A Systemic Linguistic Analysis of Two Prime Ministerial Speeches

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Functional Grammar

Apply the principles of systemic linguistic analysis explored in the course to a comparison of the style and communicative functionality of two short texts or text extracts of your own choice. The texts should have a similar subject matter, be drawn from a similar institutional or discourse domain (science, economics, health care provision, tourism, politics, the arts etc) or have some other obvious point of similarity. They need, however, to differ significantly in some aspect of their style, structure, approach, tone.

You should indicate how the texts are similar and how they are different in terms of their general stylistic properties and their communicative functionality. Your claims should be backed up by means of an analysis of the types of lexical and grammatical features explored in the course. That is to say, you should consider whether the texts are similar or different in terms of the types of textual, interpersonal and experiential (ideational) meanings explored in the materials.

Estimated Word Count: 4,300
(excluding cover page, contents, quotes, tables, references and appendices)

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which broadly speaking is concerned with understanding text by describing the use that particular text types make of lexico-grammatical features (White, 2001), has applications across many branches of applied linguistics. One such application of systemic theory is in helping to understand the communicative properties of texts. Using a systemic approach this paper will compare the style and communicative function of two speeches from the Australian political domain. The two speeches, one by current Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, the other by a former Prime Minister, Paul Keating, address the same issue - relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians - and have much in common. However, they also have several significant differences. This paper will reveal how the similarities and differences in the style and communicative functionality of the two speeches, realised by their experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings, result from the dynamic relation between text and context. First, I will provide a brief review of the relevant literature and describe the analytical framework to be used. I will then present analyses of the texts before discussing key overlaps and distinctions.

2. Literature Review

There have been several SFL-informed studies of individual speeches by recent Australian Prime Ministers on Indigenous issues. This work has mostly been concerned with discourse semantics or 'meanings beyond the clause' (Martin & Rose, 2003). A speech by former Australian Prime Minister John Howard in 1997 was the subject of several SFL-informed studies (Augustinos et al., 2002; LeCouteur 2001; Luke, 1997) broadly situated in the field of critical discourse analysis. Martin (2004), in response to what he considered an overemphasis on critical discourse analysis, discussed Paul Keating's 1992 Redfern Park speech in proposing a shift in focus from critical to positive discourse analysis. Building on this work, this paper will present a comparative systemic functional analysis of the style and

communicative functionality of two Prime Ministerial speeches on Indigenous issues in a further exploration of the relationship between text and context in politically sensitive texts.

3. Analytical framework

The analytical framework used here is adapted from So (2005) and includes both contextual and linguistic analyses. It also incorporates the notion of the metafunctions of language (Halliday & Hasan, 1989) in order to examine relations between language use and context of situation. The relation of context and metafunction is shown in Table 1. The analytical framework is presented in Table 2.

Table 1
The relation of context and metafunction (adapted from Painter, 2001, p. 178)
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field	**tenor**	**mode**
(what is going on; what it is about)	(the interactants: roles and relations)	(the channel and medium of communication)
experiential meaning choices	interpersonal meaning choices	textual meaning choices

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Table 2
Analytical framework (adapted from So, 2005, p. 70)

Contextual analysis	
1. Genre type and subtypes	What is the name of the genre of which the text is an exemplar? Are there any subtypes or subsets in this genre?
2. Context of situation 　a. Mode 　b. Tenor 　c. Field	 What is the channel of communication? What roles may be required of the speaker and hearers? Do they have equal status and how is their affect and contact? What subject matter is the text about?
3. Purpose	What are the communicative purposes of the text? How are they achieved? How are they related to the rhetorical functions of the text?
4. Institutional practice	In what institution is this kind of text typically produced? What constraints and obligations does this discourse community impose on speakers and hearers? Do the production and hearing processes influence its structure and language?
5. Sociocultural context	Are there any social, historical or cultural factors that make the text appear the way it is?
Linguistic analysis	
1. Linguistic features	What are the lexico-grammatical features for realising the metafunctions of language: experiential, interpersonal, and textual meanings? How are they related to context?
2. Intertextual analysis	Is there anything drawn from other texts? Is information attributed to sources and how?

This framework allows for an account of both contextual and linguistic factors, thus enabling a more comprehensive analysis of the relations between language use and context than a purely linguistic analysis could provide.

4. Analysis

In this section I will present analyses of the two speeches. Both speeches address Indigenous issues, especially reconciliation and the 'Stolen Generations' – the term used to refer to those

children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were removed from their families by Federal and State government agencies and church missions during the 20th century. The first speech (Appendix A) was given by the then Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating, at the Australian Launch of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People at Redfern Park, Sydney on 10 December 1992. The second speech (Appendix B) was given by Kevin Rudd, in Parliament House, Canberra on 13 February 2008.

4.1 Analysis of the Keating speech (Appendix A)

Contextual analysis

1. Genre type and subtypes

The text is an Exposition. It belongs to the subtype of Hortatory Exposition as it attempts to persuade people to do what it argues.

