

THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNIVERSITY:  
A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

by

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## ABSTRACT

### THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNIVERSITY: A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

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This study examines the negotiation of interpersonal meaning in the language of university administrators in their communications with students. The three texts in this study were written by the president of a large university to the student body and concern a controversy which arose on campus. The study uses Systemic Functional Grammar to examine how the language of the texts constructs interpersonal relationships between administration and students, as well as the extent to which such language changes when significant contextual issues become a factor. Specifically, in this study data analysis reveals that the language used changes in different contexts in an effort to maintain a positive interpersonal relationship between the university and the students in light of negative contextual factors. These findings suggest that the university values its

relationship with the students and desires to preserve a delicate balance of authority and solidarity, even in challenging situations.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

A university is an organization which is a blend of many different environments: it is a place of learning, a place of community, and even a place of politics. The stated mission of the university focused upon in this paper is “the advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of excellence.” This is perhaps the clearest objective of any educational institution and is understandably its primary purpose. This university’s mission statement also emphasizes the diversity of its student body, necessitating an atmosphere of respect and calling for unity in the university community. This illustrates the desire to promote relationships of trust, respect and solidarity between university faculty, staff and students.

However, a university is also a place of politics due to the way it must function in order to be successful. The administration of a university exists to serve and meet the needs of the students, but at the same time is an authoritative power with the responsibility of decision-making. The administrative staff is ultimately responsible for student success and the efficiency and quality of the institution as a whole. Because of this, the administration must create rules, policies and procedures which students must follow. They must keep the needs and desires of the students in mind at all times, but must also fill the role of an authoritative body to provide order and direction. In this

sense, power and authority provide necessary balance for maintaining an efficient organization and a satisfied community.

Power and authority can be conveyed in discourse; this is a commonly researched topic in linguistics (e.g. Fairclough, 1989; Fowler & Kress 1979; Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Individuals in a position of some power communicate authority in the spoken and written texts they produce. These concepts are particularly evident in institutional texts. In the case of the university, the texts produced by those individuals in power must demonstrate authority but must also suggest a cooperative, positive relationship with the student. Kress (1989) writes:

The institution of education is constituted around difference, a difference of knowledge, power, age, and frequently one of class. All the texts which are produced within the education system therefore are motivated by difference.  
(p. 18)

While achieving this balance may be easy enough in routine discourse, some situations which arise may prove to be more difficult to manage. Dealing with serious issues and working through periods of transition on a university campus can be a source of frustration and unease; it is the responsibility of the president and university administration to ensure the process is handled smoothly. The administration must uphold authority while at the same time maintaining a positive relationship with students.

The present study, therefore, examines power and authority as instantiated in institutional texts generated by university administration. Specifically, the objective of this study is to examine (a) how the language of texts addressed to students constructs interpersonal relationships between administration and students, and (b) the extent to which such language changes when significant contextual issues become a factor. In

order to address this objective, I draw upon insights from the Hallidayan framework known as Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), analyzing the interpersonal relationships between administration and students as presented in texts produced by the university president. The texts included in this study address an important issue which arose on the campus of a large state university in the south. An SFG analysis of these texts provides insight into the ways in which the language of the university changes or progresses in response to contextual factors. Specifically, in this study data analysis reveals that the language used changes in different contexts in an effort to maintain a positive interpersonal relationship between the university and the students in light of negative contextual factors. These findings suggest that the university values its relationship with the students and desires to preserve the delicate balance of authority and solidarity, even in challenging situations.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

At its very essence, language can be defined as a tool used for the communication of meaning. However, there is much more than simple lexical or grammatical meaning encoded in text. People use language to achieve goals and express ideas. Through language, individuals establish and maintain social identity and relationships. According to Thompson (2004):

We use language to talk about our experience of the world, including the worlds in our own minds, to describe events and states and the entities involved in them. We also use language to interact with other people, to establish and maintain relations with them, to influence their behaviour, to express our own viewpoint on things in the world, and to elicit or change theirs. (p. 30)

Analyzing texts can provide insight into an individual's communicative objectives and beliefs about the world, as well as establish how the individual positions himself or herself in relation to others.

A well-researched area in regard to participant roles and relationships is institutional texts. Institutional language is used in the everyday interactions we have with organizations in the workplace, at school, at the doctor's office, etc. Both the representatives and 'clients' of these institutions use language to accomplish goals and tasks relevant to that setting. According to Drew & Sorjonen (1997):

The institutionality of dialogue is constituted by participants through their orientation to relevant institutional roles and identities, and the particular responsibilities and duties associated with those roles; and through their production and management of institutionally relevant tasks and activities.  
(p. 94)

In essence, participants understand the role they play in a particular setting, including their position relative to other participants, and use language appropriate to that setting. This differs from non-institutional texts, in which there is a less rigid, institutionally-defined demand on a participant to use language in a particular way in all settings and contexts. For example, in one type of institutional setting, that of a doctor's visit, doctors and patients have a fairly prescribed way of using language to communicate with each other (Ainsworth-Vaughn, 2001). In an example of a non-institutional setting, such as an interaction between friends, there is less of a prescribed use of language. While the participants use language appropriately according to their relative roles, exactly how they use language, what they say, and the goals they wish to accomplish will vary greatly from one context to the next. In institutional contexts, the roles, identities and responsibilities of the participants, what Goffman (1959) calls "rights and obligations" (p. 27), are more fixed. The language features of institutional talk reflect the rigid nature of institutional roles and identities.

Because the participants in institutional dialogue fill certain roles, it could be expected that there will be differences in power and social status between them. As Goffman (1959) defines it, role is the "enactment of rights and duties attached to a given status" (p. 16). The representatives of organizations will use language in ways appropriate to their given role and the setting. For example, the greater the social power

distance, the more acceptable it is for the person in power to use impersonal language (Scollon & Scollon, 1995).

Fowler & Kress (1979) illustrate this idea by doing a comparative analysis of the rules and regulations of a swimming club and an excerpt from a university catalog. The swimming club consisted of a group of families with young children learning how to swim. The rules of the club were put together by the parents in the group and were written in a personal style and friendly tone, while at the same time clearly stating the importance of the rules. The university catalog excerpt is quite different from the swimming club rules in that it is more direct and impersonal. Some of the key features in the catalog excerpt include a lack of agency on the part of the university, nominalization, passivization and directness. The impersonal nature of the catalog language was fitting for its setting, as was the less formal language of the swimming club rules. When there is social distance or a power difference between participants in the context of institutional discourse, the participants are aware of their roles and use language appropriately. Nichols (1984) explains that language “can give us insight into the consensual relationships that obtain between participants in the speech events as to their relative positions on the social scale at any particular time and place” (p. 24).

Iedema (1997) studied the linguistic structure of authority in the language of bureaucratic-administrative settings. Specifically, he examined directives (commands) and how they are realized in memos from persons in positions of power to the staff members under them. The structure of these directives illustrates what Iedema (1997) calls ‘shouldness’ (p. 73): the constraint of administrative and bureaucratic practices and

institutions on the ways in which participants in these settings function and communicate. He found that administrative texts relying heavily on these directives are formal and impersonal, not taking advantage of interpersonal connections. However, other administrative texts he examined which were more hortatory in style were written at a more personal level, encouraging others to act as opposed to commanding them to act. Iedema argues that this complexity in administrative texts is functional; on one level, those in authority want to be more accessible to their staff, but at the same time they need to maintain their authority in order to effectively run their organization.

The results of the research performed by Fowler & Kress illustrate that context is a key factor in language choices. According to Halliday (1994), language can only be understood by examining the ways in which it is used in certain contexts, both cultural and situational. Speakers use certain configurations of linguistic resources in certain contexts, which Eggins (1994) summarizes as “the impact of dimensions of the immediate context of situation of a language event on the way language is used” (p. 9). The dimensions she is referring to include the purpose or topic of a text; the style of the text, which is determined by the roles of the participants; and the means in which the text is expressed, either spoken or written. All these dimensions have an effect on the language choices a speaker makes, and it follows that changing contexts will cause a speaker to adjust his or her language appropriately.

Context therefore directly affects the language choices a speaker makes in any given setting. Iedema’s research reveals that even in institutional settings, participants still have language choices they can make which will affect the relationship they have

with other participants in that setting. In other words, the participants use language in a fairly prescribed way, but they do have some flexibility when establishing interpersonal relationships with other participants. This thesis will address the negotiation of interpersonal meaning in texts written by people in positions of authority to those under them. While it is understood that authority figures use language in certain ways to accomplish certain goals and establish their roles in relation to other participants, the specific strategies they use can vary, particularly in response to changing contextual factors. The use of varying strategies in light of changing context, specifically in the setting of a university, has not been discussed a great deal in previous scholarly literature and this thesis will provide additional research in this area. A university is a wonderfully complex environment which provides an excellent source of material for research in language choices and interpersonal meaning in texts.

The complexity found in university texts is revealed through an analysis using Systemic Functional Grammar. The central notion of SFG is that language is a system of choices which can be utilized by speakers to convey certain messages and ideas above the level of the individual utterance. An analysis using SFG highlights functional aspects of a text not directly stated, such as the speaker's intentions, beliefs and social identity. The purpose of this study is to analyze selected texts using Systemic Functional Grammar to examine (a) how the language used by university administration initially establishes interpersonal meaning; and (b) the extent to which the language progresses or changes in response to contextual factors.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Systemic Functional Grammar is a grammar model developed by M.A.K. Halliday (1994) which takes a functional approach to grammar, analyzing language as a social-semiotic of communicative meaning-making. Language and interaction are defined by context and this model seeks to show how contextual meaning is expressed in grammar. SFG is 'systemic' in that grammar consists of a series of choices that can be made in order to express ideas; in other words, language represents a system network within which language choices are meaningful in relation to other choices that are suppressed. It is 'functional' in that the systems achieve certain functions which are realized in the lexico-grammar of the language.

