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Explain and engage: linguistic resources in Swedish as a second language textbooks to support academic writing

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ABSTRACT

Upper secondary school textbooks are widely used as educational material. Textbooks can, however, differ greatly, for example in the choice of linguistic resources. Comparing textbooks can therefore highlight how students will have access to different kinds of support in their learning process. This study explores the support found in textbooks for upper secondary Swedish as a second language students as they prepare for a high-stake writing test. Six textbooks are analysed regarding two types of linguistic resources, for explaining writing and engaging the students. Systemic functional linguistics are employed to examine explaining resources (lexical and conjunctive cohesion) as well as engaging resources (addressing the reader and appraisal). The results display how the varying presence of such resources influences the range of potential support available to the students and how teachers need to use textbooks in a conscious and critical manner. To strengthen teachers' professional judgement as textbook users, the article presents a toolbox of linguistic resources for explaining and engaging in the classroom.

1. Introduction

Acquiring the formal writing skills needed in higher education is a significant achievement for any individual (Schleppegrell 2004; Edling 2006). This is in fact 'a challenging and multifaceted endeavour, both for first language (L1) and second language (L2) writers' (Kyle and Crossley 2016, p. 12). Schools therefore have to support students in developing this specialised, academic writing if they are to qualify for tertiary education. These writing skills are crucial not only to handle higher education but are also 'a type of writing that students need to master to succeed in society' (Magnusson 2018, p. 22). For second language students, the step from everyday language to academic language is especially challenging (Lindberg 2009; Magnusson 2018).

In Swedish upper secondary schools, academic writing is taught as, and assessed in, a very specific text genre, called *investigative writing*,[1] a discursive genre where a phenomenon is explored with the aid of established sources (Hellspong and Ledin 1997; Holmberg 2013;

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Apelgren and Holmberg 2021). Programmes preparing for higher education (as opposed to vocational programmes) encompass three courses of Swedish or Swedish as a second language, often taught as one course per school year. Towards the end of course 3 there is a mandatory national test that includes an investigative essay.

The national test assignment is the same for Swedish, from here on *Swe*, as for Swedish as a second language, from here on *SSL*. On the whole, SSL is 'vastly similar [to Swe] in terms of curricular content, goals and grading criteria […] implying high academic content in SSL regarding literacy, and literary and linguistic content' (Hedman and Magnusson 2022, p. 2). One of the two Swedish subjects must be included in an upper secondary school certificate.

SSL addresses the large, heterogenous group of students with a multilingual background, meaning they did not grow up speaking Swedish, exclusively or at all. In upper secondary school, a passing grade in Swe or SSL is necessary to qualify for tertiary studies. A passing grade is difficult to achieve without passing the national test in Swedish since teachers 'must take particular account of the results of a national test' (SNAE 2024). In a worst-case scenario, upper secondary refugee students who do not pass will not get their residence permit extended (Upper Secondary School Act (SFS 2017:353) 2017). Hence, the impact of what is taught in class on writing could reach far beyond the classroom.

In light of these potentially serious consequences, the issue of support becomes crucial for the L2 student. This study examines linguistic resources offered in textbooks to support academic writing. That the intended readers of these textbooks are not beginners but rather have reached 'an advanced learning language at near-native level' (Ekberg 2013, p. 260) can explain why the textbooks for SSL in this study are difficult to distinguish from textbooks for Swe in terms of both content and language. The discussion in the concluding section on linguistic features that support learning could therefore be of relevance to textbooks in general.

2. Background: the subject Swedish as a second language

In the Swedish school system, SSL is taught alongside mainstream Swedish, Swe, from lower primary to upper secondary. Swe and SSL are weighted equally when calculating scores for school leaving certificates, including admission to higher education. At upper secondary level and municipal adult education, students can choose between the two subjects (Sahlée 2017). Needless to say, the group of students enrolled in SSL is vastly heterogeneous which places a significant strain on both teachers and teaching material (Wedin and Straszer 2023).

Compared to L2 education in other countries, 'SSL represents a relatively unique L2 educational design' with a specific teacher education (Hedman and Magnusson 2022, p. 2; SNAE 2022). There is however a lack of such qualified SSL teachers that has led to a situation where many SSL classes are taught by unqualified teachers—qualification levels for SSL teachers are among the lowest in all of the Swedish school system (SNAE 2025).[2] It is also common that SSL and Swe are taught in the same classroom by the same teacher, who may be qualified in Swe but not in SSL, especially in smaller schools (Hedman and Magnusson 2021).

Although Swe and SSL are two separate subjects, the national test assignments are the exact same but assessed according to their respective syllabus, with different matrices in the teacher assessment manual (SNAE 2024). The syllabi for both Swe and SSL course 2

and 3 mention two writing genres, *investigative* and *argumentative* texts. In SSL course 2 students are to learn how to adapt one's text 'to the subject, purpose and recipient', which entails knowledge of 'textual patterns and linguistic features' as well as techniques for citing and referencing sources. In course 3 this skill is made further stringent as the writing is to result in 'texts of a scientific nature' with the use of strategies for adapting to 'the subject, purpose, situation and recipient'. In addition to knowing how to make references to sources, the student shall also gain 'basic knowledge of source criticism' (SNAE 2011).