2. Context of situation

a. Mode

Spoken discourse in the mode of a speech given at the Australian Launch of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People.

b. Tenor

Prime Minister of Australia (speaker) → Audience (hearers), in the first instance, but in reality the speaker is addressing all Australians. Although as national leader the speaker has more institutional power than his hearers, as an elected leader he is also expected to adopt a suitably humble and respectful tone, especially given the sensitive subject matter. The speaker here adopts an appropriate tone and level of formality on the basis of this relationship.

c. Field

It is concerned with the problems facing Indigenous Australians and the history of relations

between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

3. Purpose

This speech is intended to acknowledge past and present problems and to persuade its hearers to carry out some suggested solutions to existing problems.

4. Institutional practice

The speaker is expected to follow certain linguistic conventions while addressing the audience in this context and this is reflected in the language and structure of the text, which is less formal than a parliamentary motion, but more structured than an off-the-cuff media interview.

5. Sociocultural context

The text was produced in response to events such as the release of The Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in the same year and the landmark Mabo High Court judgement, which paved the way for the granting of land rights to Indigenous Australians. Both events prompted widespread debate on Indigenous issues in Australia. The setting of the speech is also significant as it is delivered in Redfern, a suburb of Sydney with a large Aboriginal population, to an audience celebrating the launch of the International Year For the World's Indigenous People.

Linguistic analysis

1. Linguistic features

a. Experiential meanings

Process types and participant roles

 Material processes (verbs/verbal groups of doing things) are the most common process type in the text, followed by Mental processes (which denote ways of thinking, perceiving and feeling) and Relational processes (which denote existence or states of being or having), then Verbal processes (ways of communicating something).

Table 3
Process types as percentage of total verbs/verbal groups in Appendix A

Process type	Approximate %
Material (e.g. 'provide', 'make' and 'build')	50
Relational (e.g. 'is', 'are' and 'have')	20
Mental (e.g. 'see', 'know' and 'imagine')	20
Verbal (e.g. 'say', 'tell' and 'show')	10
Total	100

Participants

The pronoun 'we', referring to all non-Indigenous Australians including the speaker, is by far the most common participant in the text. It is most frequently employed as an Actor in material processes, as in the following examples:

We *We* *We*	*took* *brought* *committed*	*the traditional lands (33)* *the disasters (34)* *the murders (36)*
Actor	Process: material	Goal

The next most common participants in the text are variations of 'Indigenous Australians', the most frequent being the pronoun 'they' which appears most often as an Actor in material processes:

they *they* *they*	*have made* *have shaped* *helped build*	*remarkable contributions (69)* *our knowledge of this continent and of ourselves (75)* *this nation (78)*
Actor	Process: material	Goal

The association of Indigenous Australians with positive processes and non-Indigenous Australians with negative ones is highly significant, realising a version of events more suited to arguing the speaker's position, which appears to be: 'we' non-Indigenous Australians need to acknowledge that we did these things, so we can try to put things right.

Grammatical metaphor/Nominalisation

Nominalisation – the use of a nominal form to express a process meaning (Thompson, 2004, p. 225) – plays a significant part in realising the persuasive function of the text. One role of nominalisation is to restrict the arguability of statements, which it does by fully packaging propositions as 'things' (Thompson, 2004, p. 213). This text uses nominalisation to 'establish' the existence of certain propositions before presenting claims that are definitely arguable in themselves, but because they are directly linked to what has just seemingly been established are harder to contest.

A closer look at the clauses in question will reveal how this is achieved. First, the use of 'the starting point' in the following clause signals the existence of a problem that requires attention from now on; that the problem exists cannot be disputed, perhaps only how to approach it:

> And, as I say, **the starting point** might be to recognise that the problem
> starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians (30).

The text develops this line of argument with further nominalisations:

> It begins, I think, with **the act of recognition**. **Recognition** that it was
> we who did **the dispossessing** (31-32).

The nominalisation of the mental process of recognising after careful modalisations ('the starting point *might* be' and 'It begins, I *think*'), changing what is an arguable process into something whose existence is more difficult to question, appears calculated to make the controversial claims that follow less contestable. The choice of the nominal 'the dispossessing' again presents a proposition as a 'truth': that dispossession did take place and all that is required now is to recognise who did it. The speaker then delivers, in definitely arguable clauses, his version of events with a clear verdict on who was responsible for them:

> **We** <u>took</u> the traditional lands and <u>smashed</u> the traditional way of life. **We**
> <u>brought</u> the disasters. The alcohol. **We** <u>committed</u> the murders. **We** <u>took</u> the
> children from their mothers. **We** <u>practised</u> discrimination and exclusion (33-38).

The speaker would have been very aware that these statements would generate a lot of criticism, which he may be trying to negate by establishing in the preceding clauses that these

things had occurred and all that was needed now was to acknowledge them, a point he makes with further nominalisations:

> It was **our ignorance** and **our prejudice**. And **our failure** to imagine **these things** being done to us (39-40).

b. Interpersonal meanings

Interpersonal meanings – the opinions, attitudes and evaluations adopted and expressed regarding the information contained in the text – are revealed in several ways.