There are three 'metafunctions' formulated by Halliday (1994) which form the basic foundation on which Systemic Functional Grammar is based. Metafunctions are broadly-categorized fundamental functions which each concern a different kind of meaning within grammatical clauses. The 'experiential' metafunction includes the happenings, or the topic, of a text. An analysis from this perspective consists of examining the system of TRANSITIVITY realized as 'processes' in a verb phrase constituent and its associated participants. There are several kinds of processes and

participant types which are given different functional labels according to their role in a clause. The four main types of process are material, mental, relational and verbal, which each have assigned participants relating to each other by means of the process. The ‘interpersonal’ metafunction involves the structure of clausal elements as they manage the interpersonal relationship between speaker and addressee and achieve the communicative purpose of a text. The MOOD realizes this metafunction and elements of modality, tense and polarity are taken into account. The ‘textual’ metafunction organizes clauses as messages realized by speakers who arrange the ways in which the various groups and phrases in the clause are ordered with the THEME system.

Systemic Functional Grammar is a useful tool for studying language because it provides insight into the language choices that underlie text production and comprehension. It also helps to determine the possible reasons behind textual choices in light of the choices that were suppressed. Further, an interpretation of these individual choices can only be understood as contributing to the collective whole of the text, not solely as individual utterances contributing to the meanings in specific clauses.

An area in which SFG becomes a particularly useful tool is institutional language. One recent example of an SFG analysis of institutional text is a study conducted in the medical field by Kealley, Smith, and Winsor (2004). Kealley, et al. use Systemic Functional Grammar in an analysis of pamphlets written by nurses to give to their patients’ relatives. The purpose of the pamphlets is to empower the relatives by giving them information, but Kealley, et al. hypothesize that the nurses have written them in such a way as to maintain their own authority. The researchers specifically examine the

text through the interpersonal metafunction in order to determine how the text constructs the identities of the speakers and addressees. Some of the categories they identify in their analysis are speech functions, modality and agency. These aspects of SFG were particularly useful in the authors' study in that they clearly show how the speakers leave little room for addressees to challenge what they say. Modality usually allows the addressee to question and negotiate what is said, but the writers of these pamphlets position themselves and the addressees so that their own authority is not at risk.

The speaker-addressee relationship is an important consideration when doing a Systemic Functional Grammar analysis. Just as speakers have their audience in mind when addressing them face-to-face, writers generally have an intended audience in mind when they produce a written text, and their language is altered to fit the style they believe they should use when addressing that particular audience. There are differences between spoken and written language, of course, but the idea is that the style of writing will match the intended audience. For example, an executive of a large company would not use the same language when writing memos to his employees and when writing a letter to a family member.

An SFG analysis can reveal that certain roles are constructed for the speaker and addressee. According to Halliday & Hasan (1989), texts establish identities for the participants and their role relationships to each other. Though there are many factors involved in determining identity, the concept of power is often a factor in the construction of role relationships in text. As seen in the example from Kealley, et al., the issues of power and authority are often important aspects of institutional language.

### 3.1 Research Questions

My first research question involves the initial establishment of interpersonal meaning, or the relationships constructed between the speaker and addressee; in the case of the texts of this study, the university and student body. Because these texts are written from the president directly to the students, they are an excellent source for analyzing role construction.

My second question involves changes in language which may take place due to changing contextual factors. The texts in this study concern an important issue which occurred at the university and follow a short sequence of events which show a change in the language choices made by the university president.

### 3.2 Data Collection

#### *3.2.1 Texts*

The texts chosen for this study include letters and statements written by the president<sup>1</sup> of a large state university in the south<sup>2</sup> to the university's student body. The texts address a controversial issue on campus surrounding the 'Hall of Flags'. The Hall of Flags was a display of 123 national flags in the atrium of one of the Engineering buildings. The flags represented the various countries of origin of the university's Engineering students and was a symbol of the university's diversity. However, it became a symbol of controversy in 2006 when some Vietnamese-Americans objected to the hanging of the national flag of Vietnam. Prior to the controversy, two Vietnamese flags

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<sup>1</sup> It is not determined if the president is the author, but the fact that he signed and approved the texts shows that he approved of the language choices which were made.

<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms are used in place of the university name and other identifiers in the texts.

were displayed in the Hall of Flags: the Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom Flag, which represented Vietnamese-American students, and the flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which represented international students from Vietnam. In April 2006, Vietnamese-American students and their community strongly protested the hanging of the national flag. They viewed it as a political symbol, one that brought painful memories of oppression and tragedy.

Text 1 is an editorial released in the student newspaper on April 28<sup>th</sup> which defended the spirit of the Hall of Flags. In it, the president maintained that the university was not endorsing the politics or policies of any of the countries represented in the Hall of Flags, but merely supporting students from those countries. The president assured students that both Vietnamese flags would remain on display. Two days later, thousands of Vietnamese-Americans marched in protest at the university. As a result of this and other pressures, the president had the flags removed and released an immediate statement on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Included as Text 2, this statement informed students of the removal of the flags with a brief explanation of the reasons behind the president's decision. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, he wrote a more in-depth letter to the student newspaper, included as Text 3, concerning the removal of the flags and his plans for finding ways to recognize and celebrate the campus' diversity in the future.

### *3.2.2 Context*

The president of the university at the time of this controversy was fairly new; he had only accepted the position two years prior, in February 2004. Additionally, he had little experience in university administration. He had served as a dean at a different

university for seven years before coming to this university, but his background was in business and law. His degrees were in law and public administration, and unlike many university presidents, he did not hold a doctoral degree.

The university is a public institution in the heart of a large metropolitan area. According to a university fact book, the student body consisted of almost 25,000 students in 2006. This student body is very diverse, including large populations of minority, international and non-traditional students. The university has many organizations and programs in place to both celebrate diversity and promote unity on campus. The mission statement of the university includes the following paragraph:

The mission of a university can be achieved only when its students, faculty, staff, and administrators value and promote free expression in an atmosphere of tolerance, responsibility, and trust. The University regards these attributes as prerequisites for any community of learners and vigilantly strives to maintain them.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

To discover the answers to the research questions stated previously, Halliday's interpersonal metafunction will be key, but other aspects of the Hallidayan framework will also be considered. Specifically, with regard to these texts, I focus on the following: (a) the MOOD system, including an analysis of Subject-Mood-Adjunct structures and the speech functions/roles that such structures establish; (b) the lexical choices involved in establishing appraisal; and (c) the extent to which Agency and transitivity contribute to interpersonal meanings. Excerpts from the analyzed texts included below are *italicized* (see Appendix A).

### 3.3.1 Structure of the MOOD

An understanding of the MOOD system aids in an analysis of the interpersonal meaning established in these texts. MOOD, consisting of Subject and Finite, is an essential part of the interpersonal approach (Thompson, 2004). The Subject of the MOOD is similar to the subject of traditional grammar, but is interpreted functionally; in other words, the Subject is what a clause is ‘about’. The Finite is defined as “the first functional element of the verbal group” (Thompson, 2004:49). It reveals tense, modality and negative or positive polarity in a clause. The Finite is most easily identified in clauses containing an auxiliary. The auxiliary, being the first functional element of the verbal group, is itself the Finite, as in the following examples:

*They had become*

*The university will continue to display*

The part of the verbal group after the Finite element is called the Predicator. The Predicator is located in the RESIDUE, which includes all of the elements of the clause outside of the MOOD. In the above examples, *become* and *continue to display* are Predicators.

Not all clauses have an auxiliary as an easily identifiable Finite. In simple present or simple past tense verbs, the Finite becomes ‘fused’ with the lexical verb:

*we established the Hall of Flags*

*a heated controversy emerged*

In these examples, *established* and *emerged* do not have a preceding auxiliary; they therefore contain the functional element of the Finite within them. The fact that each of

these verbs consists of two functional elements can be illustrated by adding a tag question:

*we established the Hall of Flags, didn't we?*

*a heated controversy emerged, didn't it?*

A tag question repeats the MOOD elements of a given clause, changing the Subject to a pronoun and making the Finite explicit. Therefore, even a Finite fused with the lexical verb in a clause will be made clear in a tag question. The tag questions for the examples above reveal a 'hidden' verbal operator, a form of 'do'. Even though it is not visibly present in the clause, it is still contributing to the MOOD by assigning tense to the lexical verb.