This third and last course is also explicitly meant to prepare students for university (SNAE 2011) and the writing assignment in the national test is even designed to resemble the first paper to be handed in for a university course (Hillbom 2022). To prepare for the test, an exam booklet with excerpts from texts 'of a scientific nature' is discussed in class.[3] The investigative essay must then base its reasoning on the sources in the booklet. To what extent students have met scientific texts during their school years will of course vary between classrooms, and the same goes for how much they have practiced writing in more formal genres. Research has established that developing academic writing skills in a second language is particularly complex and time-consuming (e.g. Magnusson 2013). Qualified support in that learning process is hence essential, and a potential means of support is the textbook.

3. Theoretical framework and concepts

The present study is located in the theoretical field of systemic functional linguistics or SFL. Following SFL, language is regarded as a social practice that fulfils social purposes through 'a complex system of interconnected layers of meaning' where the 'lexicogrammatical system sets out the available language choices' (Alexander 2019, p. 2). In every context, people make such choices depending on what they want to achieve (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). A text is always doing something, and this 'doing' is accomplished through linguistic choices expressing three metafunctions: What the text is about is handled by the *ideational* metafunction. What relationships are formed between author and reader is realised through the *interpersonal* metafunction. How the text is organised is referred to as the *textual* metafunction (Halliday and Hasan 1989; Hellspong and Ledin 1997; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). This study aims to investigate how linguistic resources in six SSL textbooks are employed to deepen students' understanding of a specific content (ideational) and to engage students in this content (interpersonal).

Language is treated in the SFL theory as means for meaningful social interaction in different discourse practices, such as learning in a school setting (Martin and Rose 2008). Central to the SFL theory is the *context of situation*, situated in the *context of culture* and encompassing every aspect of a certain *text in context* (Martin and Rose 2008; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). In a school context, students are expected to produce texts within a specific selection of text genres—the space of potential texts. In accordance with Martin & Rose, genres are regarded in this study as 'staged, goal oriented social processes' that 'enact the social practices of a given culture' (2008, p. 6). This is what makes SFL so useful for the analysis of what Schleppegrell has called 'the language of schooling' (2004). From a functional perspective, it is important to study not only students' writing but also the educational material that surround it, since 'conditions for learning are shaped by every sign in every mode operating in a textbook' (Bezemer and Kress 2010, p. 15). The use of SFL concepts

allows an investigation of how a phenomenon, in this case academic writing, is explained and presented as engaging for a reader.

Teachers operationalise the syllabus for their students, 'a process of re-interpreting and recontextualising the syllabus' (Alford 2015, p. 107). The same can be said of textbook authors: their job is to operationalise the syllabus in textbooks, guiding both students and teachers (Vitta 2023). In doing so, authors choose linguistic resources, and the results of these choices can be found in the text. At the other end of the interaction, students depend on their linguistic proficiency to understand what is being explained and how to engage with it in the way intended. Challenges in reading comprehension are exacerbated when the textbook fails to explain things in a clear and coherent way, a problem that has been identified in Swedish textbooks (Reichenberg 2000; Ekvall 2004).

Different types of linguistic proficiency have been discussed by many scholars, including Cummins, who coined the concepts of BICS and CALP in the late 1970s. BICS are *basic interpersonal communicative skills* whereas CALP is a *cognitive academic language proficiency* (Cummins 1979; 1980; 2000; Schleppegrell 2004; Lindberg 2009; Christie 2012). While BICS are achieved relatively quickly and easily by most young immigrants, CALP is much more demanding. The proficiency required in the national test essay, to fulfil the demands of this specific genre of investigative writing, can be seen as the most complex form of CALP in the Swedish school context. In this study, the concepts of BICS and CALP are utilised to highlight how the development of different kinds of linguistic competence may need special attention.

The step from oral language production, trained naturally from birth, to writing, is a giant leap for all students. As Canagarajah puts it, 'written language is not native to anybody. All writers, including native speakers, have to learn writing in formal educational contexts' (2013, p. 108). Particularly for academic writing, no student can rely only on their oral literacy skills and their previous everyday life experiences, since the knowledge they need to structure and formulate a text that meets the criteria in an assessment situation is of a different kind (Shanahan and Shanahan 2008).

4. Previous research

In the present study, the academic writing taught through textbooks in an upper secondary school context is seen as the seed for the academic writing expected at university. This discursive genre has been given an increasingly prominent place in secondary school curricula, but it has also been experienced by teachers as particularly problematic to handle in the classroom. It relates to the fact that students cannot start the writing process in their imaginations, as they can do with narrative texts, or in their own ideas, as they can do with more opinion-based texts (Holmberg 2013; see also Kyle and Crossley 2016, who distinguish between independent writing tasks and the more demanding source-based writing tasks).

Another reason why academic writing is extra challenging for certain groups of students is the knowledge of different social practices students bring to the exam. Only some of them will benefit from practices they have met before (Bourne 2000; Macken-Horarik 2006). Macken-Horarik investigated the semantic features of student responses in an Australian year 10 English examination. The students' essays differed markedly in quality and thus in grade, depending on how well students recognized the underlying demands of the

assignment. Macken-Horarik concluded that many students 'are disadvantaged by their failure to 'guess' the hidden requirements of the situation' (2006, p. 27).