Mood Block

The Mood Block consists of three elements – Finite, Subject and Polarity. The Finite is the part of the verbal group which encodes primary tense or the speaker's opinion. The Subject is the nominal group that interacts most closely with the Finite (Butt et al., 2000, p. 89-90). Polarity indicates if the clause contains some form of negation. The Mood Block plays a central role in the arguability of a clause as it is this element which will be passed back and forth in any debate (White, 2001, p. 89).

In this text, subject choice helps reveal the speaker's position on the described events. The choice of Subject in the following clauses clearly establishes the speaker's evaluation of who is implicated in the events:

We		*brought*	*the disasters (34)*
We		*committed*	*the murders (36)*
We		*took*	*the children from their mothers (37)*
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
Mood Block			Residue

As discussed, this inclusive 'we' refers to all non-Indigenous Australians. Wodak argues that an "essential function of the 'we discourse' is the denial of personal responsibility and its displacement on to the group as a whole in the sense that what many people believe cannot be wrong" (1996, p. 116). However, in this case many of the group concerned resented this, which was to have a huge social and political impact.

By contrast, when Indigenous Australians are chosen as Subjects they are associated with positive events. For example:

they they	have made helped build		remarkable contributions (69) this nation (78)
Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
Mood Block		Residue	

The interpersonal meanings of the text are also realised by the use of interrogative clauses:

Didn't Isn't	Australia it	provide opportunity and care for the dispossessed Irish? (26) reasonable to say that if we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to the problems which beset the first Australians – the people to whom the most injustice has been done? (29)
Finite	Subject	Residue
Mood Block		

These rhetorical questions involve the audience at some level and create a sense of shared understanding between speaker and hearers as like-minded 'reasonable' people. Augustinos et al. (2002, p.135) have written how many rhetoricians

> '...advise speakers to mobilize and deploy arguments with which an audience can readily identify with, and which are predicated on the values and common-sense understandings shared by a speaker and his/her audience. It is through the routine deployment of such commonplaces that speakers can engender support from, and identification with their chosen audience'.

An example of this advice comes from Billig, who argues that speakers 'should try to slide their controversial views into categories which are familiar and well-valued by the audience' (1996, p. 224). It is possible to see such discursive strategies at work here. However, beyond this rhetorical function, interrogative clauses such as these give the text a more interactive and personal tone.

<u>Modality</u>

Modality – the expression of probability, obligation and the like – is, according to Halliday, 'grammar's way of expressing the speaker's or writer's judgement, without making the first person 'I' explicit' (2001, p. 182). In this text, it is especially used to express the speaker's position on what is needed for reconciliation to take place. In the following passage modalisations expressing obligation and certainty in contrast to a phrase expressing the (un)likelihood of an alternative possibility present the speaker's judgement very clearly:

> We simply <u>cannot</u> sweep injustice aside. <u>Even if</u> our own conscience allowed us to, I am <u>sure</u>, that in due course, the world and the people of our region <u>would not</u>. There <u>should</u> be no mistake about this - our success in resolving these issues <u>will</u> have a significant bearing on our standing in the world (20-22).

While sure of his opinions, the speaker is also careful at times not to be too direct and modalises accordingly:

> We non-Aboriginal Australians <u>should perhaps</u> remind ourselves that Australia once reached out for us (25)
>
> And, as I say, the starting point <u>might</u> be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians (30)
>
> <u>Perhaps</u> when we recognise what we have in common we <u>will</u> see the things which <u>must</u> be done - the practical things (51)

Modality is most powerfully used in the conclusion of the speech, expressing the speaker's evaluation of both the obligations of non-Indigenous Australians and the likelihood of those obligations being met:

> There is one thing today we <u>cannot</u> imagine. We <u>cannot</u> imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through 50 000 years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, <u>will</u> be denied their place in the modern Australian nation. We <u>cannot</u> imagine that. We <u>cannot</u> imagine that we <u>will</u> fail. And with the spirit that is here today I am confident that we <u>won't</u>. I am confident that we <u>will</u> succeed in this decade. (109-114)

c. Textual meanings

<u>Theme</u>

Theme, 'the point of departure for what the speaker is going to say' (Halliday, 1994, cited in

Butt et al., 2000, p. 137), is concerned with the particular approach the writer/speaker takes to the content of a text in its development. The Themes in this text reveal that it is mostly concerned with people. The pronoun 'we' is a repeated Theme throughout the text, being employed in some of its most persuasive clauses:

We	*have to give meaning to 'justice' and 'equity' (55)*
Theme	Rheme

If	we	*improve the living conditions in one town,*
textual	topical	Rheme
Theme		

they	will	*improve in another (56)*
textual	topical	Rheme
Theme		

When	we	*see improvement,*
textual	topical	Rheme
Theme		

when	we	*see more dignity, more confidence, more happiness*
textual	topical	Rheme
Theme		

we	*will know we are going to win (59)*
Theme	Rheme

We	*need these practical building blocks of change (60)*
Theme	Rheme

Augostinos et al. (2002) write that the categorisation of an inclusive 'we' at the level of the nation is a common linguistic strategy in political rhetoric, arguing that such discursive practices emphasise the shared community of all citizens and produce an image of consensus while helping reinforce the speaker's position as spokesperson for the nation. The use of the strategy throughout the text allows the speaker to build up the feeling of consensus by 'seeking to establish a sense of communality and shared values with the audience' (Augostinos et al., 2002, p.115). The extensive use of 'we' as a Theme in this text helps construct this image of consensus thereby playing an important role in realising its persuasive function.

2. Intertextual analysis

There is explicit reference to two external texts: The Report of the Royal Commission into Deaths in Custody and the Mabo High Court judgement. The judicial source of these texts adds great weight to the speaker's arguments as they can be viewed as both highly authoritative and free of political bias. Previous studies analysing political rhetoric (Augostinos et al. 2002; Dickerson, 1997; LeCouteur et al., 2001) have identified the citing of apolitical and expert others to claim a consensus warrant for a particular position as a linguistic device speakers use to present their versions of events.

Making the cited texts themselves Subjects and Participants (Sayer and Actor) adds further authority as it is they – the highly authoritative and apolitical Royal Commission report and High Court judgement – and not the speaker 'showing' and 'establishing' the way things supposedly are:

> **The Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody**
> [Sayer] <u>showed</u> with devastating clarity that the past lives on in inequality, racism and injustice, in the prejudice and ignorance of non-Aboriginal Australians, and in the demoralisation and desperation, the fractured identity, of so many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (45)

> By <u>doing away with</u> the bizarre conceit that this continent had no owners prior to the settlement of Europeans, **Mabo** [Actor] <u>establishes</u> a fundamental truth and <u>lays the basis</u> for justice (62).

The speaker cleverly interweaves some evaluative lexis into these clauses – 'devastating clarity', 'injustice', 'demoralisation and desperation', 'fractured identity', 'bizarre conceit', 'fundamental truth' – which otherwise may have been seen as overly dramatic or emotional. However, by directly linking these evaluations to the authoritative texts the speaker makes some very strong, emotive arguments appear as objective observations rather than just his own possibly more subjective personal opinions.

4.2 Analysis of the Rudd speech (Appendix B)

Contextual analysis

1. Genre type and subtypes

It is a formal apology.

2. Context of situation

a. Mode

Spoken discourse in the mode of a parliamentary speech.

b. Tenor

Prime Minister of Australia (speaker) → Members of the Parliament of Australia and attending public and media in the first instance, however the apology is addressed to the Indigenous Peoples of Australia (hearers). The speaker is speaking on the behalf of the Parliament of Australia which strongly influences the tone he adopts.

c. Field

It is concerned with the history of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, especially the practice of removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

3. Purpose

The text is intended to acknowledge the past mistreatment of Indigenous Australians and to offer a formal apology for that mistreatment on behalf of the Australian Federal Parliament.

4. Institutional practice

The text was produced under constraints imposed by the institution (the Australian

14

Parliament) and the expectations of the addressees. The formal Parliamentary setting imposes constraints on the speaker, such as the use of situationally specific language and an expected conventional structure.

5. Sociocultural context

The text was produced shortly after a change in government in the spirit of what Barkan (2000) describes as a 'new international morality', reflecting an increasing willingness of nations to apologise for past historical injustices. While there was majority public support for the apology, its exact nature and wording was the subject of public debate. One commonly raised fear was that an official apology might lead to expensive compensation claims. Another concern was that some Australians felt that they should not be made to feel responsible for things that had happened in the past, which had been a criticism of the Keating speech.

Linguistic analysis

1. Linguistic features

a. Experiential meanings

Process types and participants

Material processes constitute approximately 55% of all verb groups in the text. Verbal, Mental and Relational processes occur at about the same frequency (15%).

Table 4
Process types as percentage of total verbs/verbal groups in Appendix B

Process type	Approximate %
Material (e.g. 'inflict', 'embrace' and 'harness')	55
Relational (e.g. 'are' and 'were')	15
Mental (e.g. 'reflect' and 'acknowledging')	15
Verbal (e.g. 'say' and 'request')	15
Total	100

Participants

The most frequently occurring participant in the text is the first person plural pronoun 'we' whose referent is the Australian Parliament, which occurs about four times more often than the next most frequent participant, 'all Australians.' Its role is mostly as Senser in mental processes and Sayer in verbal processes as in the following examples:

We	*reflect*	*on their past mistreatment (2)*
Senser	Process: mental	Phenomenon

For the future	*we*	*take heart (13)*
Phenomenon	Senser	Process: mental

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind,	*we*	*say*	*sorry (7)*
Circumstance: matter	Sayer	Process: verbal	Verbiage

