying this we then need to consider a range of strategies for students to employ the language of persuasion in the oral mode before moving into reading and writing and speaking texts with characteristics of more written-like language. By doing so, students can be supported in taking on the grammatical features required for the topic. In saying this, topics should be motivating and of interest to students and those in which students have or are supported to acquire the relevant background knowledge. When discussing persuasive texts in the classroom Hutton (2011:6) points out that prior to writing persuasive texts students need to be involved in activities to 'research the topic and gather evidence for the point of view they hold. Oral discussions should also precede writing so that students can try out their ideas, hear the views of others and refine their thinking.' By involving students in oral language

tasks we can then explicitly point out the differences between oral and written language with particular regard to presenting as an authority.

Some examples of oral language strategies that can be used to develop and refine ideas follow.

Think, Pair, Share is an effective strategy in any context but particularly when collaboratively developing viewpoints. After introducing an issue, for example, 'Should children be given pocket money', students initially think about their viewpoint/s and then share with a partner. Students then share ideas with the whole class. The advantage of this simple strategy is that students are all able to offer a response whilst also receiving models and ideas from other students. What is more, a bank of ideas is quickly developed.

Similarly the **inner circle / outer circle** game can be used to encourage sharing of responses. By placing students in concentric circles in which each student faces a partner the teacher asks students to respond to a topic. For instance:
* give one reason why animals should be kept in captivity
* elaborate on a reason given by another student
* convince your partner as to why the reason could be incorrect.

After each response the students are asked to move on to a new partner, for example, those in the outer circle move 3 steps to the right.

Using **role-play** can assist students in taking on the viewpoints of themselves, or in the case of older students, the views of less familiar stakeholders. Developing role cards and placing groups of students into role is an ideal way to develop oral language around a topic as well as apprentice students into the role of developing and supporting viewpoints. In order to take on roles students will need to be given time to identify the issues and arguments with particular thought to the point of view of stakeholders involved as illustrated below in Figure 16.
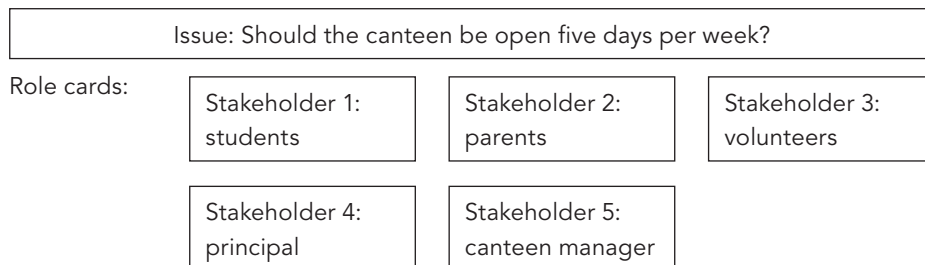
Issue: Should the canteen be open five days per week?

Role cards:

Stakeholder 1: students	Stakeholder 2: parents	Stakeholder 3: volunteers
Stakeholder 4: principal	Stakeholder 5: canteen manager	

FIGURE 16: USING ROLE CARDS TO DEVELOP VIEWPOINTS

This can be used when it comes to writing as students get to closely consider the needs of the potential audience.

Once students have had opportunities to talk about issues **Talk to the hand!** can assist them in organising their thoughts in a more formal way, which can then lead to text organisation for writing. After identifying a topic and issues, an image of a hand can be displayed. For best results the teacher should model developing an oral expository text. After modelling students can then develop their own oral text and share with a partner by organising their structure based on the hand as seen in Figure 17.
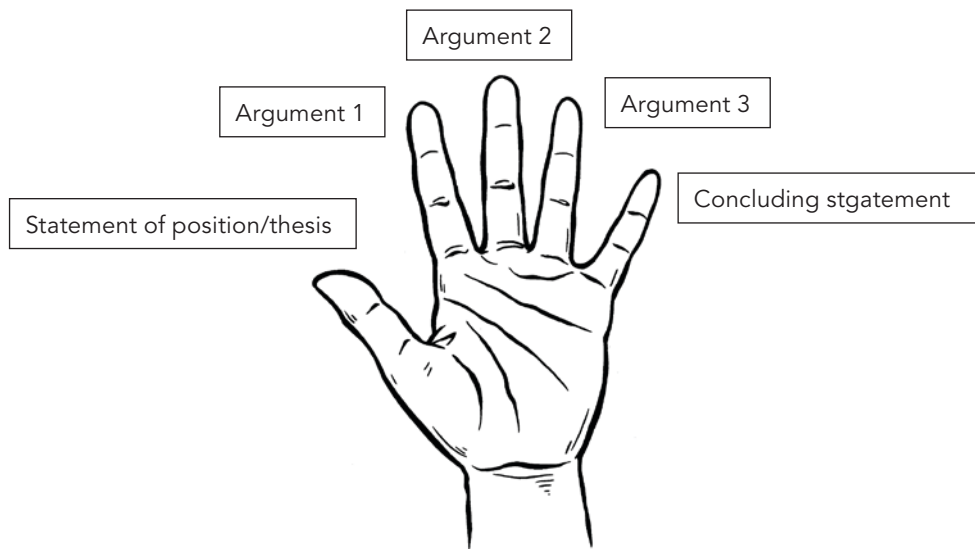
Argument 2