Inspired by Macken-Horarik (2006), Allison (2011) analysed test essays written by Year 11 students in Australia. Only students with English as their L1 were awarded the grade A by their teachers, while students with English as their L2, despite being considered advanced learners, got C. Their teachers claimed that the texts produced by L2 writers lacked topical depth and sophistication, compared to those by L1 writers. The conclusion Allison draws is that the assessment standard, built on a specific, formal school literacy, favours L1 students and that further research is needed on how to support L2 students' writing skills (Allison 2011; see also Alford 2015). The present study aims to make visible linguistic resources for such support, found in textbooks for L2 students.

Multilingual students may also be disadvantaged by the textbooks themselves. Jou (2017) has shown how graduate students with English as an additional language were confused by certain wordings in a textbook on academic writing. For instance, students were asked to select which of nine reporting verbs ('claim', 'assume' etc.) were objective and which were (potentially) evaluative. This is a difficult question to answer without having contextual information. Relevant to the present study could be the idea that multilingual students are extra vulnerable to the lack of context—just listing certain words or giving advice like *always be objective in academic writing* is not enough in itself. Instead, students will need support from the redundancy found in context.

The challenge of academic writing for all students is not lessened by the fact that secondary school textbooks in general use abstract and condensed language—a clear example of CALP (Cummins 1979, 1980). Research has pointed to a range of additional difficulties that written texts as in school textbooks entail for L2 students (Iversen Kulbrandstad 1996; Reichenberg 2000; Schleppegrell 2004; Christie 2012). Lindberg (2018) has underlined how L2 students need support grasping the abstract or transferred meaning of everyday concepts, words that otherwise will act as stumbling blocks as they falsely look familiar. This phenomenon is not just a matter of having a limited vocabulary in one's L2 but of understanding the different meanings of concepts, on different levels of abstraction.

Previous research has found that linguistic resources such as *voice* and *causality* increase readability, which Reichenberg (2000) demonstrated in her dissertation on lower secondary history and civics textbooks. Her experiment with adding a clearer voice as well as more causal links to textbook texts was repeated on a smaller scale by Ransgart (2003) with middle school textbooks. Reichenberg (2000) and Ransgart (2003) based their investigations on two American studies, Beck et al. (1991) and Beck et al. (1995), that demonstrated how comprehensibility can increase substantially by small altering of the text.

> Because textbooks are such a central part of the curriculum, learning in school is greatly influenced by the extent to which students understand their texts. […] Texts that facilitate a reader's ability to draw connections by making the nature of events and ideas and their relationships more apparent have been characterized as coherent. (Beck et al. 1995, p. 220)

Voice has been defined as 'qualities that enable the reader to view text as communication between an author and a reader'; when 'the author [is] speaking to the reader, or the author […] attempts to engage or involve the reader' (Wade et al. 1999, p. 199, 216). Beck et al. wanted to 'explore how texts might speak to readers in ways that promote engagement toward comprehension of central content' (1995, p. 225). To Wade et al. (1999), the concept

reader-text interest encompasses both ease of comprehension and writing style. As such, text qualities that facilitate comprehension cannot be separated from those that enhance interest, as far as learning is concerned. The present study, however, makes an attempt to separate resources for *explaining* from those for *engaging* in order to enable a more detailed analysis of them individually. Consequently, the analytical framework of linguistic resources presented below consists of these two parts.

There are similarities between the framework of engaging resources in this study and the notion of voice in previous research (e.g. Wade et al. 1999; Reichenberg 2000). Beck et al. define voice as *activity*, *orality,* and *connectivity* (e.g. by 'addressing the reader directly'), all qualities that can narrow the gap between text and reader and make texts engaging (1995, p. 225). In these previous studies, researchers have altered textbook texts to establish which measures increase the learning outcome, while the framework set up here aims to analyse the different ways in which this voice is lexicogrammatically realised in existent textbooks. The understanding of the interpersonal metafunction is furthermore deepened with concepts from Appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005; Folkeryd 2006; White 2015).

As for the selection of resources for explaining in this study, the similarity to previous research on textbook readability lies in the kinship between *coherence* and *cohesion*. Beck et al. (1991, 1995) rewrote textbook texts to make them more coherent by adding explicit links of cause and effect, a strategy further developed in a Swedish setting by Reichenberg (2000) and Ransgart (2003). The present study focuses on how words and clauses are woven together by different means of cohesion. Causal links can be found here as well but are interpreted within the resources of conjunctive cohesion, mainly that of enhancement. An additional factor that sets this study apart from the above-mentioned studies is the material. While previous research has analysed the presentation of facts in, for example, history textbooks for younger students, both L1 and L2, the present study aims to explore advice on academic writing in textbooks for older L2 students.

Finally, textbooks can be vital not only for their subject content but also as models for students' own non-fiction writing (Ekvall 2004; Strömquist 2004). For example, in the textbooks, students encounter linguistic resources typical of non-fiction writing that students rarely meet outside the school context (Shanahan and Shanahan 2008). In summary, a well-functioning textbook can be of great help in the classroom, but we need to better understand the support available through various linguistic resources and connect this understanding to their potential impact. Hence this study and the research question guiding it: *What linguistic resources are used in the textbooks to explain investigative writing and engage the SSL student in writing such texts?*

5. Material and method

As mentioned in Section 2, writing investigative texts is core content in upper secondary SSL course 2 and 3, which makes textbooks aimed at these two courses particularly interesting for this study. Six printed textbooks for upper secondary SSL, all available on the market in the early years of the 2020s, were selected (see the reference section and appendix section A).

