

Chapter 2: **Research into the language of workplace English**

In recent years, research into the language of workplace English has increased in quantity such that it is becoming an established and important area of applied linguistics. Swales (2000:65) observes that there has been a growth in research activity in workplace English over the last 15 years. Hewings (2002:209) demonstrates this growth with reference to the increasing number of business English articles published in the 'English for Specific Purposes Journal', one of the principal journals in the general field of workplace English and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). A major impetus for this research is the widely perceived need to develop materials for teaching which are based on authentic texts of the workplace. The pedagogic application research is noted by St John (1996), who argues that the field of business English has been under-researched and that there is insufficient research both to define and demarcate it satisfactorily and to underpin course design and teaching materials. The motivation for the present study is to conduct research into workplace English which will, hopefully, at a later stage, underpin course design and material.

The data for the study are thus a sample of authentic texts drawn from two previous projects concerned with analysing the language of the workplace – the Effective Writing for Management (EWM) project based at Bristol University (Davies and Forey, 1996; Davies et al., 1999) and the Communication in the Professional Workplace (CPW) project based at the English Language Centre, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong (Nunan et al., 1996; Forey and Nunan, 2002), both of which aimed, ultimately, to inform and improve teaching materials. Details of both projects and the data used in the present study are presented in Chapter Four.

From the original, and extensive, data, it was necessary to make a selection of texts for analysis. One of the major findings of the EWM project was that certain 'text types' or 'genres' were more frequently used in workplace English than others. This finding provided the basis for the selection of particular texts for analysis in the present study: memos, letters and reports.

In addition to the pedagogic motivation for the study, the evaluation of different theoretical or practical frameworks appropriate for the study was a significant focus.

In the international context of the workplace, the study was also concerned with the effect of culture on workplace use of language.

In what follows, these considerations constitute the basis for the exploration of certain general research questions relating to the research literature on workplace English:

- 1) In what specific contexts and for what specific purposes has research been undertaken?
- 2) What specific research into the language of memos, letters and reports has been undertaken to date?
- 3) In what ways do cultural factors influence language practices in the workplace?
- 4) What different models of language underpin different approaches to the study of the language of the workplace?

In Section 2.1, an overview of different interpretations of the term ‘workplace English’ is presented and the key research in this area is introduced. In Section 2.2, two key models of language within the field of workplace English are presented in brief. The different methodological approaches used in the study of workplace English are discussed in Section 2.3. This is followed by a more detailed review of key studies related to different workplace genres, and an outline of the general field of workplace English and the issues to which it has given rise are discussed in Section 2.4. In Section 2.5, research into workplace English which has specifically taken on an assessment of English language needs in various workplace contexts is presented. Section 2.6 is concerned with reviewing the need for further research into workplace English. An overview of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the model of language adopted, and the justification for adopting a SFL model in the present study are given in Section 2.7. Research into the language of the workplace within the theoretical framework of SFL is reviewed in Section 2.8. Finally, responses to the questions listed above are offered in Section 2.9. The key theoretical issues concerning Theme are presented in detail in Chapter Three. Other theoretical issues, such as grammatical projection, where one clause is used to project meaning, (e.g. *it is said that* is used to project the clause that follows) and the use of informant interpretations of texts, are further elaborated in Chapters Six and Eight respectively. The later theoretical chapters provide explanations of the concepts at the point at which these concepts are applied in the analysis and interpretation.

2.1 Overview

The term ‘workplace English’ is used to refer to discourse which is also known as ‘professional discourse’ (Gunnarsson et al., 1997), ‘institutional discourse’ (Agar, 1985; Ventola, 1990; Drew and Sorjonen, 1997; Iedema, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000) ‘business discourse’ (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1997a); and ‘workplace discourse’ (Joyce, 1992; Berry 1995, 1996; Willing, 1997). Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (1999) point out that the basic difference between these descriptions is who the participants in the discourse are. They draw a distinction between business, institutional and professional discourse. They suggest that the label ‘institutional discourse’ is applied to interactions between lay and business people and that ‘professional discourse’ is often seen to include interactions between professionals and lay people, whereas ‘business discourse’ is talk and writing between individuals who are in the domain of business and “who come together for the purpose of doing business” (Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson, 1999:2). While Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (1999) appear to suggest that distinctions between such terms as business, professional, and institutional discourse can be made, drawing these distinctions is not as straightforward as it at first may seem. For example, Iedema (1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000) refers to the discourse he studies, which is generally discourse between business people for the purpose of doing business, as ‘institutional discourse’; Berry (1995, 1996), when referring to ‘workplace discourse’, covers texts written in “business and industry” (1995:57); and Joyce (1992:1) refers to workplace texts as those reflecting the day-to-day tasks of employees in various workplaces ranging from manufacturing to clerical ones. Berry, although discussing workplace discourse, also includes administrative texts produced in educational institutions in this category. Therefore for many researchers the terms business, professional, institutional and workplace discourse seem to be almost interchangeable. These terms refer to texts which are constructed within a business, a workplace or an institutional environment and which are concerned with matters related to the exchange of goods & services or information within a workplace environment.

The present study is situated in the field of workplace discourse, where the texts at the heart of the study are, on the whole, texts written, produced and intended for communication between people in order to do business. However, in establishing the distinction between the terms ‘workplace’, ‘business’, ‘institutional’ and ‘professional’, it

seems that the nature of research undertaken is as important as the participants involved in the collection of data in the workplace. The term ‘business English’, it seems, tends to be used in studies of English texts that are written either by non-native English speakers or of texts that are written in countries where English is not the native language. Furthermore, the model of language used also seems to influence the choice of terminology. Many of those working within the tradition of ESP refer to ‘business English’ texts, for example Nickerson (1998, 1999) and Charles and Charles (1999), among others. By contrast, in research carried out in countries where English is the native language and where the writers may be either native or non-native speakers of English, there is a tendency for researchers to use the terms ‘workplace’, ‘organisational’ or ‘institutional’, for example Berry (1995, 1996), Iedema (1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000), Stainton (1996) and Martin (1997). Judging by this practice, the term ‘business English’ appears to be related to a context which is limited to users who are ‘doing business’. However, this usage seems to be somewhat restrictive in that it may exclude some texts produced in an organisational or workplace setting. For example, following this definition, the term ‘business English’ would appear to exclude administrative texts produced in an educational institution or health organisation. Therefore, for the purpose of the present study involving an analysis of texts written by both native and non-native English speakers, the terms ‘workplace’ and ‘institutional’ discourse are used synonymously to refer to the texts in this study.

Regardless of the terms used – business, workplace, organisational or institutional English – the driving motivation of most studies in this area is to study authentic texts in order to contribute to an understanding of the way in which the texts work so that this knowledge can be used to inform pedagogy. Many studies emphasise the analysis of authentic texts, and recommend that commercial materials which have been constructed and which bear little resemblance to the real language used in the workplace should be rejected (Williams, 1988; Charles, 1996; Louhiala-Salminen, 1996).

2.2 Models of language and the analysis of workplace texts

There are a number of different models of language which can be adopted for applied linguistic research. One model, and the most relevant model for the present study, is Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), for example, Berry (1995, 1996), Davies (1988, 1994, 1997) and Iedema (1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000). Another relevant model which

has generated a great deal of research related to workplace English is that termed English for Specific Purposes (ESP). ESP will be reviewed briefly here, and SFL will be reviewed in detail in Section 2.8. ESP and SFL research into the language of the workplace provide important contextualisations for the current study and a number of studies carried out in these two approaches are reviewed in detail below.

2.2.1 ESP and the study of workplace English

One area which has produced a range of studies related to workplace English is what has been called 'ESP', English for Specific Purposes (Hyon, 1996; Coffin, 2001). Swales (1990), Bhatia, (1993a/b, 1994), Louhiala-Salminen, (1996, 2002), Dudley-Evans (1997), Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), Nickerson (1998) and Feak et al., (2001) are representative of those working in this area. The ESP school has, according to Coffin (2001), focused on the identification of the structure of different genres and has generated educational outcomes mainly for non-native speakers of English.