The structure of the MOOD reveals the clausal mood (declarative, imperative, etc.). Though the traditional notion of clausal mood is different from the functional MOOD, they do contribute to each other. The presence and ordering of MOOD elements determine traditional mood choices. For example (MOOD elements underlined):

Subject^Finite	declarative	<i><u>I have</u> removed all 123 flags</i>
Finite^Subject	yes/no interrogative	<i>how <u>do we</u> decide</i>
No Subject or Finite	unmarked imperative	<i><u>please</u> write to me</i>

### 3.3.2 Speech Functions

Speech functions illustrate the communicative exchange in a particular utterance and can be defined as the specific positions or identities that are established by this exchange through the MOOD structure of clausal elements. In communication, we are either giving or demanding either information or goods-and-services. Therefore, there are four main speech functions (Eggins, 1994:150):



statement	giving information
question	demanding information
command	demanding goods-and-services
offer	giving goods-and-services

Speech functions are often evident in the mood selection of a particular clause. Statements are typically associated with declarative clauses, questions with interrogatives and commands with imperatives. Offers are not associated with a particular mood and can be expressed in a number of ways. Take the following examples:

*I have removed all 123 flags*

*how do we decide*

*If you have a question, comment or idea... please write to me*

The first example is a clause in the declarative mood, evidenced by the Subject^Finite ordering of the MOOD elements. As expected, this clause has the speech function of a statement; the speaker is presenting information to the addressee. The second example is an interrogative clause, shown by the Finite^Subject ordering of the MOOD elements. It has the anticipated speech function of a question; the speaker is requesting information. The third example is an unmarked imperative clause; it lacks a Subject and Finite. However, its speech function is somewhat ambiguous. The imperative mood is the least marked way to carry out the speech function of a command, which involves demanding goods and services. In this example, the speaker is requesting action on the part of the addressee, which seems to indicate that it is a command. However, the speaker is also making it clear that he wants to hear what the addressee has to say and is making himself available to the addressee. In this way, the speaker is offering goods and services, so it is

feasible that this could be classified as an offer. In these situations, context is key for determining interpersonal meaning.

Speech functions are important to this study because they help reveal speakers' intentions (i.e., to give information or demand goods-and-services in some way) and, more importantly, what response speakers consequently anticipate from addressees. Additionally, when a speech function appears in an atypical or highly marked way, such as a command in the form of a declarative, there may be some deeper meaning involved. All this helps to form the speaker-addressee relationship by setting up and establishing social positions.

### *3.3.3 Modality*

Modality takes into account the intermediate states between an absolutely positive or negative clause. It can be expressed in the verbal group with verbal operators such as *will*, *should*, *can*, etc. Modality can also be expressed through Modal Adjuncts. Unlike other types of Adjuncts, Modal Adjuncts occur with the Subject and Finite in the MOOD. They express modality elements of probability, degree, intensity, and more.

In between the polar opposites of 'yes' and 'no', there are varying degrees of probability, usuality, obligation and inclination (Eggins, 1994). The first two have to do with the exchange of information: how likely the information is to be true and how frequently it is true, which can be expressed through modalization. The second two have to do with the exchange of goods-and-services: how obligated the other person is to perform the command and how willing the speaker is to fulfill an offer, which can be expressed through modulation. All these types of modality can be expressed in different

ways which can lean towards either the positive or negative end of the polarity continuum. This concept is the idea of modal commitment, which is the degree to which a speaker is committed to the validity of his or her utterance. Below are some examples of different levels of modal commitment in clauses concerning probability and obligation.

Table 3.1 Modal values

	Modalization – probability	Modulation – obligation
High	That must be Tim.	You must wash the dishes.
Median	I will probably attend.	You should have lunch with her.
Low	Cyndi might come with us.	You can leave after the meeting.

Modality can also be examined in light of how much responsibility the speaker accepts for the attitude or opinion being expressed. The speaker's view can be objective, apparently a quality of itself, or subjective, encoding the speaker's own attitude. The modality elements can be explicit, expressed in a separate clause, or implicit, expressed in the same clause as the main verbal process. These are the four degrees of modal responsibility and a proposed effect of each (Kealley, Smith & Winsor, 2004:122):

explicit subjective	speakers' authority at risk
implicit subjective	speakers' assessment, not authority, at risk
explicit objective	dislocates speakers from assessment and the source is not open to challenge
implicit objective	dislocates speakers from assessment

The proposed effects will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. The examples below illustrate the degrees of modal responsibility in clauses concerning probability and obligation.

Table 3.2 Modal responsibility

	Modalization – probability	Modulation – obligation
Explicit Subjective	I think we should take the train.	I suggest that you get to work.
Implicit Subjective	Miles might sleep all day.	You should call me.
Explicit Objective	It's likely that she'll come.	It's necessary that we cooperate.
Implicit Objective	Brian will probably sell the car.	More time will be needed.

A modality analysis of the texts will uncover various degrees of modal commitment and responsibility on the part of the university president in his communications to the students.

#### 3.3.4 *Appraisal*

An additional aspect of the interpersonal metafunction is that of appraisal. Appraisal has less to do with grammatical issues than it does lexical choices, but it is still an important part of role construction and determining speaker-addressee relationships. Appraisal is basically the speaker's evaluation of whether a participant, action, situation, etc. is good or bad (Thompson, 2004). Martin (2000) argues that appraisal values can be grouped together in order to create a more visible interpretation of a speaker's attitudes. This will contribute significantly to the speaker-addressee relationship, and trends in the appraisal values of the university and the student body in the texts will be examined.

#### 3.3.5 *Agency and TRANSITIVITY*

Though the interpersonal metafunction will likely be the most valuable in terms of determining role construction and relationships in the texts, the concept of Agency in the

experiential metafunction will also be useful insofar as it contributes to the interpersonal features discussed above. Halliday (1994) emphasizes that though metafunctions each construe a distinctive meaning, they do not operate on discrete levels, but work together to contribute to the meaning of a text as a whole. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) state, SFG is “concerned with language in its entirety; so that whatever is said about one aspect is to be understood always with reference to the total picture” (p. 19). The meaning found through one metafunction can contribute to the meaning found in another, helping identify the larger meaning of the text.

Agency is primarily a component of the experiential metafunction, which examines the happenings, or lack of happenings, of a clause in terms of the TRANSITIVITY system network. An analysis of clauses from this approach consists of a verbal process and participants in certain circumstances. The four main types of process are material, mental, relational and verbal. The participants in each process are given different functional labels according to their role in the clause and their relation to the process.

Material processes are the ones most closely associated with ‘doing’; they are typically physical actions. The two main participants involved in material processes are an Actor, who ‘does’ the process, and the Goal, which is what the process is ‘done to’. An alternative to the Goal is the Scope, which serves as a sort of extension of the verbal process and is not affected by the action. Below are examples of clauses with material processes<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> Abbreviations in examples: ‘P’ is Process; ‘Circ’ is Circumstance.

<i>I</i>	<i>have removed</i>	<i>all 123 flags</i>	<i>from the Hall of Flags</i>
Actor	P: material	Goal	Circ: location

<i>On May 10,</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>made</i>	<i>the very difficult decision...</i>
Circ: location	Actor	P: material	Scope

In both of these examples, the speaker, *I*, is the Actor performing the process. The first example illustrates the use of a Goal; the process *have removed* is being ‘done to’ *all 123 flags*. The second example illustrates a Scope element. The process *made* is not being ‘done to’ *the very difficult decision*. Instead, the Scope serves to provide a specific range to the process; it provides additional meaning to the verbal group.

Mental processes express the internal state of the human mind and involve a Sender who internally experiences a Phenomenon in some way. Mental processes can be divided into four categories: emotion, cognition, perception and desideration (Thompson, 2004). Below are two examples of mental processes:

<i>We</i>	<i>look forward to</i>	<i>continuing these conversations</i>
Sender	P: mental	Phenomenon

<i>how</i>	<i>do</i>	<i>we</i>	<i>decide</i>	<i>which flags remain</i>
Circ: manner		Sender	P: mental	Phenomenon

The first is an example of the ‘emotion’ category of mental processes, in which we can see how a Sender feels about a certain Phenomenon. The second is an example of the ‘cognition’ category, in which a Sender decides, knows or understands some Phenomenon.

Relational processes involve ‘being’ and necessarily require two participants. There are two types of relational processes: identifying and attributive. Identifying relational processes identify one element in relation to another; the elements are more or

less equal. The element which is more general is the Value; the element which is a more specific embodiment of the Value is the Token. In attributive relational processes, a Carrier is ascribed a particular Attribute. Rather than having two more or less equal participants, an attributive relational process involves one participant which is described by a particular quality. Attributes are typically adjectives or indefinite nominal groups.

Below are examples of the two types of relational processes:

<i>Our ultimate goal</i>	<i>remains</i>	<i>fostering a strong sense of community</i>
Value	P: relational, identifying	Token

<i>a public university</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>a special institution</i>
Carrier	P: relational, attributive	Attribute

Verbal processes are associated with ‘speaking’. Even if the process is not literally verbal, it still represents a type of expression or indication. In verbal processes, the main participant is the Sayer, who performs the speaking, expressing or indicating. The Verbiage is the content of what is expressed by the Sayer. If the Sayer is directing the content to another participant, that entity is the Receiver. Below are examples of verbal processes:

<i>I</i>	<i>have announced</i>	<i>my intention to establish a committee</i>
Sayer	P: verbal	Verbiage

<i>we</i>	<i>wouldn't tell</i>	<i>students from one nation</i>	<i>that we couldn't honor them</i>
Sayer	P: verbal	Receiver	projected clause

The second example shows that the content being expressed can be realized in a separate projected clause. A projected clause shows reported speech and is not considered a participant in the verbal process (Thompson, 2004).

A TRANSITIVITY analysis is useful in this study because it shows who in the texts has the ability to do things and make things happen, as well as who in the texts is given a voice.