Empirical data was delimited in two steps. First, all paragraphs of continuous textbook texts dealing with investigate writing were identified to construct a corpus. Second, to identify themes of relevance to the skills needed in the national writing test, these text

passages were coded following thematic analysis procedures (Braun and Clarke 2022). Six themes were identified (see appendix section B). From them, three themes were selected for linguistic analysis as they have a distinct connection to what is stated on writing instruction in the syllabi (SNAE 2011).

I.   Investigative text (e.g. its purpose, starting point, and structure)
II. Academic language (e.g. formality, objectivity, and adapting to the genre)
III. The use of sources (e.g. reference and quotation techniques)

Theme number I has a genre focus and assembles content that explicitly speaks about 'investigative' writing or concepts close to this, such as 'non-fiction' or 'scientific' writing. Theme II covers advice on language—how to manage academic prose. Theme III is about quoting and referencing sources.

Having established the themes as the sorting principle for the material, the analysis turned to the question of what linguistic resources are made use of to potentially scaffold the SSL student's learning process. As mentioned in Section 3, the ideational metafunction in SFL theory regulates what the text is about, its experiential meaning, while the interpersonal metafunction regulates its social meaning, the ways in which a text turns to its reader by functioning as a communicating voice (Martin and Rose 2008; Hållsten et al. 2013; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). These two metafunctions are essential in the search for what makes a text intelligible and inspiring, which is why they were chosen for this analysis of linguistic resources for explaining and engaging (Bezemer and Kress 2010; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Holmberg et al. 2019).

The selection of resources was organised into an analytical framework with two parts, one for identifying resources for explaining and one for resources for engaging. The first part of the framework for explaining resources aims to capture lexicogrammatical choices serving the ideational metafunction, detectable through various forms of cohesion (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Martin and Rose 2008; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014). The second part of the framework serves to analyse resources for engaging, that work to realise the interpersonal metafunction (Hellspong and Ledin 1997; Martin and White 2005; Folkeryd 2006; Martin and Rose 2008; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Holmberg 2019). All of these linguistic resources are presented below.

5.1. Lexical and conjunctive cohesion as resources for explaining

Cohesion is expressed by lexicogrammatical resources for making sense of the world by linking one semantic entity to another (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Wade et al. 1999; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Holmberg and Karlsson 2019). Lexical cohesion, usually demanding only one or a few words, connects entities through means like repetition, synonymy and contrast (Halliday and Hasan 1976; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Lindberg 2018). Conjunctive cohesion is a logico-semantic relationship between clauses, such as two main clauses or a main clause and a subordinate clause. Conjunctive cohesion is also called *expansions* because it expands the meaning of the clause by extending, enhancing or elaborating on it (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Holmberg and Karlsson 2019). Table 1 displays the types of cohesion applied in the analysis.

Table 1. Cohesive resources for explaining (based on Halliday and Matthiessen 2014).

Types of cohesion		Signification	Example of application
Lexical cohesion	Repetition	Exact or approximate repeating	Investigative text—investigative writing
	Synonymy	Alternative wording of the same content	Investigative text—a form of academic writing
	Contrast	Antithesis	Investigative as opposed to argumentative
Conjunctive cohesion—Expansion	Extension	Adds new information, alternative or exception	Academic prose is unequivocal and does not invite different interpretations.
	Enhancement	Adds circumstances such as time, place, cause, reason, condition, result	Ignoring reference rules when writing in academic genres means risking accusations of plagiarism.
	Elaboration	Restates, comments, exemplifies or specifies in greater detail	The style must be formal, without slang words and other everyday language.

5.2. Appraisal and addressing the reader as resources for engaging

As stated above (Section 3), resources for engaging with the reader are found within the interpersonal metafunction in SFL (Hellspong and Ledin 1997; Halliday and Matthiessen 2014; Hipkiss et al. 2018). Their purpose is to regulate social relationships in the context of situation, the way a text speaks to or interacts with its reader (Martin and Rose 2008). Two types of such engaging resources are foregrounded here, as displayed in Table 2. First, addressing the reader, for instance by use of the pronoun 'you' (Beck et al. 1995; Hellspong and Ledin 1997; Wade et al. 1999; Reichenberg 2000). Second, appraisal, evaluative language with the capacity for stirring emotions and connecting with the reader in dialogistic engagement (Martin and White 2005; Folkeryd 2006; Martin and Rose 2008; White 2015; Holmberg 2019). Expressions of appraisal fulfil the same interpersonal metafunction as addressing the reader, since it entails the author revealing some attitude or adjusting the evaluative volume through lexical choices. For practical reasons, a simplified version of appraisal theory has been used in this framework.

Table 2. Engaging through addressing the reader and appraisal (based on Hellspong and Ledin 1997; Folkeryd 2006; White 2015).