The focus of those studying from an ESP perspective is that of identifying genres. 'Genre' for ESP practitioners is related to the 'communicative purpose' of a text. The ESP school refer to 'moves' when analysing a genre. For example Swales (1990), a founding member of the ESP tradition, introduced the Create-a-Research Space (CARS) model for writing introductions in academic articles in which he proposes the moves: 'establishing a niche', 'creating a niche', 'occupying a niche', etc. However, the pedagogic aim of the ESP practitioners emphasises communicative purpose and does not necessarily follow a particular theory of language or a particular teaching intervention as proposed by SFL protagonists promoting genre. In sum, it would appear that an ESP perspective is represented by an emphasis on pedagogy and is eclectic in its view of language embracing traditional grammar, SFL and pragmatic strategies, such as 'politeness markers' used in e-mail (Mulholland, 1999). By contrast, SFL is grounded in a theory of language which seeks to explain linguistic choices at discourse, text and clause level. This is supported by a recognised teaching model proposed by Hammond et al., (1992) which is extensively used as a genre-based pedagogy within the Australian SFL context. Issues related to the way in which SFL views and models language are dealt with in detail below. A uniting force for both ESP and SFL is the emphasis on authentic texts.

2.2.2 Workplace English texts: authenticity and corpus linguistics

Research within the field of workplace English has become increasingly committed to the analysis of ‘authentic texts’ (Stubbs, 1993). The emphasis on authenticity has developed in parallel with the development of corpus linguistics. It is only in the past twenty years, due to the development of computers, that corpus linguistics has come of age. With the development of corpus linguistics and the ability to convert and save a great deal of information in digital format it is now possible to collect, save and have access to a variety of corpora (Sinclair, 1991). A corpus is “a large collection of computer-readable texts, of different text types, which represent spoken and/or written usage” (Stubbs, 2001: 305). Unlike much of the theoretical linguistics in the past which was based on the study of isolated sentences, all corpora studies are based on naturally occurring language. As Stubbs (1996) states:

New methods and data make it possible to study patterns which are not limited to what an individual can perceive (compare telescopes and microscopes) or remember, and provide new ways of studying the material base of many of society’s activities.

(Stubbs, 1996:233)

The findings from this new method, corpus linguistics, can then be used to inform the development of dictionaries, and grammars (Francis et al., 1996, 1998) and eventually it can be incorporated into related pedagogy (McCarthy, 1998; Carter et al., 2000).

A number of commercial corpora are available: the British National Corpus (BNC), a collection of approximately 100 million words; the London-Lund corpus, approximately 500,000 words of various spoken texts; and the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen (LOB) corpus of approximately 5,700,000 spoken and written texts (Biber et al., 1998:14-5). These corpora, like the Bank of English corpus, are forever increasing in size, with the Bank of English, a corpus developed by Collins Cobuild, now standing at more than 410 million words (Sinclair, 2001).

Sinclair (2001) points out that the relative size of corpora is not so much an issue as the methods applied to analyse the data. Large corpora such as The Bank of English (which can be found at the Collins Cobuild web site) are largely intended to be analysed by computer programs before human interpretation of the findings, whereas small corpora are established with the intention that a human researcher will analyse the corpus in detail early

on in a study (Sinclair, 2001:xi). This distinction would place the present study in the latter type of corpus, involving early human intervention. Smaller corpora tend also to be more specialised in nature and are dedicated to particular text types, for example, Eggins and Slade's (1997) corpus of casual conversations, and Cheng and Warren's (1999) collection of 50 hours of spoken academic discourse. The present study is equal in size to many other specialist small corpora studies. For example, Henry and Roseberry (2001) compared 20 introductions to speakers with 40 letters of applications. Ooi (2001) collected 12 example texts from 12 different categories of personal advertisements on the internet. Ragan (2001) conducted an SFL analysis of 50 student texts comprising 11,312 words. Ghadessy and Gao (2001) conducted a statistical analysis of Theme in 974 independent clauses taken from nine texts English and Chinese translation texts. Tribble (2001) analyses the genre of fourteen different university web leaflets promoting an MA in Applied Linguistics, a total of 13,216 words. The present study analyses a corpus of 62 texts (31,833 words) of authentic memos, letters and reports.

However, even in this new technological era, the study of workplace English is still suffering from limited access to authentic texts as very few corpora based on authentic workplace texts are available (Martin, 1985/89, 1997; Williams, 1988; Berry, 1995, 1996; Davies et al., 1999; etc.). The main reason for this is the difficulty involved in accessing what are frequently sensitive and confidential texts. Methodological considerations related to the collection and development of the corpus used in the present study are discussed in Chapter Three.

2.3 Different approaches to the analysis of workplace texts

The analysis of workplace texts has proceeded from different starting points; for instance, the selection of a range of texts within a single organisation (Iedema, 1995, 1999, 2000; Nickerson, 1998, 1999) and of particular types of texts (Santos, 2002). Intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication have also been the starting points for many studies of English in the workplace, for example, by Bee-Leng (1992), Du-Babcock and Babcock (1995, 1996), Scollon and Scollon (1995), Smart (1998), Nickerson and Van Nus (1999) and Rogerson-Revell (1999). However, according to Rogerson-Revell (1999:56), research in this field "has been mainly quantitative and inductive reflecting the

discipline's concern for quantifiable evidence." These are just a few examples of the many different perspectives from which workplace English may be analysed.

2.3.1 Ethnographic studies and intertextuality in workplace English research

A wide variety of methodologies for collecting and analysing data have been used by those who have had access to the workplace community for research purposes. Brown and Herndl (1986) carried out pioneering ethnographic research, conducting interviews with training-and-development and technical managers, teachers and students attending a training course in 15 Minnesota (USA) corporations. This was followed by an ethnographic study of two companies where 12 managers were asked to identify 'good' writers. Interviews were conducted with eight named 'good writers' who were asked for their opinions about the texts they had written. In addition, Brown and Herndl interviewed peers to ask if they could identify 'good writers' in their group. The peers corroborated the managers' choices. Brown and Herndl found that the informants believed that writing was dependent upon where the writer was positioned with regard to status and that teachers' views about what was appropriate were frequently at odds with the people situated in the workplace. For Brown and Herndl, this notion of status in writing and the disparity between the views of language use by teachers and by individuals in the workplace were key considerations worthy of further research. The present study follows up some of the issues related to the way in which a writer's status is construed in the text.

2.3.2 Ethnographic considerations

The ethnographic approach of Brown and Herndl has been revisited in the work of Devitt (1991), Winsor (1993), Du-Babcock and Babcock (1995), Iedema (1995, 1999, 2000), Smart (1998) and Suchan and Dulek (1998). Du-Babcock and Babcock (1995) carried out a study in Taiwan focused on the use of Putonghua within the workplace by native speakers of English. They categorised three levels of Putonghua speakers, viz. beginners, intermediate and advanced, and found that the ability to speak a language fluently in meetings was not always viewed favourably by the speaker's Chinese counterparts. Problems arose when native speakers of English who had advanced Putonghua skills chose to use Putonghua as a medium of communication within a business meeting since they invariably alienated their peers through lack of intercultural awareness. The Chinese peers frequently expressed the opinion that they wished the meeting had been conducted in English for a

number of different reasons. English is often seen as a 'neutral' language in business. Louhiala-Salminen (1996) suggests that for some in the workplace business English is naively viewed as expressing only content and void of cultural messages. The present study, following an SFL model, suggests that it is not possible to separate culture from language. All language is argued to be inherently loaded with culture and each reader's interpretation will be biased by their own reading position, and culture (Painter, 2001).

2.3.3 The effect of cultural differences in workplace English

Louhiala-Salminen, when researching written communication and the type of language adopted by a company operating in Finland, reported an informant's view that business communication "does not have any cultural basis, as in "it's 100% subject matter, the culture behind it cannot be seen"" (Louhiala-Salminen, 1996:44). However, Louhiala-Salminen and others disagree with this view. Bee-Leng (1992), Du-Babcock and Babcock (1995, 1996), Scollon and Scollon (1995), and Connor (1999), for example, have focused specifically on cross-cultural issues within a workplace setting. They all assert that cultural issues and the manner in which cultural differences are realised through language are extremely influential within the business community. These studies raise extremely pertinent points related to the way in which cultural differences affect workplace discourse. Bee-Leng (1992) and Scollon and Scollon (1995) discuss and emphasise the differences in the discourse structures of Eastern and Western cultures. They point out that there is a major difference in what is expected from a predominantly Chinese audience compared to an audience of Westerners. As Mulholland (1997:97) points out, "practical advice on choosing the tactics which could reduce the impact of such [cultural] differences" is what is needed in workplace language pedagogy. The notion of culture and the way in which it is realised through language is an important concept in the present study. It is argued that by understanding the way in which language makes meaning at a clause level and relating this to its context, some of the linguistic issues concerning culture in the workplace will be unveiled. The discussion focuses on the language choices made and culture is seen to be an influencing factor in these choices. However, the extent and influence the culture plays is not the focus of the present study.