### 3.3.6 Clause Structure

An understanding of clause structure is helpful in this study. A large part of the texts is made up of ‘clause complexes’: groups of two or more interdependent clauses (Halliday, 1994). There are two types of interdependency in clauses complexes: ‘parataxis’ and ‘hypotaxis’ (Halliday, 1994). The following examples illustrate these different types of interdependency:

<i>Flags from 123 countries are displayed there,</i>		<i>and none is more prominent than any other.</i>
<i>Once the flag is raised,</i>	<i>it remains in the hall,</i>	<i>symbolizing SSU’s lasting connection with our students.</i>
$\beta$	$\alpha\alpha$	$\alpha\beta$

The first example shows a clause complex with a paratactic, or equal, relationship between two clauses. The speaker has chosen to join these two clauses together, but they are still independent of each other in meaning. The second example shows a clause complex with two different hypotactic, or unequal, relationships, one nested in the other. The ‘higher’ relationship is between *Once the flag is raised* and *it remains in the hall, symbolizing SSU’s lasting connection with our students*. *Once the flag is raised* is a dependent clause modifying the whole of the rest of the sentence. It is therefore labeled  $\beta$ , and *it remains... our students* is labeled  $\alpha$ . However, this dominant part of the complex itself is made up of two hypotactic clauses: *symbolizing SSU’s lasting connection with*



*our students* is modifying *it remains in the hall*. The notation of  $\alpha\alpha$  and  $\alpha\beta$  in the example shows that this hypotactic relationship is nested inside another.

Another important concept in an analysis of clause complexes is Halliday's 'rank scale' (1994). The rank scale illustrates the different levels of meaningful units in an utterance, the clause being the highest meaningful unit. When a clause occurs on the clause level, it is called a 'ranking clause'. When a clause is used in place of a lower unit, such as a nominal group, the clause is 'rankshifted' and becomes embedded in some part of another clause. The example below contains a rankshifted embedded clause:

*Our ultimate goal remains [[fostering a strong sense of community]]*

In this example, the non-finite clause *fostering a strong sense of community* is not on the clause level, but is instead acting as a nominal group and is therefore no longer on the same level as the other ranking clauses in the text.

Understanding how clauses are related is important for determining interpersonal meaning. As Thompson (2004) states: "When looking at clause complexes in text, ideally we need to be able to explain why the speaker or writer has chosen to present two messages as equal or as unequal" (p. 202). Both the order of the clauses in a clause complex and any subordination which may occur are important factors in an analysis because they illustrate the ways in which the speaker chooses to highlight certain aspects of the message. Additionally, when meaning is tucked away in embedded clauses, the speaker may be trying to deemphasize or entirely obscure information.

### 3.4 Research Method

First, to evaluate interpersonal speech functions and modality, I analyze each clause in the texts and label its mood, Subject and Finite and determine its speech function and established roles. I then use Thompson's (2004) definitions of modality to determine the level of modal commitment and responsibility in each clause. Second, to evaluate appraisal, I look for lexical signs which show speaker evaluation of the respective entities of administration and student, as well as the issue being addressed. Finally, third, to evaluate Agency and participant roles, I determine and label each clause's process and its associated participants. Instead of simply quantifying the results, I look for themes recurring in the texts to determine how roles and relationships between university administration and students are constructed and maintained. In applying this methodological approach to the texts concerning the Hall of Flags controversy, I am able to examine interpersonal meanings in-depth as they develop throughout a sequence of contextual changes.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

This chapter reports the results of a systemic functional analysis of the three texts according to the methodology given in the previous chapter. A detailed discussion of the findings below follows in Chapter 5.

#### 4.1 MOOD System

A MOOD analysis of the texts reveals that the president consistently attempts to maintain a positive interpersonal relationship with the students. Yet, there are several noticeable shifts from text to text in response to the changing contextual factors, including changes in topic, tense and modality.

##### *4.1.1 Subjects*

The Subject of a clause can be understood as a sort of ‘topic’ for the clause. The Subject may not always be the experiential Agent of the verbal process, but it does communicate what the message is ‘about’. Table 4.1 shows how often the various participants involved in the issue concerning the Hall of Flags are presented as Subjects in each text (see Appendix B).

Table 4.1 Subjects

Subject	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3
Hall of Flags/flags	13	4	9
The university/we (president and colleagues)	12	0	9
International students from Vietnam	1	0	0
Vietnamese-American students/community	1	1	0
Students/you	2	0	2
I (president)	0	2	2
Let's/we (president and students)	0	1	3
Total ranking clauses with Subjects	31	12	34

Not surprisingly, the Hall of Flags and the flags themselves occur as Subjects frequently and consistently throughout the texts. A second major Subject is the university, or *we*, which signifies the president and his colleagues as representatives of the university. However, this Subject only occurs in Texts 1 and 3. Moving from Text 1 to Text 3, the specific students involved in the controversy (Vietnamese-American students and Vietnamese international students) occur as Subjects less frequently: 2, 1, then 0 occurrences. However, there is an increase in the frequency of the president and *let's/we* as Subjects: 0, 3, then 5 occurrences. This indicates a shift in topic from text to text.

#### 4.1.2 Tense and Polarity

Tense is expressed through the Finite of each clause (see Appendix C). Of the 31 ranking clauses which show tense in Text 1, 30 express present tense. Text 1 is therefore almost entirely in the present tense, with the exception of one verbal operator expressing future tense. Text 2 contains 12 ranking clauses expressing tense: 6 past, 5 present and 1 future. The first half is entirely past tense clauses; the second half is mostly present tense

with one future tense clause. Text 3 has 31 ranking clauses expressing tense: 15 present, 11 past and 5 future. The distribution of tense in this text is similar to Text 2 in that the first section is almost entirely past tense, followed by a section of mixed present and future tense clauses.

Polarity is also expressed through the Finite of each clause. All three texts overwhelmingly feature positive polarity. Texts 1 and 2 each only have one negative Finite in lines 29 and 2, respectively. Text 3 has three negative Finites, but they all occur in the same clause complex (lines 10-12)<sup>4</sup>:

*We could not take down individual flags / because we wouldn't tell students from one nation / that we couldn't honor them in the same way [[we honored students from other nations]].*

Texts 2 and 3 each contain one instance of the negative Mood Adjunct *never* in lines 14 and 9, respectively. There are three other expressions of negative polarity in Text 1 and one in Text 3, but they occur in the RESIDUE as part of the phrasal constituent as opposed to the Finite. Below is an example of this from Text 1, line 26:

*The Hall of Flags makes no political statement*

Thompson (2004) states that “this freedom of movement is typical of interpersonal meanings as a whole: they tend to cluster around the MOOD, but they are by no means confined to that part of the message” (p. 66). However, by moving the negative into the RESIDUE, negative value is deemphasized and the positive aspect of the message is highlighted (Halliday, 1992). In this example, the suppressed option would be ‘the Hall of Flags doesn’t make a political statement’, which suggests a more negative emphasis.

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix B for symbol key.

#### 4.1.3 Speech Functions

In an analysis of speech functions, only independent clauses are examined. This is because the independent clause is the primary carrier of interpersonal speech functions, representing the identity of the clause as a whole. Any modifying clauses dependent on the independent clause, which may or may not select for MOOD, do not each have their own intended speech function. Halliday (1992) states that this is because “non-finite clauses do not select for mood, and finite dependent clauses are declarative by default” (p. 206). All the clauses in a clause complex work together to create meaning, and the independent clause is the one which realizes the mood and speech function of the whole complex. Therefore, in clause complexes, dependent clauses are not necessary in an analysis of speech functions. Table 4.2 shows the distribution of mood types and speech functions in each text (see Appendix C).

Table 4.2 Mood and speech functions of independent clauses			
Mood Class / Speech Function	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3
Declarative	29	10	20
WH-Interrogative	0	0	1
Imperative	0	0	4
Statement	29	8	20
Question	0	0	1
Command	0	2	3
Offer	0	0	1
Total independent clauses	29	10	25

As Table 4.2 reveals, Text 1 consists entirely of declarative clauses and also consists solely of statements. Since statements are associated with the declarative mood, this parallel is expected. The tables also shows that the mood choices and speech functions of Text 3 align neatly. The only variation is that there is one less command than there are imperative clauses, but this extra imperative clause has the speech function of an offer. Since it was previously stated that offers are not associated with a particular mood, it is not unexpected that it could occur in the form of an imperative.

Unlike the other two texts, the distribution of speech functions in Text 2 does not match up precisely with the distribution of mood. Since Text 2 consists solely of declarative clauses, it would follow that this text would contain all statements. However, it only has 8 statements; two of the clauses are commands. The independent clause underlined below is one of the commands found in Text 2 (line 14):

*We must never forget / that a public university is a special institution...*

The Subject<sup>Finite</sup> ordering of the MOOD (*we must*) indicates that it is in the declarative mood. However, rather than giving information, the speaker is demanding goods and services. The participant who must perform the goods and services is *we*, and *never forget* is the service which must be performed. The speaker is demanding action on the part of both himself and the addressees, so this is therefore a command achieved primarily through the modal *must*. Yet, the communicative force of such a command is mitigated to some extent by the inclusive pronoun *we*, which includes the speaker himself, thereby softening the force of the command.

#### 4.1.4 Modality

Table 4.3 shows occurrences of expressions of modality in the ranking clauses found in the texts (see Appendix B).

Table 4.3 Modality analysis of ranking clauses			
Modality Expressions	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3
Modalized verbal operators	1	1	7
Modulated verbal operators	0	2	1
Mood Adjunct: usuality	0	1	2
Mood Adjunct: intensity	0	0	1
Total individual expressions of modality / Total clauses expressing modality	1 / 1	4 / 3	11 / 9
Total ranking clauses	40	15	41

As Table 4.3 illustrates, Text 1 only contains one expression of modality. Text 2 only contains four expressions of modality in three clauses, but as this is a shorter text, it represents a much larger percentage. Text 3 contains the most occurrences of modality, both in count and percentage.