Interpersonal resources			Examples
Addressing the reader	Personal pronoun	2nd person singular	You, your, yourself
		2nd person plural	You, yourselves[6]
		1st person plural	We, us
	Imperative	Urging	Remember to use the author's last name!
		Prohibiting	Never use slang in academic writing!
	Question	Rhetorical	What is an investigative text?
		Authentical	Do you think this source can be trusted?
Appraisal: Attitude	Affect	A feeling or emotion is expressed	bored, proud, self-assured
	Judgement	Assessment of somebody's character or behaviour	trustworthy, meticulous, careless
	Appreciation	Evaluation of something according to a cultural norm	The ideal for academic prose is a completely clear and neutral tone.
Appraisal: Graduation		The evaluative volume is turned up or down	very, many, always, never, a little, completely

6. Results from the textbook analysis

To answer the research question about what linguistic resources are used to explain investigative writing and engage the SSL student in writing such texts, the three themes will be explored more in detail and one at a time: What linguistic resources are used to explain and engage the student in investigative writing (6.1), academic language (6.2) and how to handle sources (6.3)? The variation between these three themes is noteworthy. Table 3 provides an overview of how resources for explaining and engaging tend to vary according to the different themes.

Table 3. Explaining and engaging patterns.

Theme	Explaining resources	Engaging resources
I. Investigative text	definitions of the genre with lexical cohesion, mainly repetition and synonymy, and all forms of expansions	fewer and less intimate: addressing either with the pronoun 'you' as well as questions and imperatives (pattern 1) or avoiding 'you' with an impersonal 'one' or 'it' as subject (pattern 2)
II. Academic language	a variation of cohesion, often in the form of opposites (contrast or extension)	explicit: appraisal amplifying opposites, either also addressing with urging imperatives and 'you' (pattern 1) or using appraisal only (pattern 2)
III. The use of sources	dense and redundant cohesion, especially enhancement	rigorous and strong: urging or prohibiting imperatives, addressing with 'you', appraisal backing up explaining resources

6.1. Linguistic resources for explaining and engaging: investigative writing

Usually, the introduction to investigative writing is found at the start of the chapter. Two examples of how this is done will be analysed below, excerpt 1 from Si2 and excerpt 2 from Ns2. The design is similar also to introductions in Sv23 and Ko23: starting with more general definitions of the genre in an impersonal tone. In one of the textbooks, however, Fs3, resources for explaining what investigative writing means are not used until page 19 of the chapter.[4] Contrary to the traditional pattern for theme I, engaging resources dominate over explanatory ones. The proud statement in the chapter heading, repeated in small letters at the top of each page, 'You own the scientific text', also add to the prominent role of engaging resources in Fs3. The self-assuredness brought about by such a statement can be analysed as both appraisal (affect) and addressing the reader ('You'), thus combining two linguistic resources for engaging while refraining from the use of explaining resources.

In Fs2, written by the same authors but aiming at SSL course 2, the chapter does start with an explanation of investigative writing. Although plenty of explaining resources are used to do so, engaging resources are still very noticeable in the introduction, not least by a series of 'you'/'your' and by the proud, affect laden chapter heading repeated at the top of each page: 'You own the investigation'.

Unlike English, Swedish has different pronouns for the second person: 'du' means 'you' in the singular whereas 'ni' is equal to 'you' in the plural. Consequently, connotations of the singular 'you' are more intimate in Swedish and it is therefore common in Swedish non-fiction writing to avoid this singular 'you' by using impersonal pronouns such as 'one' or 'it'. Two different patterns regarding these linguistic choices were identified in the textbooks' introductions to investigative writing. In the first pattern, introductions

tended to employ plenty of 'you' (in the singular form) to engage the reader, as exemplified in excerpt 1. In the second pattern, textbooks introduced the topic without any 'you' at all, exemplified in excerpt 2. Table 4 displays the resources types for these two excerpts with the aid of the analytical framework. Italics are as in the original.

Table 4. Linguistic resources in two introductions.

Exc	Text sentence	Explaining	Engaging
1	This chapter is about how you write investigative texts.	elaboration specifying what investigative writing includes: to formulate questions, create structure, manage sources	addressing with personal pronoun and active verb: 'you write'
	You will learn how you formulate questions, create structure in your texts and manage sources. (Si2, p. 30)[7]		pronoun: 'You will learn how you … your texts'
2	**What is investigative text?**	repetition: 'investigative text' [in heading]—'investigative text'—'investigate'	rhetorical question in the heading [impersonal: 'one']
	An *investigative text* is a text where one tries to *investigate* a topic.		
	When one *investigates*, one first looks up, inquires into, facts about what one is going to write about.	repetition: 'investigates'; chain of synonyms: 'investigates'—'looks up'—'inquires into'	[impersonal: 3 x 'one']
	First one gathers facts from reliable sources, then one sorts out and compiles the information found.	enhancing time: 'First'—'then'; extending on the steps to take; synonymy: 'gathers facts'—'information found'	appreciation: 'reliable sources' [impersonal: 2 x 'one']
	Finally, one writes the text where one presents the results. (Ns2, p. 68)[8]	enhancing time: 'Finally'; elaboration of the text 'where one presents the results'	[impersonal: 2 x 'one']

In both excerpts 1 and 2, resources for explaining dominate, but the use of 'you' in excerpt 1 renders the style a more personal impression. The formal style in excerpt 2 comes of the relative lack of engaging resources; the few that are used do not signal proximity (rhetorical question, appreciation without graduation). However, having introduced investigative writing in this formal tone of voice, Ns2 on the next page switches to a more engaging style, with lots of 'you' and other means of addressing the reader as well as appraisal.