In the present study, the role of culture is acknowledged within the SFL theoretical framework. The notion of 'context of situation', as espoused by Halliday and Hasan (1985:52-69), acknowledges the role of culture in shaping language choices. As Painter

(2001) argues, language and culture cannot be separated, and according to a SFL view of language pedagogy, students learn “meanings of culture as they learn the lexicogrammatical forms of the language” (Painter, 2001:178). Cultural differences are bound to be present when writers come from different social and racial backgrounds and write in different contexts.

2.3.4 The role of spoken texts in the workplace

The focus of the present study is on written workplace English; however, spoken communication is also very important in the business world. Negotiations, meetings, informal discussions and other manifestations of spoken discourse require crucial skills within the business world. For example, negotiation skills are ranked high on the list of needs within the business community according to Charles and Charles (1999). As pointed out by Iedema (1999, 2000), written texts are often outcomes of spoken interactions. Exactly how the discourse is managed and structured in spoken interaction can greatly affect the meanings in a written text. For example, texts such as minutes, reports, etc., have a direct relationship between what was spoken and what is written. Iedema (2000) exemplifies the way in which an architect uses linguistic resources in a meeting to manipulate its outcome and shows that the discourse in a meeting greatly influences subsequent written and spoken texts.

There are a number of other studies which have focused specifically on spoken genres such as negotiations or meetings. Williams (1988) studies the difference between authentic language used in business meetings and published materials based on constructed texts which seemed to be disconnected from the real world. Over a decade later, Charles and Charles (1999) still express concern about the disparity between pedagogic practices and real world events in negotiations. They argue that more time needs to be devoted to teaching negotiation skills, and that tactics and teamwork are essential skills which should be included in the curriculum for this activity. This study enhances an earlier study by Charles (1996), which analyses six authentic business negotiations and supplements these data with interviews. Charles (1996) is concerned with how the workplace context and the nature of the relationship between parties in a negotiation are reflected in the informants’ interactions. She found that there were distinct differences between the interactions of old and new business acquaintances. While new business acquaintances relied heavily on ‘professional face saving’ devices, their ‘professional’ interactions became more

personalised role-enacted discourses as the relationship between business acquaintances matured. Charles (1996), Williams (1988) and Charles and Charles (1999) all stress the need for more empirical research based on authentic texts and suggest that the findings be incorporated into pedagogy.

Peres de Souza (1994), Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997b) and Bilbow (1997, 1998) analyse business meetings, focusing on different aspects of the discourse of the meetings. For example, Bilbow (1998) takes a pragmatic view of the language managers use with subordinates. In particular, Bilbow focuses on the language used by chairs in meetings within a large international airline company in Hong Kong. He found that the chair-talk was quite different in terms of quantity, content and form from participant-talk. Although Bilbow does not discuss the lexico-grammar which construes these pragmatic choices, he raises some interesting points with pedagogic implications. Crosling and Ward (2002) also explore an authentic situation and compare it to pedagogic practices. They compared the differences between presentation skills taught to undergraduate business students and the actual oral communication skills required in the workplace. The language taught for presentation skills was seen to be far more formal than the oral skills the graduates needed in the workplace. The graduates needed less formal, interpersonal language to express themselves during meetings and other informal verbal discourse. They found that the teaching offered did not necessarily reflect the language skills required. These findings are echoed in many studies undertaken into workplace discourse (Williams, 1988; Berry, 1996; Bilbow, 1997; Crosling and Ward, 2002).

2.3.5 Intertextuality in workplace texts

Studies of intertextuality have been undertaken by Devitt (1991) and Iedema (1995, 1999, 2000). Devitt (1991), in her study based on a text analysis and interviews with accountants, analyses tax accounting texts and investigates intertextuality. Using an ethnographic approach, she considers how any single text within the workplace refers to, draws from, and is dependent on other texts. Devitt (1991) raises some very interesting points relating to intertextuality and these are explored later in the present study. It should be noted that Devitt's research is based within the field of ESP and her discussions of genre and rhetorical issues do not refer to the notion of genre proposed in the present study.

Iedema (1999, 2000), working within an SFL framework, conducts ethnographic research into the way in which meanings are made through the discourse in a hospital in Sydney, Australia. He looks at intertextual relationships and how meaning is transformed from a spoken, more personalised form in meetings, to a more objective form in a related written report which eventually culminates in actual architectural structures. For the researcher, teacher or those wishing to succeed in the workplace, an appreciation of this shift in language is essential. Many of the concerns raised by Iedema will be returned to in more detail in Section 2.8.2.

2.3.6 The role of written texts in the workplace

Davies et al. (1999) demonstrate that written communication is central in the workplace. Findings from the managers in their EWM survey provide evidence that as the individual in an organisation moves up the promotion ladder, written communication becomes an important consideration affecting the individual's promotion and success (Davies et al., 1999). Davies and Forey (1996), who conducted interviews with managers in UK companies, found that many managers considered that the written word was 'crucial' for success and that as the written word is recorded in a more permanent form, it becomes more influential than spoken interaction within the organisation.

In essence, their findings reflect Martin's concerns with an educational setting where "the most prestigious users of language become writers, not speakers. And written language is prized above speech" (Martin, 1985/89:51). It would appear that the written word is seen to be crucial for success. This success is manifest at both an individual and institutional level. At an individual level, the written word can affect promotional prospects and personal reputation; at an institutional level, the written word represents the company's 'image' (Thompson and Ramos, 1995; Davies and Forey, 1996). In addition, it seems on the surface that the language in written texts is less personalised and more objective. The present study argues that even though written texts may appear to be more objective, the writer's viewpoint and identity are construed and realised through a number of different linguistic resources. Iedema's study of the progressive depersonalisation of workplace text is discussed in detail below in Section 2.8.2. The present study focuses specifically on written text and how the writer subtly establishes a persona in the workplace text.

2.3.7 Responses to workplace texts

In recent years there has been an increasing recognition that the views of participants in the workplace can provide valuable insights into the way in which texts are interpreted. The EWM survey (Davies et al., 1999) concentrates on eliciting managers' views of texts in the workplace. This elicitation of managers' views provided a rich resource of data and was the underlying impetus for the present study to include informant interpretations of texts, as outlined in Chapter Eight. In case studies where the written discourse of particular companies is investigated, research has also focused on responses to workplace texts. For example, Couture (1992) categorises three types of professional discourse: engineering, administrative and technical/professional. She carries out elicitation tasks and asks members from each of these three groups to select which of two sentences with similar content they preferred. She demonstrates that there is a marked difference in the preferences of the three groups. She also points out that abstraction, nominalisation and passive constructions are characteristic of administrative writing. Nickerson (1998) surveyed 305 corporations in the Netherlands with the aim of understanding corporate culture in a Dutch/English speaking environment. Ede and Lunsford (1985) found that collaborative writing, where a group of individuals share the responsibility for producing a text, was an important consideration when analysing the type of written communication produced in the workplace. They emphasise that collaborative writing is an important area which only catered for in a limited fashion, if at all, within business English pedagogy. Thus in the analysis of texts in the present study, the possibility should be considered that some texts – it is not possible to identify which particular ones – were written by more than one individual. This perhaps would mean that where the text has been created through a process of collaborative writing, the intended meaning of the text had been negotiated and arrived at through a process of consensus. This consensus would lead to collaborative texts reflecting a more 'institutionalised' view of status and writer viewpoint. The findings discussed should, therefore, be considered as representing workplace practices, and the issue of whether the meaning reflected is representative of an individual or a group's voice is, in most cases, beyond the scope of the present study.

2.4 Researching different workplace genres

2.4.1 Research into written reports in the workplace

Another focus of research into written workplace discourse is the study of particular genres. Business reports come in many shapes and sizes and “accompany and shape decisions at all organizational levels” (Rude, 1995:170). Reports are also the focus of many business communication courses and textbooks. It is surprising, therefore, that only a limited number of studies have specifically analysed the language of reports. Carter (1990), Devitt (1991), Harvey (1995) and Rude (1995) are some of the studies in this area. Carter (1990) acknowledges that certain disparities exist between writing reports at college and at work. He believes that the present educational model is too heavily dependent on the teacher’s interpretation of workplace texts, and adds that “if only the teacher’s definition counts then it is little wonder that pupils are not adequately prepared for the writing requirements of non-academic settings” (Carter, 1990:179). He emphasises the need to incorporate views other than just the teacher’s, and that informants’ views and voices from within business and industry must be taken into account. He uses reports written by a student and a manager from Proctor and Gamble (a large UK company) to illustrate some of the specific linguistic choices made. He highlights different grammatical features found in the student and business reports, including the preference for nominalisation rather than congruent verbs in the manager’s reports. He also points out that in the business report, modal verbs are used to characterise a “relatively subjective orientation to solutions” (Carter, 1990:184). He notes that in both reports writer viewpoint is more evident than would have been expected and “the different ways in which report writers “take up positions” is a topic demanding further investigation” (Carter, 1990:1989).