As discussed in Chapter 3, there are four degrees of modal responsibility which express the different levels of responsibility a speaker accepts for the attitude or opinion being expressed. Table 4.4 shows the distribution of modal responsibility in the clauses in the texts which express modality.



Table 4.4 Modal responsibility			
Orientation	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3
Implicit Subjective	1	2	4
Explicit Subjective	0	0	1
Implicit Objective	0	1	4
Explicit Objective	0	0	0

Table 4.4 reveals that the only type of modal responsibility common to all three texts is the implicit subjective. Implicit objective modal clauses are the next most common and are found in Texts 2 and 3. There is one explicit subjective clause in Text 3 and there are no explicit objective clauses in any of the texts. The implicit form seems to be favored over explicit. Explicit modality places the evaluation in a projected or embedded clause, which gives prominence to the speaker's point of view (Halliday, 1994). However, implicit modality is expressed in the same clause as the verbal process, thereby deemphasizing the speaker's connection with the fact or evaluation.

Texts 1 and 2 have more subjective realizations of modality, while Text 3 has a good number of objective realizations. According to Schleppegrell (2004), "with subjective presentation... it is clear who is making the evaluative comment – the writer. With objective presentation, the responsibility for the evaluative comment is not individuated" (p. 183). There is an increase in the number of objective expressions of modality from one text to the next, indicating a shift in the amount of responsibility taken by the speaker.

## 4.2 Appraisal

An appraisal analysis examines how a speaker feels about a particular participant or subject, as well as the content about which he or she is talking. In these texts, the main participants are the university, the students, the Vietnamese flag, the Hall of Flags and the controversy itself. After performing an appraisal examination of the texts, the following conclusions can be reached:

1. SSU is proud of its students, its diverse campus and the Hall of Flags.
2. The Vietnamese flag evokes negative sentiments.
3. The president's evaluation of the current situation changes over time.

The president states many times in the texts that SSU has a diverse campus and that the university endeavors to acknowledge and celebrate that diversity. Diversity is consistently mentioned in a positive light. Additionally, the president is constantly emphasizing that the university welcomes students with open arms and is willing and eager to work with them to get through issues or discuss new ideas. Further, this desire to recognize students and diversity is represented in the Hall of Flags. Even though the Vietnamese flag, the source of the controversy, is evaluated negatively, the Hall of Flags itself is evaluated very positively. It does not have many positive evaluations directly attributed to it; however, it is usually mentioned in the context of celebrating student diversity, a concept which is established as positive. For example, the following excerpts contain lexical items connoting a positive appraisal of the Hall of Flags (e.g. *impressive*), diversity (e.g. *celebrate*), and the students (e.g. *lasting connection*):

*We have a very diverse campus, and the Hall of Flags, which is an impressive display inside Richmond Hall, is one way we embrace and celebrate our campus' diversity and international reach. (T1, L18-21)<sup>5</sup>*

*Once the flag is raised, it remains in the hall, symbolizing SSU's lasting connection with our students. (T1, L24-25)*

*We must never forget that a public university is a special institution that respects all individuals and embraces diversity. (T2, L14-16)*

*The Hall of Flags is gone, but what remains is our noble desire to honor all our students from around the world. (T3, L21-22)*

However, while the purpose behind the Hall of Flags is good, the Vietnamese flag and the reactions it causes are portrayed as negative. The descriptors and emotions concerning the Vietnamese flag only occur in Texts 1 and 2, with lexical items connoting a negative appraisal of the Vietnamese flag (e.g. *oppression*):

*But to those who fled South Vietnam... that same flag is a symbol of oppression. Memories of the gut-wrenching events from a generation ago remain fresh for many, including thousands of Americans whose lives were touched, some tragically, by the Vietnam War. (T1, L7-11)*

*Recently, a heated controversy emerged when Vietnamese-American students and their community strongly protested the flag... (T2, L7-8)*

In the first text, the president has taken the initial stance of defending the Hall of Flags. He acknowledges that there are concerned students and community members, but expresses his confidence that it will all work out if the students and university work together:

*We look forward to continuing these conversations in the hope of reaching greater levels of understanding and respect. (T1, L40-41)*

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<sup>5</sup> Text 1, Lines 18-21 (see Appendix A)

However, the events which occurred soon after this text was produced forced the president to remove the Hall of Flags, which caused a great deal of tension:

*A cooling off period is needed for thoughtful reflection. (T2, L10-11)*

By the time Text 3 was written, the president shifted his focus away from the Hall of Flags controversy and pointed the students towards the goal of finding new, alternative ways to celebrate diversity:

*...let's work together to create a compelling new display. Let's come together to build something even better in Richmond Hall. (T3, L23-25)*

*Let's find new and enduring ways to celebrate our rich and varied international connections with pride. (T3, L33-34)*

Appraisal in these utterances is signaled by the lexical items referencing the current situation and plans for the future (e.g. *hope*, *cooling off*, *compelling*).

#### 4.3 Agency and TRANSITIVITY

A TRANSITIVITY analysis of the text reveals who in the text is placed in the role of Agent; in other words, who has the ability to act. Table 4.5 gives the number of instances in which the various participants involved in the issue concerning the Hall of Flags appear in the role of Actor, Senser or Sayer, as well as Goal or Receiver. Note the two different uses of *we*: one is used in reference to the president and his colleagues; the other is used when the president is including himself with the students. For example, the use of *we* below from line 30 of Text 1 is clearly referring to the president and his colleagues at the university:

*By displaying these flags, / the university is not endorsing these nations, their politics or policies. /// We are supporting students and alumni [[who come from these nations]].*

In this example, *we* refers back to *the university*. Some uses of *we* in the texts have clear referents; the meaning of other uses of *we* is made evident by the surrounding context of each instance.

Table 4.5 Process participants

Process Type	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3
Actor in Material Process			
The university/we (president and colleagues)	9	0	8
Students	3	0	1
I (president)	0	2	1
Let's/we (president and students)	0	0	4
Senser in Mental Process			
The university/we (president and colleagues)	1	1	2
Let's/we (president and students)	0	1	0
Sayer in Verbal Process			
The university/we (president and colleagues)	3	0	1
Students	1	0	0
I (president)	0	0	1
Goal in Material Process			
Students	2	0	4
Receiver in Verbal Process			
Students	0	0	1

Table 4.5 shows that the university, or *we*, representing the president and his colleagues, occurs frequently in the roles of Actor, Senser and Sayer in Texts 1 and 3, but only once in Text 2. Students also occur in an Agency role in the texts, but there is a shift from Text 1 to Text 3 in that the president begins to act with the students (*let's/we*) more often than the students act alone. The president does not personally put himself in an

Agency role in the first text, preferring to associate himself with the university by using the collective *we*, but does personally act as Agent twice in both Texts 2 and 3.

It can also be seen in Table 4.5 that it is almost all students who are in the ‘object’ roles of Goal and Receiver. The university never occurs in object or receiver position; it only occurs in the Agency role.

#### 4.4 Summary of Findings

All three texts share the topic of the Hall of Flags in common; this is the Subject which appears most frequently in the texts. The next most frequent Subject is the university and its representatives, showing that it also is an important topic in the texts. This corresponds to the TRANSITIVITY analysis, which shows that *we* (the university) occurs in an Agency role more frequently than other participants. Students appear in Subject position and Agency roles less frequently; in fact, there seems to be a decrease in frequency from one text to the next. On the other hand, the president (*I*) and the president with the students (*let's/we*) increase in frequency as Subject and Agent from one text to the next. Polarity in the texts remains consistently mostly positive, which as at times achieved by placing negation in the RESIDUE. Trends in tense vary from text to text.

Another type of shift found in the texts concerns speech functions and modality. Text 1 shows no variety in speech function and little modality. Text 3, however, has a larger variety of speech functions represented and much more modality. Text 2 falls somewhere between the other texts in this regard. In all the texts, an implicit orientation for modal responsibility is favored over explicit modal responsibility.

Appraisal values are given for all the participants, but they only seem to remain consistent for the university and the Hall of Flags. Moving from Text 1 to Text 3, the Vietnamese flag and the controversy are mentioned less, and the evaluations of the university and students are described more. The president's evaluation of the current situation appears to change from text to text in that he is initially hopeful that the controversy will be solved peacefully, then becomes disappointed when the situation gets worse, and finally shifts his focus towards the future and appears optimistic about new opportunities.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

As a representative of the university, the authority of the president is firmly backed by the institution of the university. He can therefore choose to present information and plans to students in as firm or strict a manner as he feels necessary. However, the findings of this study have shown that even during times when it would be reasonable for him to take advantage of his authority, he still values his and the university's relationship with the students and uses language to maintain the delicate balance of authority and solidarity.

#### 5.1 Consistent Features

My first research question seeks to determine how the language used by the university administrative staff initially establishes interpersonal meaning. To answer this question, I sought features which remained consistent throughout the texts and which did not disappear or significantly change in response to contextual factors. These features help to determine the everyday relationship the president establishes with the students in his communications with them.

The Hall of Flags and the flags themselves remain a consistent Subject throughout all three texts, which indicates that the topic remains basically unchanged. The university,



or *we*, representing the president and other university representatives, is the second most common Subject. The university figures prominently in the texts, perhaps as a reminder to students that the university is the authority and is responsible for making decisions and handling situations as they arise. If instead the president had placed the students more frequently in Subject position, it could be seen as presenting them in a more important role, which would perhaps make them feel they should have more influence in the decisions concerning the resolution of the controversy. However, this particular choice of Subject usage was suppressed in favor of a higher representation of the university in Subject role.