Argument 1

Argument 3

Concluding stgatement

Statement of position/thesis

FIGURE 17: THE 'TALK TO HAND 'STRATEGY

An aspect of developing persuasion is being clear about many viewpoints and stakeholders. Using images or artefacts is another way to develop student talk about issues on a topic. Consider the discussion that may ensue from showing close-up images of caged animals or images of solar panels beside coal-fired power stations. Objects such as light bulbs, types of heaters or even an electricity bill can easily elicit points of view . Students can brainstorm various viewpoints about the topic or image and be prompted through the use of questions such as:

How does it look from different places and different points in time?
Who (and what) is affected by it?
Who is involved?
Who might care?

These questions have been adapted from the Circle of Viewpoints thinking routine on the Harvard **Visible Thinking** site. This site has many strategies for assisting students to think and talk about a topic and make thinking visible. For other ideas for making thinking visible to assist with persuasion see: http://www.pz.harvard.edu/vt/visibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03a_ThinkingRoutines.html

The diagram shown in Figure 18 can be displayed once students have an opinion on the issue and stakeholders are identified (eg, householders, government, scientists, energy industry). Each corner of the classroom can be allocated to represent the viewpoint of each stakeholder. Students select a corner and come up with elaborations about the point that would reflect the particular viewpoint of the stakeholder. Groups can then share ideas and record them to use later and to compare informal and formal language choices.
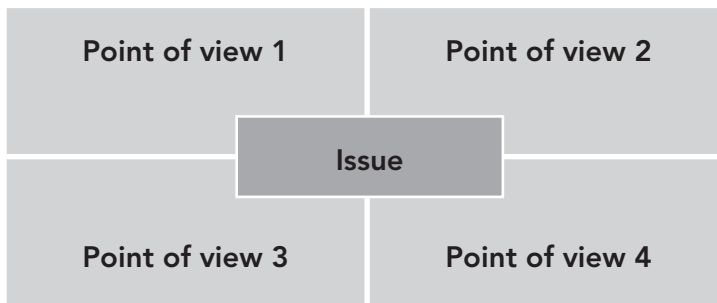
Point of view 1	Point of view 2
	Issue	
Point of view 3	Point of view 4

FIGURE 18: POINT OF VIEW CHART

An activity that can encourage students to give opinions about a chosen topic is called Find someone who … Students walk around and ask each other questions with the restriction that they can ask each student only once. Students record names and responses. It may be necessary to model changing commands into questions (both open and closed) as well as practising interpersonal skills including turn taking, active listening, interrupting and so on. The example below was used to develop talk with regards to subject matter and viewpoints on the topic of pedigree versus designer dogs. This strategy again leads to collaborative development of ideas, opinions and language which is a key step before writing.

> **Find someone who …**
> • can say why they like dogs
> • can recall making a decision about purchasing a particular type of dog
> • knows the difference between a pure breed and designer breed dog
> • can name two designer dog breeds and two pure bred dog breeds
> • believes designer dogs are healthier than pure breeds
> • thinks pure breeds are more expensive than designer breeds
> • believes pure breeds have a better temperament than designer dogs
> • thinks designer dogs can have twice the health problems as pure breeds
> • knows why pure breed dog breeders have issues with designer dog breeders
> • can explain 'hybrid vigour'
> • can give three reasons for buying a pure breed dog.

Once students have developed a range of arguments related to a topic and position, small groups can rank the arguments from strongest to weakest. Groups then share and justify their rankings in order to further develop their use of elaboration of arguments.

By providing such talk situations as those mentioned in this chapter, students are entrusted with having opinions and being able to support them. Participation in talk is critical if students are to become authorities on an issue. In addition the talk provides a context where students begin to take on the context-specific language as well as grammatical structures required as they move towards interacting around written texts.

Building the field – technical vocabulary

As persuasive writing can occur in a great range of curriculum contexts on a multitude of topics, it is critical that the required knowledge is identified prior to expecting students to read, write, talk and listen on the topic. One needs to be cautious not to focus on writing a persuasive text on a particular topic unless students have some motivation and interest in it and there is a connection to curriculum content. Even as adults it is very difficult to write a text on a topic for which we have limited knowledge even if we have effective literacy skills.

In classrooms, persuasive texts will often be informed by information texts such as those discussed throughout this book. For example, students may need to research and know about the process of recycling before being able to take a position on why

government funding should be increased to encourage further recycling. This may require them to read a range of information reports and explanation texts. They may even need to engage with procedures or procedural recounts when conducting experiments on various materials. Such experiences can help in moving from concrete to more abstract knowledge and language. Engaging with a range of texts and experiences will assist in building the field and the technical vocabulary around the topic.