2.4.2 Interpersonal features of reports

Harvey (1995), in a study of four public reports, found that even in scientific, objective reporting the writer’s viewpoint was evident in the impersonal structures. These structures were seen to implicitly encode merging voices of the discipline and the research team, e.g. *it is generally agreed*. The notion of writer viewpoint raised by Carter (1990) and the implicit structures noted by Harvey (1995) are key concepts which are investigated in detail later in this thesis. The present study argues that writer viewpoint is a key feature found in workplace texts which superficially appear to be impersonal and objective. It is argued that

nominalisation and structures such as *it is agreed* (discussed as ‘objective projecting clauses’ in Chapter Six) are some of the means by which writers can construe, and thus bring into being, certain kinds of meaning (Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999).

2.4.3 Research into letters in the workplace

From an ESP perspective a number of studies have analysed the linguistic moves in letters. Bhatia (1993a/b) focuses on promotional letters and Santos (2002) on letters of negotiation. Both aim to find out how the communicative purpose is achieved through language realisations. Santos (2002) analyses 117 letters from one Brazilian and two European veterinary-pharmaceutical companies. He proposes four moves for the letters, and argues that “linguistic elements are being used to create an atmosphere of friendship and respect” (Santos, 2002:187). The linguistic features in the letters he is referring to are Modal Adjuncts of entreaty, e.g. *kindly*, and hypothetical expressions, e.g. *I would like to ask*, which, he adds, offer “cordiality and respect” in a context where there are explicit differences in language and status, thus showing that linguistic features are directly related to shaping interpersonal relations. In the present study features such as modal adjuncts are discussed in relation to their interpersonal nature, and their status and position as part of the Theme in memos, letters and reports.

2.4.4 Research into memos

In contrast to research on reports and letters the text type ‘memo’ has received very little research. Iedema (1995, 1997, 1999) discusses memos, or what he calls ‘directives’, in detail. He analyses their lexico-grammar in detail and suggests generic stages which can be found in them. These generic stages are described and applied to two memos in Chapter Eight. The research undertaken by Iedema significantly influences the present study, and his work is discussed in more detail below.

In a number of studies the medium of the message rather than the text type has been the focus of research. Faxes, as a text for research (Akar and Louhiala-Salminen, 1999), have been on the whole superseded by e-mail communication. In addition, it could be argued that many memos have been replaced by e-mail messages.

Nickerson (1999), investigating communication in a multinational company in the Netherlands, establishes that e-mails were the most frequently used form of written communication and that in some instances e-mails were used in preference to the telephone

and face-to-face meetings. She collected messages from six managers and then randomly sampled 100 messages from one of the more prolific e-mail users. Based on this case study she demonstrated that e-mail is used at all levels and that e-mails are a major source of information exchange in the organisation. Mulholland (1999), in a qualitative study of administrative texts and informant views about the messages generated at the University of Queensland, focuses on whether efficiency is achieved through the use of e-mails and the way in which interpersonal relations are affected. His data includes five sample sets of 76 e-mails in total and discussions with 15 informants. Mullholland's principal findings were that e-mails impacted the whole workplace. In general, although brevity was an important feature, mentioned by many of the informants, interpersonal 'politeness markers' were still included in the e-mail messages. Politeness markers tended to be placed at the end of the text rather than signalled at the beginning. Placing these markers at the end of the text "makes them appear to be less important to the sender" (Mulholland, 1999:82).

Interpersonal markers were seen to be very important and an element which, even in these very brief texts, tended not to be overlooked. In the analysis of Theme in the present study, the presence or absence of explicit interpersonal markers is discussed. Since these studies into e-mail communication were undertaken, technological advances and access to the internet have made e-mail communication even more pervasive and influential in the workplace.

Gimenez (2000) analysed 63 business e-mails and compared them with 40 business letters from the same company. He investigated the emerging tendencies in the register of e-mails. He suggests that e-mails tend to take certain features of the spoken mode and that some of the spoken features found in e-mails were starting to affect the language choices in other genres. Gimenez believes that e-mails and other overtly interpersonal texts are becoming more dependent on "flexibility, informality and efficiency" (Gimenez, 2000:249). He suggests that the established tradition of teaching formulaic writing to business students needs to change. The present study argues that it is not only in the teaching of e-mail construction where pedagogy needs to take flexibility, informality and efficiency into consideration, but there is a need for pedagogy to incorporate activities which enhance the students' perception of the way in which certain linguistic devices are employed to enhance interpersonal meanings. Moreover, it is crucial that pedagogy incorporates a methodology which is concerned with the deconstruction and reconstruction

of texts and also an explicit discussion of lexico-grammatical features. However, before this can be done, research is needed which focuses on the way in which meaning is made at a lexico-grammatical level, in order to understand how certain interpersonal meanings are realised at a lexico-grammatical level.

2.5 Summary: needs analysis and workplace English

In all the studies mentioned there is a consensus that further research is needed and that improved pedagogy requires an enhanced understanding of workplace discourse. In fact, within workplace English a number of studies have taken a needs analysis research perspective. For Cooper (1992), Davies and Scott (1992), Poon (1992), Holliday (1995), Davies and Forey (1996), Barbara et al. (1996), Nunan et al. (1996), Davies et al. (1999), Forey and Nunan (2002), and others, the main focus has been a needs analysis of the business world. Many of these studies have used surveys, and in some cases interviews as well, to discover and establish the need for further research and pedagogic resources within a workplace setting. All of these needs analysis studies conclude with resounding agreement that further research is needed; that there needs to be a more 'proactive approach' towards developing a more informed understanding of workplace discourse; and that the training, support and current pedagogic resources available are inadequate. In short, most agree with Davies et al. (1999) in stressing that writing is a crucial part of the work environment. Writing is considered closely connected with status, as one informant explained, "as I move up the management ladder it will become more and more important" (Davies et al., 1999:298). The writing process takes up a large part of the working week and managers are very concerned about being able to write effectively (Davies et al., 1999:300).

Many of the studies cited also suggest that power and status are crucial features, which need to be considered in the analysis of workplace discourse. However, few have carried out any in-depth analysis at a lexico-grammatical level of a corpus of texts in order to develop a more detailed understanding of the way in which language makes meaning and how status and identity are construed in text. The following section reviews the arguments for further research.

2.6 The need for further research into workplace English

Despite the extensive research cited, there is an increasing recognition that further research is needed into workplace texts, the assumption being that a greater understanding of workplace texts will benefit all levels of pedagogy (Williams, 1988; Martin, 1985/89; Berry, 1995, 1996; Davies 1994, 1997; etc.). Workplace texts form the basis of many programmes taught at junior, secondary and tertiary levels as well as in-house or external workplace communication courses in both first and second language learning environments. According to Berry,

discourse analysts have been slow to focus on the question of what makes a text successful or not, and even slower to investigate this question in the context of the specialised language varieties of the workplace.

(Berry, 1995:57)

Martin (1985/89) agrees with Berry that “education ignores almost completely the kinds of writing that would enable children to enter the workforce” (Martin, 1985/89:60). Martin suggests two possible reasons for this neglect. The first is due in part to process writing, a model of writing introduced in the 70s and 80s, where the emphasis is on ‘ownership and voice’ (Flower and Hayes, 1981). This neglect is further compounded in process writing by completely ignoring the grammar and the structure of texts. Martin states that this form of language instruction favours the middle classes who have access to a wide variety of genres, and disadvantages “women, working class kids, migrants and Aboriginal children” (Martin, 1985/89:61). The second reason for neglect is that teachers are unable to teach what makes workplace texts effective as they have limited access to authentic workplace texts. Berry states that

teachers do not *know* what has to be learnt in order to produce effective written products in the context of the workplace, particularly workplaces such as those of business and industry.

(Berry, 1995:56, italics in orig.)