6.2. Linguistic resources for explaining and engaging: academic language

A distinctive feature of academic writing is the requirement for formal and objective language. All of the textbooks emphasize the importance of this. A recurrent pattern is explanatory descriptions of the distinctive character of academic prose by its opposite. This can be done either with contrasts, which is a lexical cohesion, or with adding of antitheses in an extension, a conjunctive cohesion. In these cases, resources for engaging help reinforce the message through appraisal (Table 5).

Table 5. Academic prose—opposites and appraisal.

Exc	Explanation/advice	Explaining	Engaging
3	Here too, the language must be formal and without slang words and preferably without abbreviations. (Ns2, p. 68)	extension adding antithesis: the opposite of formal language is slang and abbreviations	appreciation of the kind of language desired: 'preferably'
4	The language is factual, formal and without any evaluative words, explanations or comments. (Ko23, p. 71)	extension adding antithesis: the opposite of factual, formal language is evaluative, explaining or commenting	graduation: 'without any'
5	The ideal for a non-fiction text is that it is completely clear and, at best, completely unambiguous. (Sv23, p. 318)	implied contrast: 'unambiguous'	appreciation: 'ideal', 'clear', 'at best'; graduation: 2 x 'completely'

None of the excerpts in Table 5 addresses the reader as 'you' or in any other way, resulting in a serious tone. The same pattern was observable in excerpt 2 above. That is, however, not the only way to convey the message of objectivity. In excerpt 6–9 (Table 6), a different pattern can be identified when the reader is addressed in a personal way while receiving advice on not to be personal in academic prose.

Table 6. Linguistic resources—objective writing.

Exc	Wording of advice	Explaining	Engaging
6	Be careful with words like 'I' or 'we', as it can be interpreted as expressing opinions. (Si2, p. 45)	enhancement adding cause: 'as it can be …'; elaboration: 'words like 'I' or 'we' exemplify 'expressing opinions'	urging imperative: 'Be …'; affect: 'careful', 'expressing opinions'
7	Use a formal style, without I. Instead, write *it is considered, it can be said that* … (Ko23, p. 330)	extension adding antithesis + elaboration exemplifying: 'I' ≠ 'a formal style' = 'it is considered, it can be said that'	urging imperative: 'Use …', 'write …'
8	Since an investigative text should be objective and not subjective and present results—other people's results—you should write as little as possible in 'I form'. (Ns2, p. 69)	enhancement providing reason: 'Since …'; contrast: 'objective and not subjective'; repeating + elaboration specifying: 'results—other people's results'	graduation: 'as little as possible'; pronoun: '<u>you</u> should'
9	One of the main criteria for non-fiction, which is the fancy word for factual texts, is that the linguistic tone is precisely matter-of-fact. What is meant by that is that you as the writer are completely absent from the text. (Fs3, p. 141)[9]	chain of synonyms + repetition: 'non-fiction'—'factual texts'—'tone is … matter-of-fact'—'the text'; elaboration specifying: 'What is meant by that is that you as the writer …'	appreciation: 'fancy word'; graduation: 'main', 'precisely', 'completely'; pronoun: '<u>you</u> as the writer'

At the university level, it is a matter of debate whether or not to use the pronoun *I* in academic writing (Taylor and Goodall 2019). Textbooks for upper secondary school may need to simplify the issue to provide clear advice, as can be seen in Table 6. The excerpts about objective writing illustrate how explaining and engaging linguistic resources work side by side, intertwined in the same wordings yet distinguishable by their different functions. In excerpts 6, 7, and 8 cohesive resources for explaining are reinforced by addressing the reader and appraisal. The same could be said for excerpt 9, if explaining resources were more in line with the engaging ones. Potential tensions between explaining and engaging will be discussed in the concluding section.

6.3. Linguistic resources for explaining and engaging: the use of sources

Related to advice on an uncommitted, precise and objective academic language is the issue of how to handle sources correctly. All six textbooks emphasise the importance of first finding and then citing sources, but some of them seem to presuppose that students already know what a source is. By now all students *should* know, since this is not their first course in upper secondary SSL, but if they don't and their textbook doesn't offer a clear explanation either, it will be up to the teacher to anticipate and deal with this knowledge gap. One of the textbooks, however, provides this simple yet efficient explanation:

(10) To be able to answer the question, you need sources, i.e. information of various kinds. (Si2, p. 33)

Here, the term 'sources' is explained with a synonym, 'information of various kinds', preceded by 'i.e.' a 'that is' to tell the reader that a synonym will follow. The term 'sources' carries the same original, concrete meaning of 'wells' both in Swedish and English.[5] It might not be a BICS word to students nowadays when water flows from taps, but when it is used in an abstract, metaphoric sense, it is a CALP word (Cummins 1979).

When the textbook authors give advice on how to handle sources, the level of engagement rises. The words in bold or italics in excerpts 11 and 12 in Table 7 are as in the original and amplify the engagement.

Table 7. Handling sources.