Significantly, almost all of the material processes in the text are metaphorical in nature. It is also significant that the Parliament is only employed as Actor in positively evaluated processes, as in these examples:

> **We** today <u>take</u> this first step by acknowledging the past and <u>laying claim</u> to a future that embraces all Australians (12)

> A future where **we** <u>harness</u> the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to <u>close</u> the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity (14)

> A future where **we** <u>embrace</u> the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed (15)

Similarly, when 'the nation' is chosen as Actor it is in positively evaluated processes which are impossible to actually 'do' in any concrete sense:

> The time has now come for **the nation** to <u>turn a new page</u> in Australia's history by <u>righting the wrongs</u> of the past and so <u>moving forward</u> with confidence to the future (4).

When negatively evaluated processes are presented, the text employs discursive strategies to avoid implicating either the government or the nation as a whole in them. One strategy the text employs to do this is the choice of an inanimate or abstract entity as Actor:

> We apologise for **the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments** that <u>have inflicted</u> profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians (5).

By making such an abstract entity as 'the laws and policies' of past Parliaments and governments responsible for 'inflicting' such terrible things the speaker avoids implicating the current Parliament or government. The purpose behind choosing the Parliament as Actor in only positively appraised processes throughout the text is perhaps to emphasise the point that while it is 'righting the wrongs of the past' (4) by apologising for them, it is not in any way responsible for them.

Agentless passives

Another strategy employed to avoid implicating any particular group in negatively evaluated processes is the use of the agentless passive. Here is an example:

> And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry (9).

Butt et al. (2000, p. 53) write that agentless passives enable the 'losing' of the Actor of a process, adding that whenever you encounter one 'it is worthwhile asking just why the Actor has been omitted – is it because nobody knows who did the action, or because everybody knows, or because it is unimportant, or because the writer is purposely not mentioning it for some reason?' A reason for doing this in the above clause could be to avoid either admitting responsibility or blaming another person or group for inflicting such things. This particular use of the passive voice stands in stark contrast to the almost exclusive choice of active voice with positively evaluated processes.

Grammatical metaphor/Nominalisation

Like passive clauses, nominalisations allow the removal of human involvement or agency

from the activities they refer to (Thompson, 2004, p. 243). This can be seen in all of the following:

> We reflect on their past **mistreatment** (2)

> We reflect in particular on **the mistreatment** of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation's history (3)

> We apologise especially for **the removal** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country (6)

> For **the pain, suffering and hurt** of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry (7)

> To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for **the breaking up** of families and communities, we say sorry (8).

In all of these statements there is no mention of who did these things, only of those who suffered their consequences. As van Leeuwen (1996, p. 38) points out, representations 'include or exclude social actors to suit their interests and purposes in relation to the readers for whom they are intended.' Here the nominalisations make it possible for the speaker to avoid implicating the government or any other social actor in the events. However, as van Leeuwen (1996, p. 39) adds, when activities are included (for example, the removal of Indigenous children from their families), but some or all of the social actors involved in them are excluded it is possible to ask questions like 'but who removed the children?' or 'but who mistreated them?', even though the text does not provide the answers.

b. Interpersonal meanings

Mood Block

The pronoun 'we' is chosen as Subject in about 50% of clauses. This reflects the main communicative purpose of the text: for the Parliament to apologise for the past mistreatment of Indigenous Australians. Here are some examples of this function:

> **We** apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country (6).

> **We the Parliament of Australia** respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation (10).

Unlike the Keating text, there is no use at all of 'I' as a Subject, which again reflects the purpose of the text and its context. The speaker is speaking for the Parliament, not for himself, and the formal parliamentary context places further constraints on subject and person choices. The extensive association of the Parliament with positively evaluated activities may also be seen as serving the speaker's rhetorical purposes, as an attempt to present the actions of the current government in a very positive light.

Modality

There is some use of modality to realise the speaker's position on certain representations. For example, the use of 'must' and 'never' in the following clearly indicates the stance of the speaker on past events:

> We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians. A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past **must never, never** happen again (12-13).

Modality is also employed to realise the speaker's judgement on the capacity of the nation to do something, albeit metaphorically:

> For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent **can** now be written (11).