It is easy to assume that field knowledge for persuasive writing would be developed by engaging with other factual texts. While this is true, depending on the topic, literature can also be a powerful way to develop background knowledge and points of view on a particular topic. For example *The Diary of Ali Ismail* (Sunderland, 2006) is the story of a refugee boy who comes to Australia by boat. Reading such a text would be one way to engage students with some of the issues surrounding treatment of refugees. Penny Hutton (2011) suggests quality literary texts that are useful in conjunction with other texts on topics such as animal rights and conservation.

As can be seen above, there are many ways to build the field as students begin to engage with less familiar topics across the curriculum. In the example below, teachers demonstrate how they assisted students to develop the language required to understand the features of rap music.

A classroom experience: Teachers share their expertise about building the field

Paul Herron and Liane Frugtniet

YEAR 7 MUSIC

In Year 7 Music, students were learning about rap music and its features. This was the music content but the teachers wanted to incorporate a meaningful literacy focus also. Ultimately they wanted their students to develop written persuasive texts, which would evaluate rap within the broad culture. Other examples from the unit of work will be shown throughout this chapter but on page 113 is a table that was devised in order to assist students with the features of rap music as this would be required when reading and writing other texts. Students listened to three rap tracks and had to identify the features present. This highlights the complexity of technical language and field knowledge within specific curriculum areas. Students needed to acquire this language so that they could ultimately sound like authorities on the topic.

TABLE 7: FEATURES OF RAP MUSIC			
FEATURE	RAP 1	RAP 2	RAP 3
Strong repeated drum pattern			
Rhythmic vocal line			
Vocal intonation			
Use of a riff			
Accents on 2nd and 4th beats			
Moderate tempo			
Break mixing			
Scratching			
Use of short rhythms in vocal part			
Some changes in texture			
Little variation in dynamics			
Place a tick in the column if the feature applies in the song.			

It is not uncommon for evaluative language to be a focus when teaching students to interact with and produce persuasive texts. Often evaluative or in some cases emotive language can be viewed as a focus on vocabulary alone. Although this may be true in one sense it must be acknowledged as the interpersonal grammatical resources that are used to express attitude within texts. Martin & White (2002:2), when discussing such resources describe:

not only the means by which speakers/writers overtly encode what they present as their own attitudes but also those means by which they more indirectly activate evaluative stances and position readers/listeners to supply their own assessments.

In considering this statement it becomes clear that language used to convey attitude must always be considered in context, as what may be appropriate in a personal development class may be seen as inappropriate in a science class. In addition, the sharing and sometimes exchange of values and attitudes is a way of imparting and challenging social and cultural beliefs and practices through the medium of language.

Table 8 has been adapted from Derewianka (2011) and Droga & Humphrey (2003). It looks at three ways of evaluating with examples from the topic pure bred versus designer dogs.

TABLE 8: ATTITUDE IN TEXTS			
		Positive	Negative
Affect	Expressing feelings and emotions	Designer breed dogs are the **best**.	She **cried** when she learnt about the disease.
Judgement	Judging human behaviours	The breeders were **devoted** and **caring**.	His **inhumane conduct** affected the pups.
Appreciation	Evaluating the qualities of things	The kennel was **immaculate**.	They were bred in **unsatisfactory** conditions.

As can be seen in the examples above, the detection of attitude is sometimes literal but at other times inferences may need to be made in order to locate subjective attitudes, which may seem objective on the surface. This is important when we look at reading and critical literacy. When considering topics for persuasive writing some features may be more prevalent in a text depending on the subject matter and the audience's relationship with the speaker or writer.

In looking at such features in the context of a text on pure bred vs. designer dogs, words or groups of words that were evaluative were highlighted in a text. Evaluations were recorded as being positive or negative and as direct (literal) or indirect (inferential). Identification of some examples relied on the background knowledge of the reader and the opinions that were brought to the text, eg pedigree dogs. Discussions about the persuasion used by the writer can be pointed out with a focus on more sophisticated writers tending to use indirect evaluation. An example of a way to organise and discuss such language can be seen in Figure 19.
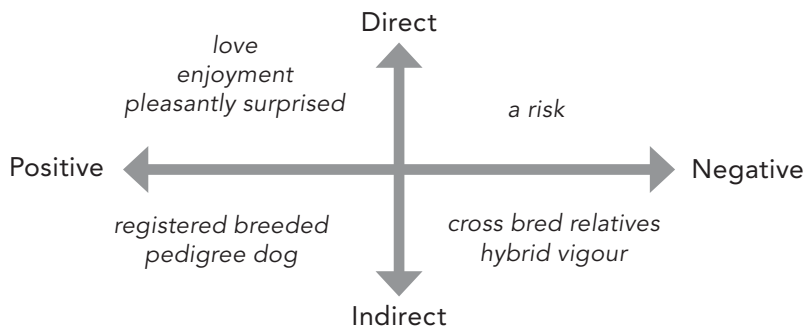

FIGURE 19: LOOKING AT FEATURES OF A TEXT

When working with texts some questions for beginning conversations about attitude can include:

Which words in the text convey attitude?