Exc	Text sentence	Explaining	Engaging
11	The level of linguistic style in an investigative text should be **factual** so that it is not noticeable what you yourself think about what you are writing about.	Extension adding antithesis: 'factual' ≠ 'noticeable what you yourself think'; enhancement providing result: 'so that it is not …'	Pronoun: '<u>you yourself</u> … <u>you</u>'
	It is important that you **neutrally**, in your own words, reproduce the most important things in the sources you use.	Extension: 'neutrally, in your own words, reproduce … things in the sources you use'	Appreciation with graduation: 'important … the most important'; pronoun: '<u>you</u> … <u>your</u> own … <u>you</u>'
	You do this by using **neutral attributive tags** so that it is heard that you are reproducing what someone else said or wrote, without mixing yourself in. (Fs2, p. 103)	Elaboration of how to implement advice on neutrality above; enhancement of result: 'so that it is heard …'; repetition: 'reproduce' (above)—'reproducing'; contrast: 'someone else' ≠ 'yourself'	Pronoun: '<u>you</u> … <u>you</u> … <u>yourself</u>'
12	Note that you must always […] enter the author's name *either* with the full name (first name and last name), *or* with just the last name in an attributive tag.	Elaboration + repetition: 'author's name—full name—first name and last name—last name'	Imperative + pronoun: 'note that <u>you</u> must'; graduation: 'always'
	Never use the **first name alone** […]	Elaboration exemplifying bad use	Prohibiting imperative with graduation: 'never use'
	It gives a disingenuous impression and can make it sound like you know the person you are referring to. (Ns2, p. 72)	Enhancement of consequences: 'it gives a disingenuous impression … sound like you know …'; extension: 'and can make it sound …'; repetition + contrast: 'you' ≠ 'the person you are referring to'	Appreciation (of the impression but implicitly also judgment of the behaviour): 'disingenuous'; pronoun: 2 x '<u>you</u>' while possibly scaring the reader to not believe '<u>you</u>' have the same prestige as the source

Overall, the advice on handling sources holds a more rigorous, even authoritarian tone than what was the case with theme I and II. If students ignore the rules, the consequences are depicted as severe. Worst of all is to be found guilty of plagiarism. In excerpt 13, two key words are in italics, which also adds to the engagement. Though this last excerpt uses several resources for engaging, both by addressing the reader and by appraisal, it is towards the end significantly heavier in explaining than in engaging (Table 8).

The seriousness in excerpt 13 is unmistakable, but what also stands out is the variety of tools from the linguistic inventory used to explain and engage. Here, the support provided to the L2 student seeking to understand how to handle referencing in academic writing, is expressed through redundant explaining resources. Engaging resources, in turn, work to back up the explanation.

Table 8. Handling sources—an extended example.

Exc	Text sentence	Explaining	Engaging
13	**Write in your own words** [subheading]	Repetition: 2 x 'write in your own words'	Urging imperative: 'Write …'; pronoun: 'your own'
	It is important that you write your text in your own words.		Appreciation: 'important'; pronoun: 'you'—'your text'—'your own'
	However, that doesn't mean you have to come up with everything yourself.	Elaboration/contrast: 'to come up with everything yourself'	Pronoun: 'you'—'yourself'
	It just means that you should formulate yourself independently.	Elaboration/synonymy: 'formulate yourself independently'	Pronoun: 'you should'—'yourself'; appreciation: 'independently'
	Picking large parts of sentences or entire sentences from another text without marking it as a *quote* and making a source reference is called *plagiarism*.	Elaboration/chain of synonyms: 'Picking … sentences from another text' = 'plagiarism' = 'to steal other people's wordings and ideas'; elaboration: 'without marking it …'; repetition: 'plagiarism'—'plagiarise'; contrast: 'quote' ≠ 'plagiarism'; synonymy: 'sentences'—'wordings and ideas'	Negative appreciation/ judgement with graduation: 'Picking large parts … entire'
	To plagiarise is to steal other people's wordings and ideas. (Sv23, p. 330)		Judgement: this behaviour, 'to steal', is disliked

7. Discussion

The aim of this study has been to explore linguistic resources used in passages on investigative writing in textbooks targeting upper secondary SSL students. To achieve this, an analytical framework comprising concepts from SFL was constructed. Research showing that two central aspects of textbooks are to be intelligible and inspiring (Reichenberg 2000; Ransgart 2003; Ekvall 2004) underpin the framework, where these aspects are operationalised as resources for explaining (ideational metafunction) and resources for engaging (interpersonal metafunction).

Three of the themes identified in the data were analysed. The first theme was *investigative text*, e.g. passages about its purpose, starting point and structure. With the aid of the analytical framework, the analysis revealed that chapters about investigative writing typically start with an introduction to the genre (6.1). Resources for explaining dominate over resources for engaging in this first theme, resulting in a formal tone. One textbook does not explain investigative writing until page 19 of the chapter, which affects the conditions for functional teaching. The same textbook also relies heavily on engaging resources, sometimes leaving the reader with more cheering on than useful advice about writing. This can have implications for the quality of the support the SSL student preparing for the national writing test will get. In light of Macken-Horarik (2006) reasoning about how expectations of the task are decisive for the student's performance, the strategy of mostly using engaging resources cannot be considered very helpful.