Evaluative lexis

Evaluative lexis is used extensively to present the speaker's negative evaluation of past events: 'this *blemished* chapter in our nation's history', '*inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss*', 'the *indignity* and *degradation* thus *inflicted*', '*injustices* of the past', '*old* approaches have *failed*.' The speaker's positive appraisal of Indigenous Australians is also realised by evaluative lexis: 'the *oldest continuing cultures in human history*', 'a *proud* people and a *proud* culture.' Lexical choice also helps create a positive evaluation of the Australian nation: 'our *great* continent', 'this *great* country, Australia.' Such realisations serve to position the speaker favourably with all sections of his audience – Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike.

c. Textual meanings

<u>Theme</u>

The Themes in this text reveal that it is mostly concerned with communicating the actions of the government. The pronoun 'we' (the Parliament) is by far the most common topical theme in the text, which is not surprising given its main purpose. Perhaps more significant is the use of Marked Themes where negatively evaluated events are represented without causal agents, as seen here:

> For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, [Theme] we say sorry [Rheme] (7)

> To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, [Theme] we say sorry. [Rheme] (8)

> And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, [Theme] we say sorry. [Rheme] (9)

Placing the events and not the Subject/Actor in the Theme position has significantly altered the message conveyed in these statements. If the order is reversed, a very different message emerges and the Subject/Actor seems more implicated in events:

> We [Theme] say sorry for the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind. [Rheme]

> We [Theme] say sorry to the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities. [Rheme]

> And we [Theme] say sorry for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture. [Rheme]

However, this is clearly not the message the speaker wants to convey. Therefore, he has chosen Themes more suited to realising his intended message in order to help achieve his overall aims.

2. Intertextual analysis

There is no explicit citation of external texts. There is however, one interesting use of a rather euphemistic phrase used in a speech by Kevin Rudd's predecessor as Prime Minister, John Howard. In that speech, Howard referred to the mistreatment of the Indigenous Australians as a 'blemished chapter' in Australia's history (Howard, 1997). Rudd uses the identical phrase in a similar way in this text. However, unlike this text, Howard's speech was not an apology.

In fact, it argued vehemently why an apology to Indigenous Australians was *not* necessary. Examples such as these demonstrate, as Martin (2004) points out, how language in the service of power can be used to suit a variety of interests.

5. Comparison: similarities and differences

I will now discuss what the analysis has revealed of the similarities and differences of the two texts. There are several areas where they overlap, as might be expected of texts sharing a similar Mode, Field and Tenor. The similarities in the two texts are seen in the following:

- **Subject matter**. Both texts discuss the same issue – relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. They both acknowledge and discuss the past mistreatment of Indigenous Australians as well as problems currently facing Indigenous Australians.

- **Structure**. Both texts are highly structured prepared speeches consisting of an introduction of sorts, a discussion of the issues and a conclusion which focuses on the future. Where they differ is in their purpose with the Keating text being more argumentative, so its 'middle section' consists of more arguments than the Rudd text.

- **Interpersonal meanings**. Both texts abound with interpersonal meanings. Mood choice, modality and evaluative lexis play an important role in realising the interpersonal meanings of both texts. Evaluative lexis is used in both to present a positive appraisal of Indigenous Australians and a negative appraisal of their past treatment in order to realise the communicative and rhetorical purposes of each text.

- **Participants**. Most participants in both texts are groups, not individuals (for example, Indigenous Australians, non-Indigenous Australians). The first person plural pronoun 'we' is the most common participant in both texts, a typical feature of political speeches.

- **Nominalisation** has a very important role in realising the purposes of both texts. Although used to achieve different overall purposes, both texts use nominalisation to help make their representations of events more difficult to contest.

There are, however, some very significant differences between the two texts as they belong to different genres and are produced in different settings and sociocultural contexts. These differences emerge from the following:

- **Purpose**. The texts have different communicative purposes. The Keating text has a persuasive function and exhorts people to do what its arguments propose. The Rudd text is an apology. It acknowledges that changes are necessary, but is very abstract and does not specify what these changes are or who should make them. On the other hand, the Keating text is more specific, arguing that all Australians need to take certain practical actions.

- **Formality**. The Rudd text has a much more formal style. Its structure and some of its lexis ('We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request', 'this Parliament resolves') reflects the highly formal, rather sombre nature of its purpose and setting. It also seems very 'one-way' in that it does not ask much of its hearers beyond accepting what it says. The Keating speech is less formal and more interactive, making use of involvement strategies, rhetorical questions and ellipsis.

- **Personal tone**. The Keating text has a more personal tone. Due to the differing contexts Keating has more freedom to speak for himself than Rudd and makes frequent use of the first person singular ('I think', 'I am sure', 'that seems to me'), giving his speech a considerably more personal tone. The Rudd speech uses an *exclusive* 'we' throughout, distancing its hearers and making it seem very impersonal. These factors are most obviously related to the settings in which the speeches are made. However, the tones adopted also reflect each speaker's communicative purposes, with Keating trying to persuade people to accept *his* arguments and Rudd offering an apology on behalf of the institution to which he belongs.

- **Involvement of hearers**. Keating directly involves his audience in representations. The *inclusive* 'we' the Keating text uses involves its hearers directly in the processes it represents, both negative ('We took the children from their mothers') and positive ('I am confident that we will succeed in this decade'). The Rudd speech however, makes no

attempt to involve its hearers directly in its representations.