Berry even questions whether those situated within the workplace would be able to expound on what are the key features of a text and what makes it effective. She points out that discussions between members of the business community and teachers “do not seem to get much beyond matters of spelling and punctuation”. She believes that teachers need to be “much more explicit” about the language, the grammar and the types of text associated with business and industry (Berry, 1995:56). Berry (1995, 1996) and Swales (2000) point

out that even if research is carried out into various workplace genres, teachers and instructors need to develop and enhance their knowledge in order to teach workplace discourse effectively.

Brown and Herndl (1986), Berry (1995, 1996) and Barbara et al. (1996) argue that one aspect of this 'gap' between the workplace and pedagogic resources is a mismatch between what teachers/trainers are trying to teach and the language business people identify with. In their interviews with training managers Brown and Herndl (1986) reported that

The training managers we met in our preliminary interviews reported employees' sense that writing instruction was irrelevant to their jobs: they were reporting a bad cultural fit between teacher-language and professional writer-language.

(Brown & Herndl, 1986:25)

For example, Brown and Herndl found that teachers tended to reject nominalisation and advise their students to avoid using such features in their writing. However, nominalisation was seen by workplace participants as part of the group affiliation, something that writers should use, and it was viewed as a cultural norm for written communication within their group. Thus the teachers were rejecting or advising the business English students to go against what they saw to be appropriate to their group identity. Each group was seen to have its own cultural identity and to develop a language which helps promote that notion of the 'in group'. Sometimes teachers and others were unable to understand or appreciate the language of the 'in group'. One explanation for this is suggested by St John (1996), viz. that business English has been a movement where design and development of materials have been at the forefront of those working within this field. She adds that it is an area which still remains under-researched. She believes the pedagogic materials developed are often based on the intuitions of material writers rather than on understandings of authentic data. The materials writer may pitch the resources at an incorrect level and even if the material writer understands the language of the text, they may not understand the context or the origin of production and the recipient of the text. Therefore St John (1996) suggests that studies which disclose information about the lexico-grammatical features alongside an understanding of the context in which the meaning is made are preferred.

Berry (1996:6) points out that one way in which the differences between the teachers / trainers and students can be overcome is to make the research relevant to the needs of the

target community. In order to improve the relevance of research there needs to be collaboration between researchers, informants and material writers in seeking to understand the way in which meaning is made. Stainton (1996) supports this view. She argues that if those in the workplace are involved in research then they will have a greater feeling of ownership and investment in trying to make a study and its outcomes successful. Based on these assumptions, and in order to make the research relevant to the field of applied linguistics and to the development of pedagogy, the present study incorporates informant perceptions and views about how sample texts make meaning. The findings from this particular part of the study are found in Chapter Eight.

Martin has continually argued that a wider variety of genres needs to be incorporated into the education system. Christie and Martin (1997) present an edited collection of articles based on work undertaken in Australia in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The studies in this book have a pedagogic focus and were undertaken as part of the Disadvantaged Schools Programme (DSP). The DSP 'Write it Right' project (1991-1994) was an outstanding initiative in New South Wales, Australia, led by Martin (Martin & Christie, 1997). The research produced valuable explorations of the language in educational genres (English, history, science, mathematics and geography) and workplace genres (media, science, industry and administration). The DSP initiated much research into a variety of genres and even after the funding was exhausted, many of those originally working on the DSP project continued with valuable research into educational genres. Genres and texts used within secondary education have been researched by Coffin (1997), who investigated history texts, and Martin (1985/89), Martin and Rothery (1986, 1993), and Rothery and Stenglin (1997, 2000), who studied narrative discourse in a school's context. The research into scientific discourse crosses the border between workplace and educational genres and the work of Rose et al. (1992), Halliday and Martin (1993), Rose (1997), Veal (1997) and Martin and Veal (1998) covers a number of issues related to science in education and industry. White (1997, 2000) analysed the language of the media.

The one study that solely focused on workplace texts was Iedema (1995, 1997), who studied the language of administration. Iedema has continued his research in this area and has subsequently published other papers on institutional discourse (Iedema, 1998, 1999, 2000). Iedema's studies will be discussed in more detail below.

To sum up, although there has been a great deal of research into workplace English in recent years there is still a call for further research in this area. Many of the studies presented above have focused on specific texts, specific organisations and/or the dichotomy between spoken and written workplace communication. Many of these studies follow an ESP model of English. However, as Swales (2000) maintains,

legitimate questions can be asked about the “applied” nature of some of these investigations, since it is not always clear how the findings are to be transmuted into teaching or study materials.

(Swales, 2000:68)

Research following the ESP tradition has predominantly been directed towards creating teaching materials for non-native speakers of English (Coffin, 2001). In addition, a more consolidated theory of language within the tradition of ESP is still to emerge.

There is a small but growing body of research into the language of the workplace within the field of SFL. These studies are able to offer a consolidated view of language and the way in which meaning is made because they are all based within a specific theory of language. Before surveying some of the contributions made by SFL studies into workplace discourse, a brief explanation of the theory of SFL will be given. Moreover, a justification for the choice of SFL above other theories of language will be presented.

2.7 Models of language: an alternative to ESP approaches

2.7.1 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a model for analysing texts

The model of language used in any study is, according to Berry (1996), dependent upon the models of language which are relevant for the “intended users of one’s work” (Berry, 1996:4). The rationale for selecting SFL as a model for analysis in the present study is that it incorporates the notion that the language is a social phenomenon, and in dealing with language it works at the level of the text as a unit of meaning. Texts as semantic units, representative of the social phenomenon of the workplace, were the starting point for the present study. The initial aims of the research were to gain a better understanding of the semiotic relationship between a text and its context. The lexico-grammatical choices realised in texts were analysed so that the meaning found in a text’s lexico-grammar could be understood in relation to its context, i.e. its writers, its intended readers and its surrounding environment. The outcome of such an analysis could then be used to extend

the existing knowledge related to workplace texts, develop better pedagogical and enhance students' study methods. However, the achievement of all of these goals was not possible in one study. Therefore, the present study is restricted to an examination of three genres as a contribution to SFL. It is hoped that the outcomes of this study will then be transferable to pedagogy. The intention is that the primary users of the research outcomes will be applied linguists and teachers, with material writers and students its secondary users.

With this in mind, SFL fits well as an analytical tool and pedagogic resource as it takes the researcher, teacher and learner beyond the boundaries of the sentence and allows those involved to analyse and discuss language at a text level (Burns, 1990:62). As pointed out by Berry (1996:61), in SFL "meaning is given priority over form and texts over sentences", and discussions about the way in which meaning is reached are the primary concerns within SFL. A text, following Halliday and Hasan (1976), is

a passage of discourse which is coherent in these two regards: it is coherent with respect to the context of situation and therefore consistent in register; and it is coherent with respect to itself, and therefore cohesive.

(Halliday and Hasan, 1976:23)

As pointed out by Berry, SFL is based on texts and not on sentences and is viewed as "a theory of meaning as choice, by which language of any other semiotic system is interpreted as networks of interlocking options" (Halliday, 1994:xiv). It is these notions of choice, of complete texts and of the interrelationship of the context and the way in which this affects the choices one makes to realise meaning, which makes SFL an attractive theory of language for researchers, teachers and students. By viewing language in this way SFL opens up choices for the student and is not teaching prescriptive rules which simply need regurgitating (Berry, 1996:8). As Martin, Christie and Rothery (1994) point out, it is very important to recognise that "genres make meaning; they are not simply a set of formal structures into which meanings are poured" (Martin, Christie and Rothery, 1994:236).

2.7.2 Different levels of meaning in SFL

To reiterate, SFL offers a theory of language well suited to text analysis and application. SFL applied to the deconstruction of texts can make

explicit the relations between meaning constructed at clause level and meanings at the 'larger' levels (paragraphs and text) which in turn can be systematically related to the specified elements of the context.

(Harvey, 1993:25)

The different levels of meaning, as suggested by Harvey, reflect SFL notions that language makes meanings at different strata and that the different strata are interrelated. The strata identified within SFL are context, discourse semantics, lexico-grammar and phonology / graphology (Martin, 1997:6). These layers are interrelated and display regular co-occurrence where realisations are simultaneously coded as different meanings, wording and sounds. The present study analyses language in a ‘bottom up’ approach, where choices and meanings at a lexico-grammatical level are used to interpret discourse, semantic and contextual meanings.

Language and social context realise and influence meaning within each other’s domain. Social context construes language and language construes patterns of social context. Three variables used to account for the differences and to model the context of situation are:

- **Field:** the ‘what’, what is being talked about? What is the aim of the text?
- **Mode:** the ‘how’, how is the text represented? The kind of text that has been made – spoken, written?
- **Tenor:** the ‘who’, who is doing the talking or writing? The relationship between the speaker or writer and the listener or reader.