The second theme dealt with *academic language*, e.g. advice on formality, objectivity and adapting one's prose to the demands of the genre. This theme seemed to call for more engaging resources as well as a more severe tone of voice (6.2). All six textbooks show this pattern but there are differences regarding which ones of the engaging resources are used. When teaching the student to avoid the pronoun 'I' in academic writing, some textbooks repeatedly address the reader with 'you'. This might appear contradictory when the intention is to discourage personal pronouns. For instance, excerpt 9 exhort that 'you as the writer

are completely absent from the text'. Such a tension, or double message, could influence how the textbook text acts as a model for students' own writing (Strömquist 2004) and therefore would be a good thing for the teacher to discuss in class. Unless the teacher highlights such a potential tension between textbook content (the ideational metafunction) and style (the interpersonal metafunction), the support for the students' learning will be insufficient, even more so if they don't meet proper academic prose, free from personal pronouns and imperatives, in other settings.

The third theme was about *the use of sources*, with advice on referencing. This theme displays an even more rigorous tone of voice, presenting rules for reference and quotation techniques as if such rules were more important than any other aspect of academic writing (6.3). It is an impression that emanates from the choice of engaging resources, where some of the textbooks embed the advice in urging or prohibiting imperatives, personal pronouns, and appraisal to the point that readers might actually get scared of making mistakes and thereby get inhibited in their writing process. Teachers will have to mitigate this and also show examples of how to handle sources in practice. Such instances of exemplary academic writing are not common in the data. Following Jou (2017), a textbook that provides plenty of contexts is a better support for multilingual students.

Drawing attention to the specific meaning of a word in this academic writing, as done in excerpt 10, is unusual: 'To be able to answer the question, you need sources, i.e. information of various kinds.' By adding the synonym, the textbook authors signal the importance of understanding the word in this specific, CALP way (Lindberg 2018). Synonymy is thereby used as a resource not only to explain main concepts but also to highlight what the reader should pay attention to, unveiling CALP words as being different from their BICS twin. Explicit explanations of everyday BICS concepts that in an academic context take on new CALP meanings are extra valuable to the multilingual student (Cummins 1979; Lindberg 2018). Since the use of such resources for explaining with cohesion vary substantially between the textbooks in this study, it is also worth considering that students usually have access to one textbook only.

The present study identifies a potential risk that resources for engaging outweigh resources for explaining, thus disrupting comprehension. Learning academic writing from a textbook that leans heavily on an engaging voice, urging and warning in an intimate tone, can have implications for the learning outcome. As has been stated in previous research, a clearer voice, connecting the author to the reader, will make the text more readable (Beck et al. 1995; Wade et al. 1999; Reichenberg 2000). The present study partially confirms this but also underlines how resources for engaging are not always unproblematic, especially when they seem to pull in another direction than the explanations. Textbook authors can avoid unnecessary tensions by using linguistic resources for explaining in a deliberate and redundant way, thoughtfully unpacking concepts belonging to the academic realm. L2 students preparing for a high-stakes writing test will then be able to find valuable support in their textbook.

The methodological contribution of this study consists of trying out an analytical framework to identify linguistic resources brought into play when textbooks explain and engage. The results also have a bearing on teachers' work because this offers a more systematic way of discussing textbook qualities. Thinking about textbook characteristics in terms of their functionality, as done in this study, makes it easier to identify aspects in a text that are essential for understanding.

To support their students' learning process, teachers need to read textbooks critically, with attention to *how* the text explains and engages. With the aid of the analytical framework presented here, which could be used by teachers as a toolbox for textbook analysis, it becomes possible to see how the linguistic repertoire is stretched in different directions, placing more emphasis on some resources and less on others. Having made such an analysis of the textbook's use of resources to explain and engage, the teacher will be better prepared not only to choose and use but to compensate for the shortcomings and build on the strengths of textbooks.

Notes

1. The term 'investigative' writing is used here since it is the official translation of the Swedish 'utredande text' (SNAE 2011).
2. As for the school year 2023–2024, 43.4% of SSL teachers in upper secondary school and 45.7% in adult education on upper secondary level were reported as qualified. These numbers can be compared to those of Swe, 89.7% resp. 74.8% (SNAE 2025).
3. The excerpts in the booklet are however not academic in the sense that they could fully serve as models for the investigative essay to be produced. Instead, these texts are collected from newspapers and popular science books, though the test essay must be written in a more formal, academic style (Hillbom 2022).
4. The 18 pages preceding the explaining passages are devoted to a 'model assignment' resembling the one in the national test, with a task formulation, five different newspaper articles that constitute the sources and three examples of student essays based on these sources, commented on and assessed according to the knowledge requirements for SSL course 3.
5. 'Källor' in Swedish = 'sources' in English.
6. In Swedish, second person singular ('du') and second person plural ('ni') are not the same pronoun. The plural 'ni' is sometimes used as a polite form when addressing a single person but since that form also implies distance from the recipient, it would not appear in educational material. See also appendix section C.
7. These two sentences actually contain one more *you/your/yourself*, five in total, since 'learn' is a reflexive verb in Swedish (cf. Swedish original in the appendix section D).
8. Data extracts are translated from Swedish by the author. See appendix for original Swedish wordings.
9. The term 'main criteria' is explained at the bottom of the page with the synonym 'most important requirements'.

Disclosure statement

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