- **Attribution of responsibility.** Related to the above point, the Keating text directly attributes responsibility for the mistreatment of Indigenous Australians to human agents, whereas the Rudd text does not. Instead, it uses strategies in the lexico-grammar such as nominalisations, agentless passives and inanimate agents to avoid attributing agency to any social actor. This could be related to the sociocultural environment in which the text is produced and the political purposes of its speaker – with fears related to the legal ramifications of apologising and the potential political fallout of being seen to 'blame' all Australians for past events (a factor stemming from reaction to the 'we discourse' of the Keating speech, a discursive strategy which in the intervening years had come to be viewed as politically suicidal).

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to reveal how similarities and differences in the style and communicative functionality of two speeches result from the dynamic relation between text and context. Analysis of the experiential, interpersonal and textual meaning choices of both texts has revealed how these similarities and differences were realised. The similarities in the two texts emerged from their sharing similar situational contexts, namely having a similar Mode, Field and Tenor. Likewise, differences in the general style and communicative function of the two texts were shown to have emerged from differences in other contextual factors such as purpose, setting and sociocultural context. Hopefully, I have demonstrated that the relationship between text and context is systematic and two-way and that exploring these dynamic relations in a systemic functional framework can lead to a better understanding of texts and their purposes.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Keating speech

The speech below was given by the then Prime Minister of Australia, Paul Keating, at Redfern Park in Sydney on 10 December 1992.

Australian Launch of the International Year for the World's Indigenous People

1 Ladies and gentlemen,
I am very pleased to be here today at the launch of Australia's celebration of the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People.
2 It will be a year of great significance for Australia.
3 It comes at a time when we have committed ourselves to succeeding in the test which so far we have always failed.
4 Because, in truth, we cannot confidently say that we have succeeded as we would like to have succeeded if we have not managed to extend opportunity and care, dignity and hope to the indigenous people of Australia - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.
5 This is a fundamental test of our social goals and our national will: our ability to say to ourselves and the rest of the world that Australia is a first rate social democracy, that we are what we should be - truly the land of the fair go and the better chance.
6 There is no more basic test of how seriously we mean these things.
7 It is a test of our self-knowledge. **8** Of how well we know the land we live in. **9** How well we know our history. **10** How well we recognise the fact that, complex as our contemporary identity is, it cannot be separated from Aboriginal Australia. **11** How well we know what Aboriginal Australians know about Australia.
12 Redfern is a good place to contemplate these things.
13 Just a mile or two from the place where the first European settlers landed, in too many ways it tells us that their failure to bring much more than devastation and demoralisation to Aboriginal Australia continues to be our failure.
14 More I think than most Australians recognise, the plight of Aboriginal Australians affects us all. **15** In Redfern it might be tempting to think that the reality Aboriginal Australians face is somehow contained here, and that the rest of us are insulated from it. **16** But of course, while all the dilemmas may exist here, they are far from contained. **17** We know the same dilemmas and more are faced all over Australia.

18 This is perhaps the point of this Year of the World's Indigenous People: to bring the dispossessed out of the shadows, to recognise that they are part of us, and that we cannot give indigenous Australians up without giving up many of our own most deeply held values, much of our own identity - and our own humanity.

19 Nowhere in the world, I would venture, is the message more stark than in Australia.

20 We simply cannot sweep injustice aside. **21** Even if our own conscience allowed us to, I am sure, that in due course, the world and the people of our region would not. **22** There should be no mistake about this - our success in resolving these issues will have a significant bearing on our standing in the world.

23 However intractable the problems may seem, we cannot resign ourselves to failure - any more than we can hide behind the contemporary version of Social Darwinism which says that to reach back for the poor and dispossessed is to risk being dragged down.

24 That seems to me not only morally indefensible, but bad history.

25 We non-Aboriginal Australians should perhaps remind ourselves that Australia once reached out for us. **26** Didn't Australia provide opportunity and care for the dispossessed Irish? **27** The poor of Britain? **28** The refugees from war and famine and persecution in the countries of Europe and Asia? **29** Isn't it reasonable to say that if we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to the problems which beset the first Australians - the people to whom the most injustice has been done?

30 And, as I say, the starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians.

31 It begins, I think, with the act of recognition. **32** Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. **33** We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. **34** We brought the disasters. **35** The alcohol. **36** We committed the murders. **37** We took the children from their mothers. **38** We practised discrimination and exclusion.

39 It was our ignorance and our prejudice. **40** And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. **41** With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. **42** We failed to ask - how would I feel if this were done to me?

43 As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us.

44 If we needed a reminder of this, we received it this year. **45** The Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody showed with devastating clarity that the past lives on in inequality, racism and injustice, in the prejudice and ignorance of non-Aboriginal Australians, and in the demoralisation and desperation, the fractured identity, of so many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

46 For all this, I do not believe that the Report should fill us with guilt. **47** Down the years, there has been no shortage of guilt, but it has not produced the responses we need. **48** Guilt is not a very constructive emotion.

