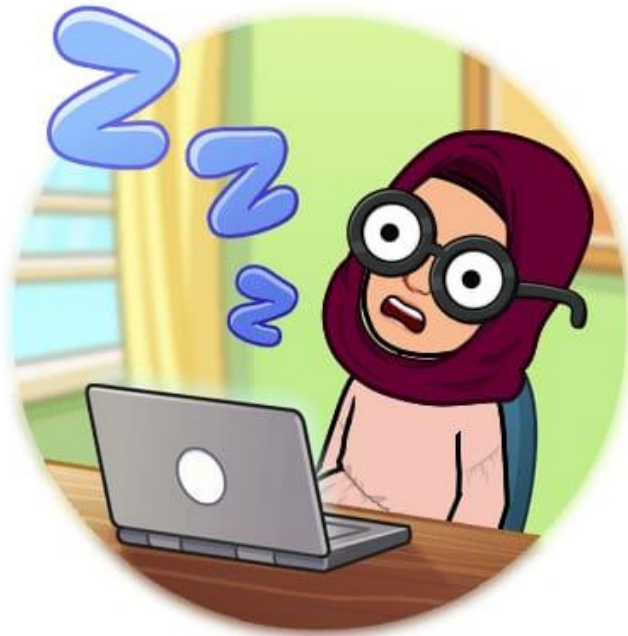


# Analyzing Textual Metafunction



# **Are governments necessary in Australia?**



# TEXT 1

- I think governments are necessary because if there weren't any there wouldn't any law and people would be killing each others. They help keep the system in order for certain things. If there wasn't any federal government, there wouldn't be anyone to fix up problems in the country. It's the same with the state governments. If the state government didn't exist there wouldn't be anyone to look after the schools, vandalism and fighting would occur everyday. The local government is important to look after the rubbish because otherwise everyone would have diseases.

# TEXT 2

- In Australia there are three levels of government, the federal government, state government and local government. All of these levels of government are necessary. This is so for a number of reasons. First, the federal government is necessary for the big things. They keep the economy in order and look after things like defence. Similarly the state governments look after the middle-sized things. For example they look after law and order, preventing things like vandalism in schools. Finally, local governments look after the small things. They look after things like collect rubbish, otherwise everyone would have diseases. Thus for the reasons above we can conclude that the three levels of government are necessary.

I think  
governments are necessary  
because if there weren't any  
there wouldn't any law  
and people would be killing each others.

They help keep the system in order for certain things.

If there wasn't any federal government,  
there wouldn't be anyone to fix up problems in the country.

It's the same with the state governments.

If the state government didn't exist  
there wouldn't be anyone to look after the schools,  
vandalism and fighting would occur everyday.

The local government is important to look after the rubbish  
because otherwise everyone would have diseases.

In Australia there are three levels of government, the federal government, state government and local government.

All of these levels of government are necessary.

This is so for a number of reasons.

First, the federal government is necessary for the big things.

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Similarly the state governments look after the middle-sized things.

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They look after things like collect rubbish,  
otherwise everyone would have diseases.

Thus for the reasons above we can conclude  
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I think **governments** are necessary  
**because if there** weren't any **there** wouldn't any law  
**and people** would be killing each others.

**They** help keep the system in order for certain things.

**If there** wasn't any federal government,  
**there** wouldn't be anyone to fix up problems in the  
country.

**It's** the same with the state governments.

**If the state government** didn't exist  
**there** wouldn't be anyone to look after the schools,  
**vandalism and fighting** would occur everyday.

**The local government** is important to look after the  
rubbish  
**because otherwise everyone** would have diseases.

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the federal government, state government and  
local government.

**All of these levels of government** are necessary.

**This** is so for a number of reasons.

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**They** keep the economy in order and look after  
things like defence.

**Similarly the state governments** look after the  
middle-sized things.

**For example they** look after law and order,  
preventing things like vandalism in schools.

**Finally, local governments** look after the small  
things.

**They** look after things like collect rubbish,  
**otherwise everyone** would have diseases.

**Thus for the reasons above** we can conclude  
**that the three levels of government** are  
necessary.





# Discussion

- Although the two texts present the same case, that the three levels of government in Australia are necessary, and use much the same arguments, the texts are very different in how they develop their arguments. The explanation of these differences can be found mainly in how the information is structured, or in how the resources of Theme and Rheme are deployed.
- In particular the use of Textual Themes is important in structuring the texts. In the first text most Textual Themes are structural (Conjunctions). These operate at sentence or clause complex level. There are no Textual Themes used to join larger units of text. This leaves implicit relations between different parts of the text. In the second text Textual Themes are mainly Conjunctive Adjuncts. These are used to develop the rhetorical structure of the text.



- Going back to the clause ‘This is so far a number of reasons,’ we find the Topical Theme ‘this’ summarising the thesis presented in the preceding text and linking it to the new information in the clause ‘a number of reasons’.

**This**                      is so    *for a number of reasons.*  
Theme                                      New

- The Conjunctive Textual Themes at the beginning of each sub-section of text to link up to this piece of New Information. They introduce new reasons. They operate at a text-organising level rather than at a sentence-organizing level. Even within sub-sections of the text we find a similar pattern of organisation. The Conjunctive ‘for example’ provides a link between one sentence and another.





- We also find differences in the kind of information found Topical Themes. In the first text we find a number of Existential clauses with 'there' as Theme. These clauses have no content or topical information in the Topical Theme. Most of the content information is found in the Rheme as new information. Thus the argument tends to develop as a sequence of news without much link between Theme and New.



- In contrast the second text puts more content information in the Topical Themes and there is more continuity in choice of Topical Themes. For example:

**First**      **the federal government**    *is necessary for the big things.*

Conj.	Topical	Rheme    ( <i>New</i> )
Theme		

**They**      **keep**      *the economy in order*

Topical	Rheme    ( <i>New</i> )
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**and**      **look after**    *things like defence.*

Str.	Rheme    ( <i>New</i> )
Theme	



- Here we find a Conjunctive in the first sentence linking the following text to 'reasons'. The federal government is Topical Theme in the second clause with 'the big things' as New Information. In the second clause the Topical Theme 'they' refers to the federal government in the previous clause and, in the New Information 'the economy' is an example of a 'big thing' while 'in order' can be related to 'is necessary'. In the final clause the Structural Theme links the clause to the one above, assumes the same Topical Theme by leaving it out and adds 'defence' as an example of another 'big thing'.



- In addition the second text employs Marked Topical Themes in the first sentence of the text and at the beginning of the final subsection.

*In Australia*      *there are three levels of government,*

<i>Marked Topical</i>	<i>Rheme</i>
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*Thus*      *for the reasons above*      *we can conclude*

<i>Str.</i>	<i>Marked Topical</i>	<i>Rheme</i>
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- In the first example ‘in Australia’ locates the content of the text for the reader. It has an orienting function. In the second example, the Marked Topical Theme links the final subsection to the rest of the text (‘above’), especially to ‘reasons’.
- The contrast between the two links is not in what the writers were trying to say but is how they said it. The writer of the first text utilises Theme patterns typical of face-to-face interaction, of speaking. The writer of the second text used patterns more typical of writing, giving the text a more explicit rhetorical structure.

- Should campus start offline learning next semester?

I'll wait...