The predominant process in each text is material, which indicates a focus on actions and events and the participants involved in them. This is because much of the texts is devoted to the action involved in the Hall of Flags controversy and plans for positive actions in the future. All three texts feature mostly declarative statements, which serve the purpose of giving information. This high usage of declarative statements is to be expected in a written text in which there is no feedback between writer and reader (Eggins, 1994). These observations taken together reveal that the purpose of all three texts is to give information concerning events surrounding the Hall of Flags issue. The president, in the role of an authority figure, is in a position to provide information and ideas to students, firmly backed by the institution of the university.

All three texts feature almost entirely positive polarity. There are very few negative Finites, and other expressions of negative polarity are even deemphasized in that they occur outside the Finite or outside the MOOD entirely. These strategies for

deemphasizing negatives heighten the overall positive effect of the text. Since the controversy evokes negative sentiments, the president could have chosen to reflect these negative feelings in his language. However, he instead makes a great effort to avoid negativity in the texts. This indicates that the president wishes to keep the texts positive, even though he is addressing a negative situation. Further evidence that the president wishes to keep the texts positive is found in the appraisal values he attributes to certain participants. The only appraisals which feature prominently in all three texts are positive evaluations concerning the students, diversity and the Hall of Flags. The president attributes nothing but positive qualities to these participants and ideas because they are things that the university is proud of, and always will be. Even though the Hall of Flags had to be removed, the president never backs down from his defense that the concept behind the Hall of Flags was honorable and good. Even though many students on campus are upset by the controversy and the decisions he has made, he still only has positive things to say about the students. The lack of negative polarity and the consistently positive appraisals of these participants seem to show that the president wants to maintain a positive atmosphere and avoid appearing negative, despite the stressful situation.

The president makes little use of overt commands. Instead, when he requires action on the part of the students, he deemphasizes the force of the commands either by making them objective, in that they do not appear to come directly from him, or by using *let's* or *we*, signifying that it is a responsibility which he must take along with the students. As one of the prominent authority figures on campus, the president could easily write in a more commanding style by using more imperatives and associating himself

with the students less. However, he instead chooses to mitigate his commands and accept responsibility for action along with the students. According to Fowler & Kress (1979), “Though commanding presupposes inequality of power, it does not necessarily imply conflict of interests” (p. 27). The president illustrates this idea in his communications with students in that he takes on responsibility along with them and takes care to explain the significance of his requests for action. He also writes in a respectful way towards the students in that his language shows he is genuinely interested in the students’ thoughts and opinions; additionally, he never uses negative language when referring to the students, even when their opinions may differ from his own. On the contrary, the president repeatedly emphasizes the students’ importance to the university.

A final observation is that even though the president writes with a positive and encouraging attitude, he also makes certain that he and the university maintain their authoritative position in relation to the students. The university is consistently an Agent, in a position to do, act, or think, and it is consistently students who are the ‘objects’ of processes. The university and its representatives are in a position of power and, regardless of the surrounding contextual changes, need to maintain their authority.

## 5.2 Changing Features

My second research question concerns the extent to which the language progresses or changes in response to contextual factors. While certain features remain consistent, many other features change in response to the events and emotions involved in the Hall of Flags controversy. An examination of these changes reveals the ways in

which the interpersonal relationships established in the texts are adjusted to accommodate the present context.

One noticeable change is a shift in topic. While the Hall of Flags and the university remain consistent topics, there are other Subjects which change from text to text. For example, from Text 1 to Text 3, there is a decrease in the number of times in which Vietnamese students and the Vietnamese community are given as Subjects. The Vietnamese flag and the participants directly involved in the controversy are not mentioned at all in Text 3. This suggests a shift in focus away from the specific participants and details of the controversy. In contrast, there is an increase in the number of times in which the student body and the president occur as Subjects. This suggests a shift in focus towards what the campus community can do together to find new ways of celebrating diversity. In Text 1, the president appears to feel that a resolution can be found for the Hall of Flags issue. The controversy has not yet reached its peak, so the president seems comfortable talking about the specific participants involved and defending the Hall of Flags. However, after the events which led to the removal of the flags, it became clear that the issue caused a great amount of tension and conflict and therefore became a very sensitive subject. Perhaps because of this, the president shifts the students' attention away from the controversy and directs them towards new and exciting possibilities for the future. He deemphasizes specific people and things as Subjects in the controversy and encourages the collaborative *we* and future progress. While Texts 1 and 2 concern conflict, Text 3 focuses on cooperation.

There is also a noticeable shift in tense. Text 1 is almost entirely in the present tense because the issue has only just risen; the president is in the midst of trying to find a solution while attempting to uphold peace on campus. Text 2 occurs immediately after the removal of the flags, and the first part is in the past tense, describing what has happened. It then switches to present tense, briefly stating that all those involved need to take time to reflect on the issue and what has transpired in the past few days. In Text 3, the president first explains the events up to that point in the past tense, then switches to a mix of present and future tenses. In this text he shifts the focus away from the current controversy and towards the future, talking about the new and exciting things which will be done on campus. In a sense, he has abandoned trying to 'fix' the current issue because too many people have strong emotions tied to the controversy. A solution could not be found which everyone could agree upon, so it became necessary to leave the issue in the past and try to move forward. He therefore encourages the student body to look towards the future to find new ways of celebrating diversity.

The president uses an increasingly larger variety of speech functions from text to text. Text 1 consists entirely of statements, which reflects its purpose of providing information. At the time this text was written, the president was attempting to propose a solution for the issue and defend the principle of the Hall of Flags; he still seems comfortably in control of the situation. He is therefore merely giving information to the students to let them know what is occurring and the steps he is taking to bring resolution to the issue.

In Text 2, the president is still mostly giving information by way of statements, but there are also two commands given:

*A cooling off period is needed for thoughtful reflection. (T2, L10-11)*

*We must never forget that a public university is a special institution that respects all individuals and embraces diversity. (T2, L14-16)*

The first command calls for students to calm down and reflect on the situation. The second command charges students to maintain an atmosphere of respect on campus. This text was written immediately following the removal of the flags, and the president was possibly anticipating a strong negative reaction. Because of the brevity of this text and the sternness of these commands, it seems that the president is trying to keep the situation under control by briefly and clearly stating what he expects of students. The tension on campus was very high when this text was written and the president likely wanted to prevent it from getting worse. However, it should be noted that these two commands are in the declarative mood as opposed to the imperative mood. By choosing to express his requests for action as declaratives, he is mitigating them in a way by ‘disguising’ them as statements, which has a softening effect. Additionally, he uses strategies of passivization and the inclusive *we* to mitigate power. The president is commanding action, but doing it in a less forceful way than he could have chosen to do.

Text 3 was written a few weeks later after all those involved had time to reflect on the issue. This text, like the others, is mostly giving information, but this text stands apart from the other two in that its speech functions promote student involvement and it is written on a more personal level. There are three commands, but they are all of the *let’s* variety. In other words, the president is not just commanding the students to perform

some action, but rather he is saying that he and the students should work together to accomplish the goals laid out. In addition to the *let's* commands, Text 3 also contains one question and one offer:

*Once we start down the road of removing objectionable flags, how do we decide which flags remain and which are removed? (T3, L12-13)*

*If you have a question, comment or idea for the committee, please write to me at president@ssu.edu. (T3, L29-31)*

The question is rhetorical in that this is a one-sided, written text and the president does not expect an actual response. However, it does still serve to bring the readers into the action and involve them in his thought processes; it makes the text seem as if it is interactive. The offer involves the students even further. This offer is in the imperative mood and could be viewed as a command, but the anticipated response would seem to indicate it is more like an offer. The anticipated response of an offer is either acceptance or rejection, as opposed to the anticipated response of compliance or refusal to a command (Eggins, 1994). Since the president is not explicitly telling the students they must do something, but rather is letting them know that he is available if they want to get in touch with him, the response would probably be “thanks” or “we appreciate it.” This is therefore an offer in which the president clearly states his desire for students to be active participants in the university’s future plans to celebrate diversity. In Texts 1 and 2 the president seems to be trying to keep tight university control of the situation, but by Text 3 he wants to involve the students more. He may be trying to show the students that even though not everyone agreed with him in the controversy, he made the decisions he did for

the benefit of the students, and he now wants to make a special effort to show them he cares about their opinions and needs.

Moving from Text 1 to Text 3, there is a clear increase in the number of expressions of modality. This increased modality perhaps shows that the president is trying to be more cautious and personal. According to Eggins (1994), “The higher use of modalization... can be explained as part of the way the writer creates a less authoritative, more suggestive tenor, by balancing the power inequality inherent in the modulations” (p. 315). In Text 1 the president seems confident in his university-backed authority, expressing his desire that the student body understand the spirit of the Hall of Flags and respect what it symbolizes. However, the events which unfolded afterwards were unexpected, threatening his authority and going against what he had previously hoped would be the outcome. He therefore appears to change strategies in Text 3 by more cautiously presenting his ideas and information, writing on a more personal level to the students. In this way he is presenting himself to the students less as an impersonal authority figure, but more as a real person who cares about their opinions.

Concerning modal responsibility, there is an increase in objective expressions of modality from text to text. The objective clause in Text 2 calls for a cooling off period (lines 10-11). The objective clauses in Text 3 are statements of what has happened and what will happen in relation to the controversy; for example:

*there will be no flags displayed in the atrium of Richmond Hall (T3, L16-17)*

*A committee including students, faculty, staff and others will be appointed this summer (T3, L28-29)*



By using objective expressions of modality and presenting these statements not as his own opinions, perhaps the president is trying to close the subject. Because of their objective quality, the responsibility for these statements does not clearly belong to the president himself, but to some unknown entity. In the case of these texts, the reader would likely view the statements as belonging directly to the university itself, and therefore they become less arguable. When discussing new plans for the future, the president seems willing to be involved personally in the text, but when referencing events directly related to the controversy, he communicates the information objectively, which may signify he wishes to close the issue by not making it open to discussion.