Does the attitude of the writer/speaker become clear from the beginning of the text?

How does the writer try to affect the reader? Do they convey emotions? Do they judge the actions of people? Do they evaluate particular things or objects? Does this change across the stages of the text?

Are single words used or groups of words used to evaluate?

Is the evaluation obvious or do I have to infer?

Theme and nominalisation

> For explanations about Theme and Nominalisation see:
> • Derewianka, 2011: 145–148; 161
> • Rossbridge & Rushton, 2010: 37–39; 57–59; 70–71
> • Droga & Humphrey, 2003: 99–103

Just as we have discussed in relation to other factual texts, the role of Theme and nominalisation can have an important effect on the organisation of a text, and in the case of persuasive texts, these choices can result in conveying authority, as a speaker or writer interacts with an audience.

A range of Themes play a significant role in texts which persuade. Theme is the first element in the clause and can be considered at a text, paragraph, sentence and clause level as it shows how the flow of information is developed across a text. The role of Theme in persuasive texts can range from placing the writer upfront in the case of early writers or topical information upfront, as texts become more sophisticated. For example:

_I_ *think you should go to Canberra because there are lots of fun things to do.*

Canberra attractions *provide great entertainment for families.*

As Themes focus on the topic rather than the writer we start to develop more dense, authoritative texts.

Themes can also be interpersonal as a writer may choose to forefront their attitude to the reader. In the text on page 116, written by a Year 3 student, a range of **interpersonal Themes** have been used. As a note of caution, such choices should

only be considered whilst explicitly discussing the relationship between the speaker/listener or writer/reader. Examine this text:

Honestly *I think every family should go to Canberra.*

You need to go to Canberra because it is your only opportunity to see parliament.

Surely *everybody would agree that Questacon is the best and every family needs to go there.*

Naturally *I feel that you need to go to Canberra because Old Parliament and the War Memorial are wonderful places.*

Clearly *this shows that everyone needs to go to Canberra.*

When working with students, the idea of Theme can also be used to introduce and connect arguments through the use of **text connectives** (See Derewianka, 2011: 153–154).

After further explicit teaching and the development of strategies for planning, a Year 3 student redrafted her text and used a range of connectives in Theme position to help sequence, connect and elaborate upon arguments.

Visiting Canberra is a fantastic opportunity for families to enjoy many great places.
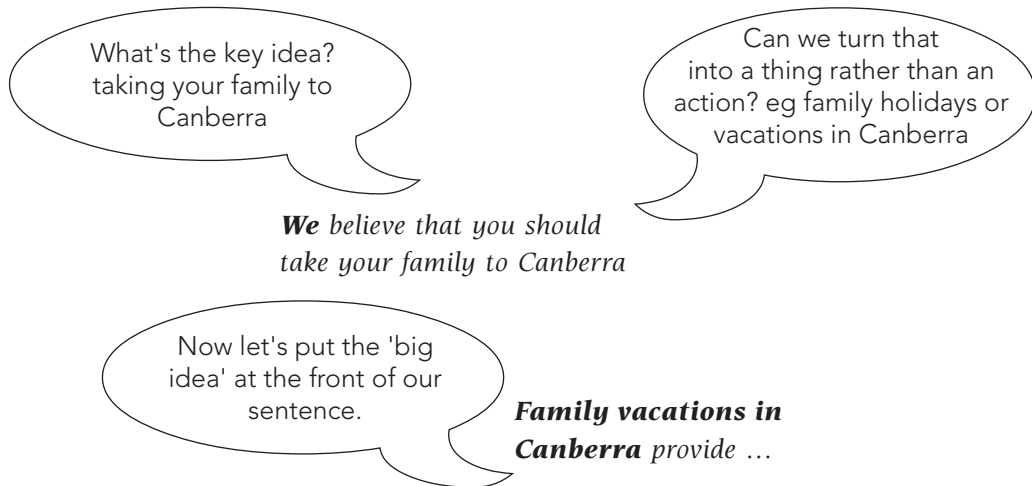
First of all *Questacon is the best place for families as it has lots of activities about Science and Technology.* **For example** *Track Attack is a ride that is like being on a real rollercoaster.*

Furthermore *the wonderful War Memorial is to help to remember the soldiers who fort in war and died.* **For example** *the Japanese submarine that entered Sydney Harbour is displayed for families to look at.*

In addition *new Parliament House is a fantastic opportunity for all families to enjoy as Federal Parliament is only located in Canberra. New Parliament opened in 1988 as old Parliament is now the Museum of Democracy.*

In addition to Theme, nominalisation is a powerful tool used for persuading and is commonly seen in the texts older students are required to read. Take a look at the sentence on page 117 and how careful discussion (see suggested discussion around the sentence), can assist students to nominalise so that actions can be turned into nouns or ideas.