Field, mode and tenor are the variables of register (or the context of situation) as they reflect the three main functions of language (ideational, textual, and interpersonal) (Halliday et al., 1964; Halliday, 1994; Martin, 1997). Variation in field/mode/tenor will affect language choices. That is, in a workplace setting, if the field remained constant and the variables of mode and tenor changed, then different texts would be constructed. For example, if the field were concerned with a strategy plan for the coming year, the text would vary depending on the tenor. The text would be very different if the tenor represented junior staff discussing a strategy plan, rather than the Chief Executive Officer and the Finance Director. Or if the mode were to vary, and the text was realised in a written mode, the text, e.g. a written report, would be quite different to a spoken text, e.g. a presentation. Each text – a meeting, a presentation, and a written report – would vary in the linguistic resources used to realise the text. Field, mode and tenor are used to model linguistic resources at the level of context.

At the level of the clause, the functional diversification of language choice is modelled through three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Ideational resources encode our experiences of the world, interpersonal resources encode interaction, and textual resources are concerned with how language is used to organise our experiential and

interactional meaning into a coherent whole (Halliday, 1994:35). Although there is some dispute about the relationship of the variables of context of situation and the metafunctions, i.e. field to ideational, tenor to interpersonal and mode to textual, there is general agreement that they are related. The metafunctions are used to model language at the strata of lexico-grammar. The present study analyses written workplace texts at a lexico-grammatical level and focuses specifically on the textual metafunction in memos, letters and reports. The metafunctions, and in particular the textual metafunction, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. An integral feature within the textual metafunction is Theme, and Theme is the focus of the present study. Theme within its own right has been seen to be a valuable resource for understanding texts. Theme was chosen because as Halliday (1978) points out, “the textual function has an enabling function with respect to the other two; it is only in combination with textual meanings that ideational and interpersonal meanings are actualized” (Halliday, 1978:113). Chapter Three presents in greater detail the justification for choosing Theme as the point of analysis. Chapter Three also outlines the identification, function and theoretical considerations concerning Theme.

Field, mode and tenor are used as a resource to understand variables of register (Martin, 1997:6). Register is “designed to interface the analysis of social context naturally with the metafunctionally diversified organization of language resources” (Martin, 1997:6). Register, according to Martin (1992a, 1997), is a composite term for field, mode and tenor. As shown in Figure 2.1, the relationship between register and genre is seen to be ‘connotative’, in that they are both semiotic systems that make use of each other, but they are not the same and function within their own plane.

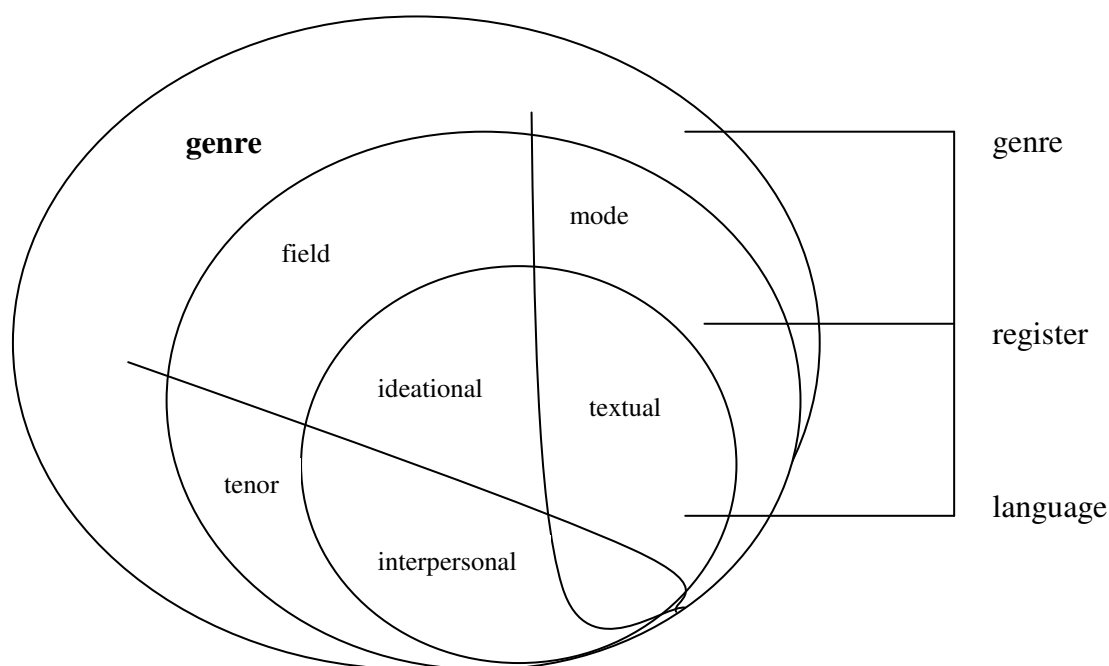


Figure 2.1 Language, register and genre (adapted from Martin, 1997:11)

At this point it should be noted that Halliday (1978) and Halliday and Hasan (1985) differ from Martin (1992a, 1997) in their view of where ‘genre’ and ‘register’ fit within the model of language. In brief, Halliday does not include ‘genre’ within his model of language. Halliday (1978) and Halliday and Hasan (1985) claim that the three elements of context – situation, field, mode and tenor – together determine the ‘register’ of language.

2.7.3 Genre and SFL

Martin (1997, 2002) along with other systemic colleagues has developed a theory of genre within an SFL framework. The notion of genre developed by Martin and his colleagues was pedagogically motivated and has been applied to a number of different educational genres in both the DSP Project and other studies, as outlined above. Genre, following Martin, is an abstraction above the metafunctions and accounts for “relations among social processes in more holistic terms, with special focus on the stages through which most texts unfold” (Martin, 1997:6). As pointed out by Martin et al.,

Genres are referred to as *social processes* because members of a culture interact with each other to achieve them; as *goal oriented* because they have evolved to get things done; and as *staged* because it usually takes more than one step for participants to achieve their goals.

(Martin, Christie and Rothery, 1994:233; italics in orig.)

The difference between Halliday (1978) and Halliday and Hasan (1985) and Martin's (1992a, 1997) reading of register and genre requires a detailed argument. Unfortunately, a comprehensive and detailed discussion of the relationship of register to genre is beyond the scope of this study. The present study will apply the notion of genre as a "staged goal-oriented process" and will follow Martin's argument in regard to register. An analysis of memos, following the generic stages introduced by Iedema (1995) which affect the meaning potential of a text, is discussed in Chapter Eight.

In much of the literature it may seem that genre and text type are interchangeable, although in some instances they appear to be used to refer to very different textual entities (Davies, 1994; Paltridge, 2002). Davies (1994) argues that there needs to be an established reality in the use of such terms as *genre* and *text type*. Paltridge (2002) views text types to be constituent units of a text and to represent rhetorical modes such as 'problem - solution', 'exposition', 'argument', etc. (Paltridge, 2002:73). However, the distinction in rhetorical modes is made by Davies (1994, 1997) and Martin (1997) at a level between lexicogrammar and genre and is viewed as 'rhetorical pattern' (Davies, 1997).

Davies, in attempting to clarify the division between genre and text type, argues that a distinction should be made between five levels of texts: discourse type, genre type, text, text type and rhetorical pattern. Discourse type according to Davies (1997) is identified with reference to discourse goals. At the level of genre, Davies draws a relevant distinction between 'genre as process' and 'genre as object' (Davies, 1997:48). Davies adds that genre as process is seen to be "staged goal-oriented social processes underlying a class of texts" and that genre as object is a "class of texts which reflect a particular set of processes or goals, and which derive from an identifiable public source/environment, and which are directly or indirectly controlled by an "editor"" (Davies, 1997:48). She suggests that text types are constituent units of a text serving "distinctive communicative functions in relation to other textual units and which occupy identifiable and motivated positions in the complete text" (Davies, 1997:50). She proposes three textual units: "interactive", "organisational" and "informing". She suggests these textual units can be associated with stages of the text; for example, as proposed by Davies (1997:50), the interactive and orienting units are similar to the moves identified by Swales (1990) in his CARs model. Davies's model, which on the whole is an appealing one, has not to date been widely tested

as a model for research. The present study borrows partially from Davies (1997), but the terms genre and text type used in the present study are closer to Martin's use of such terms.