This is perhaps further evidenced by the one instance of an explicit expression of modality, which occurs in Text 3:

*At SSU we're proud of the diversity of our student body. In fact, we think it's a reason to celebrate. (T3, L1-2).*

In this statement, the president on behalf of the university does assume direct responsibility for the opinion being expressed. However, this statement is not controversial. The president is simply stating that the university is proud of its diversity and wants to show it off, but this is something he knows most people on campus would agree with. In other words, he is not risking much by stating this, which further shows that he is trying to emphasize the positive aspects of the situation and be more cautious in his statements.

Most of the appraisal values the president assigns participants in the text do not change, but the president's focus on certain participants does shift from text to text. For

example, only in Texts 1 and 2 are the Vietnamese flag and related subjects mentioned. By Text 3, the appraisal values presented concern only the student body and new possibilities for celebrating diversity. This indicates a shift away from the negative appraisals associated with the controversy and towards the positive appraisals associated with the students and future goals.

The appraisal values that do change have to do with the president's evaluation of the changing context. In Text 1, his purpose in writing to the students is to make a defense of the Hall of Flags. The appraisal values given to the situation highlight his hope for understanding and resolution. Text 2 occurs immediately after the president was forced to remove the flags, and the tension he must have been feeling is evident in his negative appraisal of the situation. By the time Text 3 was written, he had time to think and make plans for the future. He is again optimistic, and his positive appraisal of the situation is focused on the promotion of finding new ways to celebrate diversity.

A transitivity analysis of the texts shows who in the texts has the ability to act as Agents: to say, do or think. There is a clear shift in Agency from Text 1 to Text 3 in that the university as a whole acts as Agent less, and the president as an individual acts more. Further, the president makes more use of *let's* and *we*, showing that he is willing to cooperate with the students. Rather than working alone, he may be suggesting that the positive changes he is promoting will not happen unless he and the students work together. At the start of the controversy, the president uses the university as the main Agent to show their institutional authority in the situation. However, by the time the last

text is written, the president has brought the action down to a more personal level, making an effort to put himself and the students together in a cooperative, active role.

Overall, therefore, the changes which seem to be occurring from text to text are a result of the changing context. In Text 1, the president's focus is on the controversy and the participants involved. His use of the present tense and declarative statements, his frequent references to the university, and infrequent use of modality reflect that he wants the university to take charge and find resolution in the current situation. However, this does not happen, and the brevity and directness of Text 2 illustrate the tension of the situation and the president's disappointment in the outcome. Text 3 is a clear departure from the styles of Texts 1 and 2 in that the president shows a strong desire to collaborate with the students and involve them more in the university's decisions and plans. The focus of the text is on possibilities for the future, and it is written more personally, using the university as a participant less and the president as an individual more. The president shows his willingness to involve the students through a more frequent use of *let's* and *we* as Subjects and Agents.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

It is important to understand the significance of the features which change and those which do not. What can be gleaned from a systemic functional analysis of the features which do not change is that the president communicates with the student body in a way that maintains his authority, but that also encourages students to be involved and play an active part in the university community. He strives to maintain a positive relationship with the students by avoiding or deemphasizing negative statements and appraisals and by highlighting positive ones. He makes it clear through his language that he wants to work with the students and not be an impersonal authority figure. The president and the university administrative staff want to reach out to students on a personal level in order to promote community and an atmosphere of camaraderie on campus; they want students to feel valued and respected. However, they must also be firm in their decision-making and student guidance; there must be institutional authority in an organization as large as a university in order for its operation to be successful. The university must find a balance between these seemingly opposing elements in order to maintain a complex but effective relationship with its students.

This relationship must be stable for there to be order and structure in the university community. However, the exact realization of the relationship is not perfectly static at all times. Contextual factors play a significant part in the language choices a speaker makes. The president and other administrative figures have a regular way of addressing students concerning the everyday issues and events on a university campus. However, when extraordinary factors are involved, their language choices will subtly change. Not only will the contextual factors themselves affect the way university representatives choose to use language, but the reaction they anticipate from the students will also be influential.

By observing feature changes from text to text, it is possible to see that the president adjusts his language in response to changing contextual factors. For example, certain situations may cause him to be more careful in the way he writes a text, or to emphasize the university's authority if he feels it is necessary. In the events surrounding the Hall of Flags controversy, an analysis using Systemic Functional Grammar highlights these changes in his language usage. Text 1 is probably fairly representative of the way in which the president normally addresses the students. His tone is light, but also firm because he knows the situation is unpredictable. He emphasizes his authority as a representative of the university and presents his ideas for how to handle the situation, while at the same time keeping a positive attitude and respecting the participants involved. However, the situation quickly turns negative, and he is forced to remove the Hall of Flags. The tension on campus is reflected in Text 2, in which the president briefly explains what happened and calls for a cooling off period. In this text his language is the

most authoritative, because the controversy is at its peak and he needs to make sure it does not get out of control. He is brief and to the point, and leaves little room for argument. By Text 3, though, everyone has calmed down somewhat and the president has returned to his optimistic attitude. The difference between this text and Text 1 is that now the president is encouraging students even more to take an active part. While the institution of the university was the key actor in Text 1, the president now writes more personally, getting involved himself and encouraging students to act with him. He shifts the students' focus away from the controversy and towards the positive opportunities for the future. The president emphasizes that he wants the students to help and in return makes himself available to them.

In considering both the consistent and changing features in these three texts, what is particularly enlightening is not merely that such features are evident. Rather, what is interesting to note is the control that the president maintains throughout the texts through linguistic means. The nature of the relationship of the university administrative staff and students is intriguing; the president and other university representatives are in the unique situation of having to treat the student as someone deserving of their respect and attention, but they must also maintain their authoritative role. This study has shown insight into the ways in which language plays a part in balancing the complex relationship between university authority figures and students. A systemic functional analysis has shown that the president of the university in this study is aware of the importance of this balance. He could have used language to emphasize his power and authority; alternatively, he could have used language to involve himself on a very

personal level with the students. However, he instead works to maintain an effective balance of authority and solidarity. In the case of sensitive contextual issues, he adjusts his language accordingly in order to preserve the positive interpersonal relationship he has established with the students. The results of this study have shown that the interpersonal relationships established by university administrative figures are reflected in the language they use when communicating with students, and consequently, their language choices are adapted appropriately in response to changing contextual factors in order to maintain these relationships for the purpose of the wellbeing of the campus community and the success of the university.

One of the aspects of this study which needs to be researched further is whether or not the strategies used in these texts are employed in other settings and by other administrators. The president of this university goes to great lengths to preserve a positive interpersonal relationship with the students, which is especially interesting in light of his non-academic background and in this setting of a large public university, which has an arguably less close-knit campus community than would a smaller private institution. It brings up the question of whether the president feels and acts this way because he is relatively new at working with college students and therefore has a fresher perspective on what the relationship between administration and students should be, or if this attitude is typical of all university presidents and administrators. Further research needs to be done in the university setting in more locations and in different contexts to look for trends in interpersonal meaning in texts written by university authority figures. Additionally, student response to university-produced texts could provide insight into how effective

these strategies actually are in establishing and maintaining a positive interpersonal relationship. The president at this university clearly understands the importance of maintaining the delicate balance of authority and solidarity, but the student perspective must be taken into account in order to fully understand the effectiveness of the language strategies used by administrators. This research could be used to help university administrators understand the most effective ways of communicating with their students in order to promote positive interpersonal relationships, as well as discover the benefits of maintaining a balance of authority and solidarity rather than leaning towards one or the other, even in challenging situations.



## APPENDIX A

### TEXTS

## Text 1

### *Editorial in the student newspaper*

*April 28, 2006*

1      Some Vietnamese-American students and members of the community have  
2      objected to the presence of the Vietnamese flag on campus.

3      Twenty-three international students from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam are  
4      enrolled at SSU. The flag of Vietnam represents them at International Week  
5      events and in the Richmond Hall of Flags. To the people of Vietnam, including  
6      these 23 SSU students, the Vietnamese flag is a symbol of their home nation.

7      But to those who fled South Vietnam, including some of our Vietnamese-  
8      American students and their families, that same flag is a symbol of oppression.  
9      Memories of the gut-wrenching events from a generation ago remain fresh for  
10     many, including thousands of Americans whose lives were touched, some  
11     tragically, by the Vietnam War.

12     It's in that spirit that we have assured our Vietnamese-American students that the  
13     Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom Flag, the flag of the former nation of South  
14     Vietnam, will represent them on our campus.

15     The university will continue to display both the Heritage flag and the Vietnamese  
16     national flag in the Hall of Flags, at International Week and other places that  
17     celebrate our diversity.

18     More than 10 percent of our students come from other nations. We have a very  
19     diverse campus, and the Hall of Flags, which is an impressive display inside  
20     Richmond Hall, is one way we embrace and celebrate our campus' diversity and  
21     international reach.

22     The hall represents the nations from which our College of Engineering has  
23     enrolled students. International students request that their home nation's flag be  
24     raised in their honor. Once the flag is raised, it remains in the hall, symbolizing  
25     SSU's lasting connection with our students.

26     The Hall of Flags makes no political statement about Vietnam, South Vietnam or  
27     any other nation or former nation. Flags from 123 countries are displayed there,  
28     and none is more prominent than any other.