The classroom discussion could go something like this:

What's the key idea? taking your family to Canberra

Can we turn that into a thing rather than an action? eg family holidays or vacations in Canberra

We *believe that you should take your family to Canberra*

Now let's put the 'big idea' at the front of our sentence.

Family vacations in Canberra *provide …*

By participating in conversations like that above we can guide students to create texts which are more dense, and most importantly, when considering the function of persuading, we immediately alert the reader to the most important point. In this case the focus shifts to 'family vacations …' rather than 'we'.

Through the process of nominalisation we can repackage a whole clause or in some cases many clauses into one noun group. This can result in moving from sensing or thinking verbs such as (eg *believe*, *think*) to often relational verbs (eg *is*). In addition the removal of personal pronouns places the key idea or argument in Theme position. Thus we alert the reader to the substance of the argument at the beginning of the clause and take the focus off the human participant. Of course, such choices must be considered in relation to the needs of the audience.

Modelled reading

As can be seen from the discussions so far, there are many grammatical features that can be focused on when considering persuasive texts. During modelled reading the teacher needs to select texts for particular purposes and be able to clearly indentify features across the text. To show examples of nominalisation it may be wise to choose a text that is written in a more academic style while when focusing on interpersonal choices a different text from a different domain may demonstrate this feature in a better way.

Fortunately, our culture abounds with examples of persuasive texts, and due to the use of technology, a range of texts in various modes are readily available. Modelled texts need to be selected based on the features they demonstrate or sometimes do not demonstrate so that students are able to distinguish between effective school-based texts and those that may occur in the broader society. Ideally the texts we use with students will focus on immediate real-life problems and issues.

When considering modelled texts obviously we can read, view and discuss a range of contexts in which persuasion occurs. Advertising in its many forms including junk mail and catalogues or brochures provide useful material for considering persuasive devices often in both a written and visual and also multimodal form. The realm of politics also provides a wealth of texts for older students ranging from political advertising in paper and electronic form, media releases and also question time in parliament. This may provide useful examples of how to critique language choices made by participants. A range of letters and editorials also provide good examples of persuasive devices as do television and radio interviews. Even texts, such as reviews, that do not seem initially expository also provide contexts for exploring evaluative language. It would be amiss not to also consider the role of electronic texts using sites such as Twitter and Facebook as they have a pivotal role in persuading its users within our society. However, it needs to be acknowledged that many modes and forms of persuasive texts are not always valued in traditional school texts. In saying this the range of texts discussed with students will assist in them being able to distinguish the language features of these various **modes** and particularly highlight the features that do or do not create a sense of authority on the part of the speaker or writer.

There is an expectation that certain texts (often the more 'prestigious' ones, which determine the degree of success or failure at school) will be written to appeal to the intellect rather than the emotions. Students' arguments need to be based on logic and defended with evidence, rather than openly expressing personal opinion arising out of intuition, feelings or prejudice. (Derewinaka, 1991:78–79)

Derewianka goes on to point out that this depends on the age of the student. The subject area will also have an effect on the subjective or objective choices made by students when writing. However persuasive texts in schools tend to fall into the academic rather than personal realm as they are mediums for presenting knowledge, which tend to result in less focus on the writer by placing greater emphasis on the subject matter or issue. This is key to remember when discussing a range of texts

and being explicit about their contexts and how they reflect the values of the institution of school.

In the following example, texts are compared in regards to the effectiveness of their language features with a particular focus on Theme or sentence starters.

A classroom experience: A teacher shares her expertise in comparing modelled texts

Kim Self

YEARS 5 AND 6 ENGLISH / HSIE

This lesson focused on developing complex sentences and the role of Theme in discussion texts.

During a unit on transport two discussion texts were shown to students. These were texts written by students available from the NSW Board of Studies Assessment Resource Centre http://arc.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/go/home/. The texts were on the topic of banning cars from the centre of towns and cities. Students discussed which text was a better discussion text and why. Discussions also considered how the writer convinced the reader. In each text the sentence starters were highlighted and recorded on a chart. The use of sentence starters in each text was compared, as was the use of connectives.

The sentences in the weaker text were discussed and compared to the sentences in the other text. After this students focused on the weaker text and expanded the sentences using a range of sentence starters, which were used in the stronger text and supplemented with examples on a chart. Some examples included:

- This clearly shows that ...
- Additionally ...
- Furthermore ...
- From the evidence ...
- On the other hand ...
- An additional problem ...
- Consequently ...

Strategies for reading

As indicated above, persuasive texts can be found in many domains. When exploring texts, because they are often based on opinion, it is worth comparing texts involving similar or different perspectives around the same issue.

Two contrasting texts can be displayed for students. In small groups students can be asked to identify the following:

1. the text purpose
2. the issue
3. where the text might be found
4. who the writer may be
5. the target audience.

Groups then share and justify their responses with reference to the text. The teacher needs to guide student responses in relation to the functions of persuading, convincing and evaluating by discussing possible language features that might assist or hinder texts in achieving their purpose.