For Martin (1984, 2002), genre is a staged, goal-oriented process, which is realised by a 'product', real world texts such as a memo, report, essay, etc. Martin does not see the need to draw the distinction between process and product, as he believes the process and product are combined. These texts are reached through a goal-oriented process: the writer or speaker is motivated to construct a text in order to communicate their ideas. Macken-Horarik explains that genre is "the social purpose of a text and captures its distinctive global (or schematic) structure" (Macken-Horarik, 2002:20). The distinctive structure suggested by Macken-Horarik refers more specifically to the view that genres are seen to have "predictable sequences of stages" (Macken-Horarik, 2002:20). These stages can be analysed and used in a pedagogic context to model the stages and structure of different genres. For Martin and others working within the 'Sydney School', genre and text type are synonymous. Martin and Rose (forthcoming) state that the terms are interchangeable when they state "we use the term genre in this book to refer to different types of texts that enact various types of social contexts". Stainton (1996), in a discussion of her findings, appears to use the terms interchangeably. Text type and genre are, for the purpose of the present study, seen to be interchangeable.

2.7.4 Justifying the choice of SFL as a model of language

In the present study, SFL has been adopted as a theory of language because SFL incorporates an understanding of meaning above form and, as such, it is relevant to both theory and application. It responds to Widdowson's (1984:26) call for a greater focus on applying linguistics rather than just studying 'linguistics applied', i.e. the study of applied linguistics for research purposes only without considering the potential for application, and he believes that SFL may move us in this direction. However, in a later paper Widdowson (1997) is a little more sceptical about SFL and argues that it can be used for analytical purposes, but that it cannot take the next step to say that the analysis can lead to an understanding of the way in which the language is used. In opposition to Widdowson's view, many, including Martin (1985/89), Martin et al. (1994), Berry (1995, 1996) and others, argue that SFL provides tools for the text analyst, the teacher and the student to understand that meaning is based on choices and that choices are available in the language. It focuses on texts and not a collection of unrelated sentences. Tools are provided to help the analyst

deconstruct meaning at the level of discourse semantics, context, lexico-grammar and phonology and this leads to the ability to ‘understand’ how language is used.

Education cannot make access to these tools a viable goal unless it deconstructs the language involved and the ways in which such language can be taught. Ignorance of genre and language, and the dichotomy of meaning and form which sanctions this ignorance, are a major stumbling block to empowering a wider range of children than currently succeed.

(Martin, Christie, and Rothery, 1994:237)

As previously noted, workplace texts are under-researched and a greater understanding of the way in which meaning is made in these texts is crucial for consideration in the development of language skills for students at all levels. As Berry suggests, when discussing applying SFL theory within a workplace setting, “a text linguistic approach, with its concern for text types and their relation to producers and receivers and settings, does stand some chance of being perceived as relevant to their own concerns” (Berry, 1996: 6).

In outlining the reasons for following an SFL theory of language, the key terminology used throughout this thesis, i.e. *text*, *genre*, *field*, *mode*, *tenor*, *lexico-grammar*, *interpersonal*, *ideational* and *textual* has been introduced. The following section will now examine SFL research directly related to the workplace.

2.8 SFL and research into the language of the workplace

Although a number of people within the field of SFL have stressed the need to research workplace English, only a limited number of studies have been undertaken (Martin, 1985/89, 1997; Davies, 1988, 1994, 1997; Stainton, 1993; Berry, 1995, 1996; etc.). Many of these have been described earlier. Research into workplace English from an SFL perspective has tended to be carried out as part of a research project; the most notable projects have been conducted in the UK, Brazil and Australia.

The DIRECT Project is a joint research project between the Catholic University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Liverpool University, UK. The research of the DIRECT Project is quite extensive and studies have been conducted into spoken and written genres in workplace communication both in English and Portuguese. For example, Collins and Thompson (1993) and Thompson and Collins (1993) analyse face-threatening acts in oral presentations. Thompson and Ramos (1995) focus on ergativity, or cause and effect relationships, in business reports. They demonstrate the way in which the linguistic choices

within the system of ergativity present the company with a positive 'public face'. The Barbara et al. (1996) study previously cited involved the conduct of a survey of Brazilian organisations to assess communication needs and the types of different text produced in different companies. Celani and Scott (1997) analyse the meaning of business terms. Barbara and Scott (1999) propose a description of the genre of invitations for bids. They analyse in total six English and Portuguese bids, from Bangladesh, India, Jamaica and Brazil. They show that regardless of language, the bids share similar features and similar key vocabulary items, thus demonstrating that in the global international business environment this particular genre shares similar "topics, discourse communities, purpose, structure and lexicon" (Barbara and Scott, 1999:250).

Gouveia and Barbara (2001) focus on marked Theme in Portuguese workplace texts and argue that Portuguese is a pro-drop language and that it is therefore difficult to assess whether a clause is 'marked' or 'unmarked'. The DIRECT Project has contributed greatly to the knowledge of the way in which language makes meanings in certain workplace texts. Santos (2002) points out that the studies in the DIRECT Project have yielded results which have aided the development of materials and courses for teachers at the Catholic University of Sao Paulo (PUC). Such a wealth of knowledge deserves to be shared beyond the boundaries of the research community involved. However, much of the research is in Portuguese or is relevant within a Brazilian context only. Within this research project, to date no one has investigated Theme in a mini corpus of memos, letters and reports.

2.8.1 Studies of Theme choice as a research tool for analysing workplace texts

Berry and Stainton, working as part of a research group in Nottingham, have also augmented the understanding of the language of workplace discourse. Berry (1995, 1996) and Stainton (1996) have both analysed texts at a lexico-grammatical level, investigating Theme and the effect of Theme on the success of a text. Berry (1995) focuses on student writing related to tourism texts and with reference to the choice of Theme discusses their success or lack thereof. Berry (1996) focuses on Theme again and analyses three texts related to education: a prospectus, a departmental handbook and a Faculty of Arts handbook. Berry (1996) raises theoretical issues concerned with the function of Theme and the relevance of informant views. Berry (1996) suggests that Theme, although part of the textual metafunction, can realise interpersonal concerns. Berry argues that "we can understand the way in which the writer made clear to us the nature of his underlying concerns"

(Berry, 1996:18). She believes that the cumulative force of Theme indicates the writer's concerns and argues that a writer's priority need not be solely ideational but that instead "The speaker or writer's primary concerns may be interpersonal" (Berry, 1996:19). Berry distinguishes between Theme as meaning (interpersonal) and Theme as form (textual). Through reference to her sample texts supported by informant interviews, she argues that the interpersonal aspect of Theme is clearly evident and that such meanings influence the reader's interpretation of more than just a clause. The present study supports Berry's position of 'Theme as meaning'; more specifically, Theme which realises interpersonal meaning is an essential and frequent realisation in workplace texts. Berry concedes that her paper is more 'theoretical' than applied and that it is not based on extensive data. She urges more research to be carried out in this area to provide answers.

Stainton (1996) demonstrates the importance and relevance of marked Theme by arguing that texts which are viewed as more successful by specialist informants carry a higher number of marked Themes in the introduction and conclusion sections when compared to texts without this feature. Marked Theme is discussed extensively in Section 3.5 and Stainton's concerns about marked Theme are also elaborated at that point. Davies (1988, 1994, 1997) has also worked extensively in this area. Davies believes that marked Themes occur at important points in the text to 'frame' certain features in the text. Thompson (1996), in support of Davies, also agrees that marked Themes are important features. More detailed discussions of Theme, marked Theme and the relevance of these particular choices in workplace English texts are presented in the following chapters.

Berry, Davies and Stainton all acknowledge that their studies are limited and that a great deal of further empirical research is needed. The findings from the present study go some way towards demonstrating that Theme, and in particular marked Theme, carries a great deal of interpersonal meaning. Based on the findings from the data, marked Theme, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six, is seen to be a key component in construing interpersonal meaning within Theme. It is argued that marked Theme, and in particular Circumstantial Adjuncts, enhancing clauses and projecting clauses in initial position in a clause complex, occur at important stages in the text and that they help to clarify the way in which a writer's viewpoint is conveyed in a text. Enhancing clauses are introduced in Section 3.5.3. The function, purpose and findings related to projecting clauses are reviewed in detail in Chapter Six.