49 I think what we need to do is open our hearts a bit.

50 All of us.

51 Perhaps when we recognise what we have in common we will see the things which must be done - the practical things.

52 There is something of this in the creation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. **53** The council's mission is to forge a new partnership built on justice and equity and an appreciation of the heritage of Australia's indigenous people. **54** In the abstract those terms are meaningless. **55** We have to give meaning to 'justice' and 'equity' - and, as I have said several times this year, we will only give them meaning when we commit ourselves to achieving concrete results.

56 If we improve the living conditions in one town, they will improve in another. **57** And another. **58** If we raise the standard of health by 20 per cent one year, it will be raised more the next if we open one door others will follow.

59 When we see improvement, when we see more dignity, more confidence, more happiness - we will know we are going to win. **60** We need these practical building blocks of change.

61 The Mabo judgment should be seen as one of these. **62** By doing away with the bizarre conceit that this continent had no owners prior to the settlement of Europeans, Mabo establishes a fundamental truth and lays the basis for justice. **63** It will be much easier to work from that basis than has ever been the case in the past.

64 For this reason alone we should ignore the isolated outbreaks of hysteria and hostility of the past few months. **65** Mabo is an historic decision - we can make it an historic turning point, the basis of a new relationship between indigenous and non-Aboriginal Australians.

66 The message should be that there is nothing to fear or to lose in the recognition of historical truth, or the extension of social justice, or the deepening of Australian social democracy to include indigenous Australians.

67 There is everything to gain.

68 Even the unhappy past speaks for this. **69** Where Aboriginal Australians have been included in the life of Australia they have made remarkable contributions. **70** Economic contributions, particularly in the pastoral and agricultural industry. **71** They are there in the frontier and exploration history of Australia. **72** They are there in the wars. **73** In sport to an extraordinary degree. **74** In literature and art and music.

75 In all these things they have shaped our knowledge of this continent and of ourselves. **76** They have shaped our identity. **77** They are there in the Australian legend. **78** We should

never forget - they helped build this nation. **79** And if we have a sense of justice, as well as common sense, we will forge a new partnership.

80 As I said, it might help us if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of land we have lived on for 50 000 years - and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours.

81 Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless. **82** Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then were told in history books that we had given up without a fight. **83** Imagine if non-Aboriginal Australians had served their country in peace and war and were then ignored in history books. **84** Imagine if our feats on sporting fields had inspired admiration and patriotism and yet did nothing to diminish prejudice. **85** Imagine if our spiritual life was denied and ridiculed.

86 Imagine if we had suffered the injustice and then were blamed for it.

87 It seems to me that if we can imagine the injustice then we can imagine its opposite. **88** And we can have justice.

89 I say that for two reasons: I say it because I believe that the great things about Australian social democracy reflect a fundamental belief in justice. **90** And I say it because in so many other areas we have proved our capacity over the years to go on extending the realism of participating, opportunity and care.

91 Just as Australians living in the relatively narrow and insular Australia of the 1960s imagined a culturally diverse, worldly and open Australia, and in a generation turned the idea into reality, so we can turn the goals of reconciliation into reality.

92 There are very good signs that the process has begun. **93** The creation of the Reconciliation Council is evidence itself. **94** The establishment of the ATSIC - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission - is also evidence. **95** The Council is the product of imagination and goodwill. **96** ATSIC emerges from the vision of indigenous self-determination and self-management. **97** The vision has already become the reality of almost 800 elected Aboriginal Regional Councillors and Commissioners determining priorities and developing their own programs.

98 All over Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are taking charge of their own lives. **99** And assistance with the problems which chronically beset them is at last being made available in ways developed by the communities themselves. **100** If these things offer hope, so does the fact that this generation of Australians is better informed about Aboriginal culture and achievement, and about the injustice that has been done, than any generation before.

101 We are beginning to more generally appreciate the depth and the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. **102** From their music and art and dance we are

beginning to recognise how much richer our national life and identity will be for the participation of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. **103** We are beginning to learn what the indigenous people have known for many thousands of years - how to live with our physical environment.

104 Ever so gradually we are learning how to see Australia through Aboriginal eyes, beginning to recognise the wisdom contained in their epic story.

105 I think we are beginning to see how much we owe the indigenous Australians and how much we have lost by living so apart.

106 I said we non-indigenous Australians should try to imagine the Aboriginal view.

107 It can't be too hard. **108** Someone imagined this event today, and it is now a marvellous reality and a great reason for hope.

109 There is one thing today we cannot imagine. **110** We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through 50 000 years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation.

111 We cannot imagine that.

112 We cannot imagine that we will fail.

113 And with the spirit that is here today I am confident that we won't.

114 I am confident that we will succeed in this decade.

115 Thank you.

Appendix B: Rudd speech

The speech below was given by the Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, in the House of Representatives, Parliament House, Canberra on 13 February 2008.

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples
House of Representatives
Parliament House, Canberra

13 February 2008

1 —I move:

That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

2 We reflect on their past mistreatment.

3 We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

4 The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

5 We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

6 We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

7 For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

8 To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

9 And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

10 We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

11 For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

12 We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

13 A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

14 A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

15 A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

16 A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

17 A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.