A similar task can be undertaken by comparing two texts in which one is informal and spoken-like and the other is more formal and written-like. Students can be asked to place the texts on a continuum from 'spoken-like' to 'written-like' (Figure 20). Depending on their experience with talking about grammatical features in the contexts of texts students can then identify differences. This can then lead to critical analysis of the texts based on how appropriate they are for the target audience.

Similarly, examples of students writing could be ranked from most spoken-like to most written-like.

Spoken-like		Written-like
personal pronouns		nominalisation
sensing verbs		relating verbs
action verbs		topics in Theme position
active voice		passive voice

FIGURE 20: SPOKEN-LIKE TO MOST WRITTEN-LIKE CONTINUUM

In the following example students were guided through reading a blog which evaluated the music industry and rap artists. This required students to demonstrate a range of reading skills through a focus on the evaluative aspects of the text.

A classroom experience: Teachers share their expertise in reading a blog

Paul Herron and Liane Frugtniet

YEAR 7 MUSIC

The task was carefully planned as students were guided by questions to focus on the evaluative devices within the text particularly through making inferences. The effectiveness of this task lay in the role of the teacher, who by following these steps demonstrated the key role of talk around the text.

1   Students independently read the blog and underlined unknown words and phrases.
2   The students formed pairs and compared what they had underlined and shared their knowledge.
3   The teacher questioned the class and clarified any ambiguous words/phrases.
4   The teacher then displayed the text on an overhead projector.
5   In pairs the students were given one minute to verbally answer each question.
6   The class shared information after each question and the teacher recorded the responses.

Rap Music

Read the following blog then complete the activities and questions.

Once you needed to have real talent to make the music charts, now anyone with a big ego and the ability to string a few words together is able to break into the entertainment business calling themselves rappers. It seems to be more about image and celebrity than hard work developing real musical skills.

The music industry is devouring rap artists at an alarming rate, always looking for the next big thing to come along and make lots of money out of them, which is their main concern. As a result, it lacks depth and originality and is merely a product with very little to distinguish it from other rapping styles being mass produced.

Some of the attitudes that rap has about society are also very questionable. There seems to be shallow views of what is important in life, instead offering a fast-track to fame and fortune for most of these so-called 'artists'.

It's about time the younger generation started seeing this for what it is! It's a huge scam.

R.N. Taylor from Rant blog site

READING TASK

1   In paragraph one, what phrases suggest that the writer dislikes rap?
    Eg 'now anyone'
2   Circle the main idea being expressed in Paragraph 2, sentence 1.
    a Rappers are only interested in money.
    b Record companies are only interested in money.
    I chose this response because the text says:

3 Read paragraph two, sentence two. All three statements following can apply to this sentence. Complete the sentences by writing what the text says or infers. The first one is done for you.

| STATEMENT	WHAT THE TEXT SAYS OR INFERS OR SUGGESTS
Rappers are unoriginal	The text says that rap music lacks originality.
Rap music is something you can purchase	The text says…
Listeners can't tell the difference between rap artists.	The text infers or suggests this because….

4 What is meant by the first sentence in paragraph three? Circle your answer.
  a That rappers question the values of society.
  b The attitudes held by rappers are misguided.

5 What is the writer saying or inferring about the values of rappers in paragraph three, sentence two? Write at least two more points.
  The writer is saying or inferring that:
• Rap offers fame and wealth.
  • _____
  • _____

6 Why is 'artists' in inverted commas?

7 Can you describe who you think would write a blog like this? Eg young or old, mother or father etc. Give one reason for your answer.

8 Explain why the last statement could be offensive or insulting to the younger generation. Give 2 reasons.
  Reason 1_____
  Reason 2_____

Strategies for writing

As can be seen from the discussion of language features throughout this chapter, and indeed this book, the consideration of audience is critical when writing texts that persuade. In order to be an authority on a topic one needs to consider the needs and viewpoint of an audience as well as the relationship between reader and writer. When making interpersonal choices involving features such as modality, young children can sometimes use very high modality as they are not always experienced in the subtleties of English. For example, to someone in a position of power students may write '*You _must_ give more money to soccer teams or we _won't_ vote for you again*'. Generally, when dealing with audiences in a position of power, the use of low modality is more effective. Students need to learn that aspects such as age, gender,

knowledge and position can influence the language choices we make. A way to demonstrate this with students is to place participants on a seesaw as below and demonstrate the power relationship between participants.

Issue: Granting an extension for an assignment
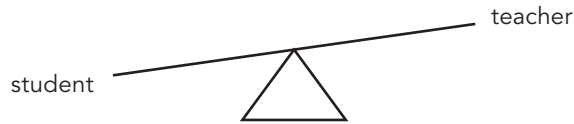
Given a school-based decision and the role of age and power the teacher is likely to be in the position of authority.

Issue: Selecting the most appropriate games site
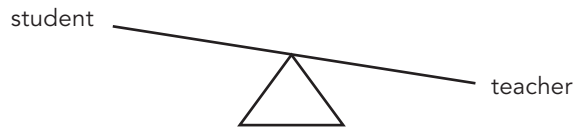
In this situation, due to knowledge and experience the students may have the greater authority. Having such a discussion prior to writing can help to frame subsequent discussion about potential language choices. Focusing on choices such as modality in the example below demonstrates how students can be guided to consider language choices during writing.