2.8.2 Construction of meaning at a text and discourse semantic level: Iedema's research

Initially as part of the DSP Project in Sydney, Australia, Iedema (1995, 1997) studied the language of administration. In this and subsequent work Iedema (1995, 1997, 1999, 2000) offers a view of language and the construction of meaning which transcends the boundaries of lexico-grammar. He analyses the language at a lexico-grammatical level in order to exemplify the construction of meaning at a text and discourse semantic level. Through his collaboration with a hospital authority, Iedema was able to gain a far greater insight into the way in which meanings are made at a holistic level. He illustrates with texts how intertextuality permeates, and how the 'politics of language' and institutional discourse instantiate, texts and formal structures. As noted above, he explains with reference to examples from spoken language (e.g. meetings) the way in which spoken interaction is transferred into written language (e.g. a report) which is finally interpreted as architectural designs (architectural plans) before the physical construction is carried out. The physical construction demonstrates the links between "non-durable forms of talk to durable constructions such as formal reports and the walls and doors of buildings" (Iedema, 2000:65). He argues that the personalised form of a text constructed in a meeting is gradually transferred to more demodalised forms.

'Demodulation', a term introduced by Iedema (1995), represents a change in modal responsibility from the personal to the impersonal. The emphasis of a clause is linguistically transferred from the commander, e.g. *Pay the fee*, where the imperative form is used to reduce any possibility of doubt, to *You should pay the fee*, where the linguistic choices are subjectified to the more objective and impersonal realisation, such as *the requirement is that you pay the fee*, to completely depersonalised, 'demodulation', e.g. *The scheme provides for adequate categorisation* (Iedema 2000:51). He states that in institutional discourse

The interpersonal imposition of control is recoded as an (ideational) state of affairs, and the implication of this having to do with one person commanding another is entirely suppressed.

(Iedema, 2000:51)

He argues that demodulation stabilises organisational relations into "presumed and non-questioned and non-questionable patterns of doing and saying" (Iedema, 2000:53), based on his interpretation of semiotic meaning that

populations are “fixed” not (primarily) by brute physical force, but by recruiting them to particular regimes of meaning. These regimes of meaning construe, and to a degree impose, a consensus as to what can be meant; that is, what can be done and said.

(Iedema, 2000:53).

In sum, he argues that language, power and control are inseparable. As language moves through different modes, from a verbal interaction to a written interaction to a realised goal, it becomes less negotiable and these less negotiable forms of language are construed in part through demodulation and nominalisation and less congruent forms of language. Linguistic resources are seen to be powerful tools which revolve around issues of “correct procedure and control” and the linguistic choices made at all stages of workplace communication are, therefore, influential in determining the final outcome (Iedema, 2000: 49).

Iedema uses a variety of institutional texts; in his initial work (1995) he studied memos. In a later paper, Iedema (1998) analyses ‘Position Descriptions’, texts which define the task duties, responsibilities and skill standards of particular jobs. These Position Descriptions come from both the public and private sectors. Iedema focuses on the linguistic realisations and the distinction between what could be called ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ job roles. Unlike the language of the ‘higher’ job roles which are realised through “*abstracted* and *potential* terms and therefore open to professional interpretation, specification, negotiation, choice and forward planning” (Iedema, 1998:486, italics in orig.), the ‘lower’ job roles and the linguistic descriptions are related to the “here-and-now”. These roles, as stated in the ‘Position Descriptions’, are less negotiable and more clearly defined, with concrete actions on behalf of the projected role for the employee.

These differences in the linguistic resources of the ‘Position Descriptions’ are related to an argument presented earlier, viz. that as one goes higher up the ladder of success, the job descriptions and competency statements “display increased levels of linguistic implicitness” (Iedema, 1998). The higher up the ladder, the more likely workers are expected to deal with “abstract conceptualizations of, and discourses about, both their work and themselves as workers than those in lower positions” (Iedema, 1998:497). And as Davies et al. (1999) argue, not only do the linguistic realisations of the job become more complex, but also writing requirements become more complex and the ability to write effectively becomes a crucial component for success. An analysis leading to an understanding of

issues related to implicitness and explicitness would be a valuable resource for teachers, trainers, material writers, students and in general those wanting to improve their written communication in the business world. Implicit and explicit choices will be discussed in the present study. Implicitness and explicitness construing writer viewpoint will be referred to specifically in relation to thematic choices, such as Conjunctive and Modal Adjuncts, the Subject of the main clause, hypotactic clauses and projecting clauses.

This section has presented some of the key studies and the contribution these studies have made to workplace English from an SFL perspective. The present study aims to extend this existing body of knowledge and to augment the understanding of the way in which language functions to make meaning in memos, letters and reports. In particular the study focuses on the way in which the writer influences the intended meaning of the message through the choice of Theme. Influencing the intended meaning of the message is related to exploiting status, identity, power and control through linguistic resources.

2.8.3 Status, power and identity in workplace written texts

Barbara and Scott (1999) with reference to workplace English texts state: “As bedtime reading, they are in themselves about as fascinating as the average insurance contract” (Barbara and Scott, 1999:227). This sentiment could also be true of the ‘average’ business memo, letter and report. However, as Fairclough (1992) argues, discourse is socially constitutive. Discourse inherently instantiates social power and identity, especially in a situation where ‘control’, ‘status’ and ‘success’ are related to communicative ability. Fairclough (1992, 1995), Clark (1995), Clark and Ivanič (1997) and Ivanič (1998), Wodak, and Meyer, (2001) Weiss, and Wodak, (2003), among others work within the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA practitioners believe that “it is mainly in discourse that consent is achieved, ideologies are transmitted, and practices, meanings, values and identities are taught and learnt” (Fairclough, 1995:219). Proponents of CDA analyse discourse which involves investigating language and the way in which power and ideology are intrinsically embedded within the language (Coffin, 2001:99).

When considering the language of memos, letters and reports and how such texts instantiate status, power, identity and writer viewpoint, the discourse becomes an intriguing and stimulating field of study. Du-Babcock and Babcock (1995) and Iedema (1997, 1998, 1999, 2000) both stress that “status, hierarchy and power always affect organizational

communication” (Du-Babcock and Babcock, 1995:3). Fairclough (1992) argues that discourse contributes to the construction of three aspects: (1) the identity, individual’s or group’s, of those involved in the discourse – this is commonly referred to as ‘social identities’, ‘subject positions’ and ‘self’; (2) the social relations between people; (3) the systems of knowledge and beliefs (Fairclough, 1992:64). Thus, following Fairclough, written discourse in the business world would be seen as being highly pervasive in determining identity, social relations, knowledge and beliefs. Creating an identity through discourse, and in this particular case writing, is, according to Clark and Ivanič (1997), “not an option: whatever we do consciously or subconsciously makes a statement about our identity” (1997:143). Ivanič (1998) adds that

Every time people write, they reaffirm or contest the patterns of privileging among subject positions which are sustained by the relations of power in the institutions within which they are writing.

(Ivanič, 1998:33)

Ivanič discusses writing within an institutional tertiary context, but such views of writing are also appropriate in wider institutional settings (Drew and Sorojnen, 1997). This notion of power, status and identity is central to understanding the way in which ‘correct procedure and control’ are maintained in the workplace. An exploration into how ‘control’ is achieved through linguistic choices is essential in order to understand the semiotic nature of the workplace. An SFL approach in combination with the ideas presented by Fairclough (1992, 1995), Clark and Ivanič (1997), Ivanič (1998) and others working within the CDA tradition will lead us forward in understanding the way in which language makes meaning.

2.9 Concluding remarks: Situating the present research

The need for further research into the authentic language of the workplace has been increasingly recognised in recent years. The great majority of the studies undertaken are motivated by the recognition of the need to develop materials for teaching about authentic contexts. Findings from two earlier projects, EWM and CPW, indicate that the most frequently used documents in organisational contexts are memos, letters and reports. These findings were reported based on research undertaken for the EWM project in 1994-1995, and the CPW project in 1995-1996. During this period, e-mails, which have been stated above as being one of the most popular text types, were not as frequent as they perhaps are today.

There is a considerable body of research literature on letters and reports; memos are less widely discussed, but Iedema (1995, 1997, 1999) provides an in-depth analysis of such texts. The research on letters and reports informs the present study while Iedema's work also provides a model for the analysis of context. Current research on social and contextual factors affecting texts and their interpretations is considered necessary for an understanding of the way in which texts are written and used in the workplace.

A wide range of models of language can be seen to underpin the recent , and the important contribution of the ESP tradition in particular is recognised. The present study, however, presents a justification for adopting a Systemic Functional Linguistic model of language. Within this approach arguments for an analysis of Theme have been presented. These arguments are detailed in Chapter Three.