A classroom experience: A teacher shares her expertise in using modals and connectives

Kim Self

YEARS 3 AND 4 ENGLISH / HSIE

The teacher and students were focusing on writing expositions in the English subject area.

The grammar focus was on causal connectives to show why (*because, because of this, as a result, consequently*), sensing (thinking/feeling) verbs (*think, believe, wonder, wish, imagine, recollect*) modality (*must, should, could, might*) and adverbs (*possibly, maybe, perhaps*). See Derewianka, 1998:59 and 110.

A list of modal verbs was displayed and used to create a cline from least definite to most definite. Modals were then highlighted in texts. The author's choice was discussed in regards to how modals were used to persuade. In groups students listed the opposite arguments to those found in texts. Using modals the teacher modelled and jointly constructed statements

to present arguments using the charts below. For example, *'If cars were banned it would be difficult for some people such as people with babies to get around given that …'*

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
may	would	must
can	wouldn't	mustn't
could	should	ought to
possibly	shouldn't	have to
perhaps	probably	certainly

SOMETHING HAPPENS	THE CONSEQUENCE OR RESULT	THE REASON WHY / WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT
eg If….	Then/It would, might, may, should, could	Because of, As a result of, Since that, given that…
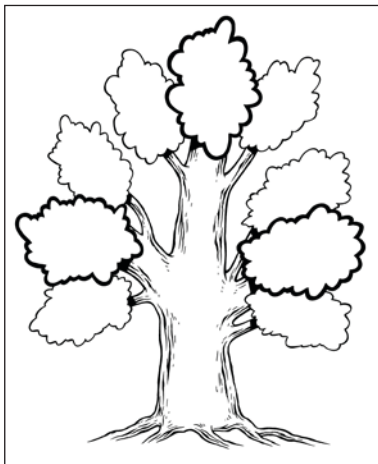
After working with a range of texts the teacher modelled how to use of an argument tree (See Figure 21) to construct an exposition with three main points and examples. Students were then prompted to include connectives and modals in their points.

FIGURE 21: TREE OF REASONS

A classroom experience: Teachers share their expertise in the process of developing formal writing

Paul Herron and Liane Frugtniet

MUSIC, YEAR 7

After reading the blog on rappers shown earlier in this chapter the teachers explained that students would be writing counter arguments to those in the blog and they would need to come up with points that elaborate. In pairs, students brainstormed arguments and elaborations. This was supported with examples from the teacher. The teacher then introduced the idea of formal writing by focusing on putting main ideas at the beginning of sentences (Theme) and nominalisation. From this point the teacher modelled writing a

paragraph by referring to Theme and nominalisation. Students then completed the writing task in pairs. Below is the task used to guide students through the process.

PERSUASIVE WRITING TASK

- Write counter arguments to the above blog.
- Include positive ideas about the importance of rap to young people.
- List your ARGUMENTS in support of Rap music in the first column then ELABORATE on your argument in the second column. Some examples are given. Some sections have questions to help you think.

ARGUMENT	ELABORATION (YOU CAN WRITE THIS IN POINT FORM. YOU DON'T HAVE TO USE FORMAL LANGUAGE)
• Rap is about expressing an opinion	• We live in a democracy and have the right to express our thoughts, feelings and ideas (freedom of speech) • If people don't like their opinion they don't have to listen. • Rappers are part of our society and they have their opinions too.
• Rap tells a story	• Think about why we tell stories. What do we learn about ourselves and others? • Sometimes songs aren't always about love and feeling but might express anger. It isn't always about how wonderful the world is!
• There are musical skills in rap	• What are some of the skills you need?
• Not all rappers sound the same	•
	•

FORMAL WRITING

Two techniques that can be used to make your writing sound more formal are:

1   Putting the 'big' or main idea at the beginning of the sentence.
   - Read your sentence
   - Underline the main point you are making.
   - If the main idea is at the end of the sentence try to move it to the front.

Example:

We live in a democracy and have <u>the right to express our thoughts, feelings and ideas</u>

The main idea is: the right to express thoughts, feelings and ideas

New sentence becomes:

The right to express thoughts, feelings and ideas is part of living in a democracy.

2   Turning a verb into a noun (nominalisation)
   • Read your sentence.
   • Underline the verbs or verb groups.
   • Try to turn one of the verbs into a noun.

Example:

The right to express thoughts, feelings and ideas is part of living in a democracy.

To express could become expression

New sentence:

Expression of thoughts, feelings and ideas is part of living in a democracy.

PAIRS WRITING TASK

In pairs write a paragraph (3 to 4) sentences that elaborate on the points 'There are musical skills in rap' and 'Not all rappers sound the same'. Do a draft in the first box and your final copy in the second box. Edit your draft. Try to put the "big" idea at the beginning of each sentence.

DRAFT
FINAL COPY

Joint construction

The notion of joint construction has been explored in all chapters in this book. The reason for this is the power of joint construction in enabling the negotiation of meanings and acknowledgement of the shift from spoken to written language. Joint construction is a significant point in the teaching and learning cycle where we can have true conversations about texts. Below is an example of how students can be involved in meaningful and motivated conversations for a real audience. It is the authenticity of the task that enhances the conversations that occur.

A classroom experience: Teachers share their expertise about supporting students in the process of joint construction

Janet Freeman, Lurlene Mitchell and Sue Shelley

YEAR 3 ENGLISH

Teachers supported students throughout a series of lessons as students moved towards a joint construction of a persuasive text. Teachers wanted to focus on developing a real purpose for students to write in order to motivate them. Also by giving them a genuine audience they could carefully consider the type of language they would use.

Students were asked to write down something they really wanted and why. A class list (see below) was made and the teacher chose one idea to discuss which was 'To sleep over at my friend's house'.

A new bike

An Xbox

A computer in my room

A puppy

A kitten

A paddle pop

To sleep over at my friend's house

A birthday party

Teachers acted out the roles of parents and child making the case for why the child should go to the sleepover. The dialogue went something like this:

Child: Mum can I please go and sleep over at Mia's?

Mum: (While hanging clothes out) Well I don't know if you can… you won't get enough sleep and then you'll be cross and won't do your homework or help about the house. Not to mention the rubbish you will eat!

Child: We won't go to bed too late and I will do my homework now! And any other work too! And I will promise to eat all my vegetables next week to make up for all the rubbish…

Mum: I think you should ask your father.

Child: Dad…

Dad: Yes

Child: Mum says I can I go and sleep over at Mia's if I do my homework and housework, eat all my vegetable and not go to bed too late. Can I? Please say yes!

Dad : Yes…I suppose so.. if your mother says you can.

Child: Oh goody I'll tell Mum.

Following the role-play the students chose another topic to create their own scenarios. Students planned the arguments they would make and acted them out.

Students were then asked what they would like from someone at school and this was brainstormed. Finally it was agreed the students would all like the principal to watch them swim at the school swimming school to see how they had improved.

Points to convince her and all the reasons she might say no were discussed (see below).

WHY SHE SHOULD COME	WHY SHE MIGHT SAY NO
She will see how well we swim	She is very busy
It would be exciting to spend time with students	She has a lot of hard work to do
She would be able to take a break from the office	Many people need her
She would be sad not to see us swim	
We are desperate for her to come	

This was then acted out and how you would speak to a principal making sure you were polite but maybe a bit persuasive was discussed. This included using good adjectives to describe how they felt and how she would feel.

In the next lesson letters from important people were read. This assisted in showing ideas to begin and end the letter. Groups of students then jointly constructed a letter to the principal. Each was read out and one was typed up and sent to her. The principal replied the next day. On the next page is the text that was jointly constructed and the reply from the principal. The joint construction was particularly successful as students were able to draw on the rich language and experiences leading up to then writing.

HAPPY DAYS PRIMARY SCHOOL
Year 3
Happy Days Primary School
Rainbow Road
Sunshine 1234

Dear Mrs Rosie,

We are writing to convince you to come to one of our swimming school sessions before the end of term.

We believe that you will be delighted by the skills we have learnt over the last few weeks and that it will be really exciting for you to spend time with students.

Also, you could get a break from all the hard work at the office, rest by the pool and be inspired by our swimming.

Mrs Rosie, we are desperate for you to come to swimming school to see us swim and we are sure you would be terribly sad to miss this opportunity to see us.

Please consider this invitation. We look forward to your prompt response.

Yours sincerely,
Year 3 swimmers
Happy Days Primary School

HAPPY DAYS PRIMARY SCHOOL
Year 3
Happy Days Primary School
Rainbow Road
Sunshine 1234

Dear Year three Swimmers,

Thank you for your letter persuading me to come to one of your swimming lessons.

After reading your letter I was totally convinced that I needed to come to one of your swimming lessons and see the skills you have gained.

In Australia it is very important to learn how to swim because our country is an island, surrounded by water, and the weather is so warm that many people spend their weekends and holidays at the beach, by rivers and swimming pools.

I will be delighted to attend one of your swimming lessons within the next two weeks to see how well you have developed. I hope you all become great swimmers.

Thank you so much for the invitation.

Kind regards,
S. Rosie

In conclusion

Throughout this book conversations about texts have been demonstrated by a range of teachers in a variety of contexts as they have taken the initiative to develop these interactions around language choices across curriculum areas. These conversations are between teachers and their students but it must be acknowledged that these conversations reach beyond the teaching and learning experience to ongoing talk between colleagues and mentors.

As we talk through issues with our students and each other we provide ourselves with the opportunity to continue to learn about subject matter and the language through which it is presented. In doing so, we develop new perspectives and continually refine our ideas. We hope that you can use this book to both start and continue conversations about factual texts in your classroom.