29     By displaying these flags, the university is not endorsing these nations, their  
30     politics or policies. We are supporting students and alumni who come from these

31 nations. The flags represent countries of origin, not governments.

32 We have reached out to the concerned students and community leaders, and  
33 together we have taken initial steps toward clarification and resolution. For  
34 example, we have posted a permanent display in the hall explaining its purpose.

35 The President's Office has offered to bring in guest speakers to discuss issues  
36 related to Vietnam — past, present and future.

37 On several occasions, my colleagues and I have met with students and local  
38 community leaders, and we have offered to work openly and constructively with  
39 them.

40 We look forward to continuing these conversations in the hope of reaching greater  
41 levels of understanding and respect.

42 SSU welcomes and embraces all qualified students from all nations who want to  
43 pursue an education and seek to advance their lives at this university.

## Text 2

### *Press statement*

*May 10, 2006*

1 Southern State University's Hall of Flags was established to celebrate the  
2 diversity of the engineering school's student body. These flags were not intended  
3 to endorse the politics or policies of any nation. As part of this display, the  
4 Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom Flag represented our Vietnamese-American  
5 students and the flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam represented our  
6 international students from Vietnam.

7 Recently, a heated controversy emerged when Vietnamese-American students and  
8 their community strongly protested the flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,  
9 viewing it as a political symbol.

10 As a result, I have removed all 123 flags from the Hall of Flags. A cooling off  
11 period is needed for thoughtful reflection. In the fall I will establish a committee  
12 to explore alternative means to celebrate the diversity of our student body.

13 Our ultimate goal remains fostering a strong sense of community among all our  
14 students, including all our international students. We must never forget that a  
15 public university is a special institution that respects all individuals and embraces

16 diversity.

### Text 3

*Editorial in the student newspaper*

*May 30, 2006*

1 At SSU we're proud of the diversity of our student body. In fact, we think it's a  
2 reason to celebrate. It's in that spirit that we established the Hall of Flags in the  
3 Richmond Hall atrium in 1989. These flags represented the nations from which  
4 our College of Engineering had enrolled students or graduated alumni. Flags were  
5 added as students from countries never before represented in the College of  
6 Engineering enrolled for the first time.

7 On May 10, I made the very difficult decision to remove the flags. They had  
8 become a source of division rather than celebration. Even though the Hall of Flags  
9 was never intended as a collection of political symbols, that became the reality.

10 We could not take down individual flags because we wouldn't tell students from  
11 one nation that we couldn't honor them in the same way we honored students  
12 from other nations. Once we start down the road of removing objectionable flags,  
13 how do we decide which flags remain and which are removed?

14 So every flag came down.

15 This includes the U.S. and state flags that were part of the display. At least for  
16 now, as we take time to plan for the future, there will be no flags displayed in the  
17 atrium of Richmond Hall. However, we will continue to fly the U.S. and state  
18 flags in many places on campus, including the Central Library mall and at official  
19 university celebrations. The U.S. and state flags will always be displayed  
20 prominently and proudly on our campus.

21 The Hall of Flags is gone, but what remains is our noble desire to honor all our  
22 students from around the world. Rather than focusing our efforts on what we've  
23 lost or casting blame without knowing all the facts, let's work together to create a  
24 compelling new display. Let's come together to build something even better in  
25 Richmond Hall.

26 I have announced my intention to establish a university-wide committee to find  
27 ways of celebrating our diversity without making statements or using symbols  
28 with divisive political meaning. A committee including students, faculty, staff and  
29 others will be appointed this summer and begin work in the fall. If you have a

30 question, comment or idea for the committee, please write to me at  
31 president@ssu.edu.

32 My hope is that SSU will always embrace students from all walks of life and all  
33 countries in the world. Let's find new and enduring ways to celebrate our rich and  
34 varied international connections with pride.

APPENDIX B  
MOOD ANALYSIS

## Key<sup>6</sup>

/	hypotactic clause boundary	< >	interrupting clause
//	paratactic clause boundary	[[ ]]	embedded clause
///	clause complex boundary		
S	Subject	C	Complement
F	Finite	Ca	attributive Complement
Fn	negative Finite	Ac	circumstantial Adjunct
Fms	modalized Finite	Am	Mood Adjunct
Fml	modulated Finite	Ao	comment Adjunct
P	Predicator	Aj	conjunctive Adjunct
Pml	modulated Predicator	WhAc	fused Wh element
F/P	fused Finite and Predicator		

**MOOD elements** of ranking clauses are shown in **bold**  
Modality elements of all clauses are shown underlined

## Text 1

/// **Some Vietnamese-American students and members of the community (S) have (F)** objected to (P) the presence of the Vietnamese flag on campus (C). /// **Twenty-three international students from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S) are (F)** enrolled (Ca) at SSU (Ac). /// **The flag of Vietnam (S) represents (F/P)** them (C) at International Week events and in the Richmond Hall of Flags (Ac). /// To the people of Vietnam (Ac), < including (P) these 23 SSU students (C), > **the Vietnamese flag (S) is (F)** a symbol of their home nation (C). /// But (Aj) to those [[who (S) fled (F/P) South Vietnam (C)]] (Ac), < including (P) some of our Vietnamese-American students and their families (C), > **that same flag (S) is (F)** a symbol of oppression (C). /// **Memories of the gut-wrenching events from a generation ago (S) remain (F/P)** fresh (Ca) for many (Ac), / including (P) thousands of Americans [[whose lives (S) were (F) touched (P), some tragically (Ac), by the Vietnam War (Ac)]] (C). /// **It (S) 's (F)** in that spirit (Ac) [[**that (Aj) we (S) have (F) assured (P) our Vietnamese-American students (C) / that (Aj) the Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom Flag, the flag of the former nation of South Vietnam, (S) will (Fms) represent (P) them (C) on our campus (Ac)]] (S).** /// **The university (S) will (Fms)** continue to display (P) both the Heritage flag and the Vietnamese national flag (C) in the Hall of Flags, at International Week and other places [[that (S) celebrate (F/P) our diversity (C)]] (Ac). /// **More than 10 percent of our students (S) come (F/P)** from other nations (Ac). /// **We (S) have (F/P)** a very diverse campus (C), // and (Aj) **the Hall of Flags (S), < which (S) is (F)** an impressive display

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<sup>6</sup> Label abbreviations are based on those used by Eggins (1994).

inside Richmond Hall (C), > **is (F)** one way [[we (S) embrace (F/P) // and (Aj) celebrate (F/P) our campus' diversity and international reach (C)]] (C). /// **The hall (S) represents (F/P)** the nations [[from which (Ac) our College of Engineering (S) has (F/P) enrolled students (C)]] (C). /// **International students (S) request (F/P)** / that (Aj) their home nation's flag (S) be raised (P) in their honor (Ac). /// Once (Aj) **the flag (S) is (F)** raised (P), / **it (S) remains (F/P)** in the hall (Ac), / symbolizing (P) SSU's lasting connection with our students (C). /// **The Hall of Flags (S) makes (F/P)** no political statement (C) about Vietnam, South Vietnam or any other nation or former nation (Ac). /// **Flags from 123 countries (S) are (F)** displayed (P) there (Ac), // and (Aj) **none (S) is (F)** more prominent than any other (C). /// By (Aj) displaying (P) these flags (C), / **the university (S) is not (Fn)** endorsing (P) these nations, their politics or policies (C). /// **We (S) are (F)** supporting (P) students and alumni [[who (S) come (F/P) from these nations (Ac)]] (C). /// **The flags (S) represent (F/P)** countries of origin, not governments (C). /// **We (S) have (F)** reached out (P) to the concerned students and community leaders (Ac), // and (Aj) together (Ac) **we (S) have (F)** taken (P) initial steps (C) toward clarification and resolution (Ac). /// For example (Aj), **we (S) have (F)** posted (P) a permanent display in the hall [[explaining (P) its purpose (C)]] (C). /// **The President's Office (S) has (F)** offered (P) / to bring in (P) guest speakers (C) / to discuss (P) issues related to Vietnam — past, present and future (C). /// On several occasions (Ac), **my colleagues and I (S) have (F)** met with (P) students and local community leaders (C), // and (Aj) **we (S) have (F)** offered (P) / to work (P) openly and constructively (Ac) with them (Ac). /// **We (S) look forward to (F/P)** [[continuing (P) these conversations (C) in the hope of [[reaching (P) greater levels of understanding and respect (C)]] (Ac) ]] (C). /// **SSU (S) welcomes (F/P)** // and (Aj) **embraces (F/P)** all qualified students from all nations [[who (S) want (F) to pursue (P) an education (C) // and (Aj) seek (F) to advance (P) their lives (C) at this university (Ac)]] (C). ///

## Text 2

/// **Southern State University's Hall of Flags (S) was (F)** established (P) / to celebrate (P) the diversity of the engineering school's student body (C). /// **These flags (S) were not (Fn)** intended to endorse (P) the politics or policies of any nation (C). /// As part of this display (Ac), **the Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom Flag (S) represented (F/P)** our Vietnamese-American students (C) // and (Aj) **the flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S) represented (F/P)** our international students from Vietnam (C). /// Recently (Ac), **a heated controversy (S) emerged (F/P)** / when (Aj) **Vietnamese-American students and their community (S)** strongly (Ac) **protested (F/P)** the flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (C), / viewing (P) it (C) as a political symbol (C). /// As a result (Aj), **I (S) have (F)** removed (P) all 123 flags (C) from the Hall of Flags (Ac). /// **A cooling off period (S) is (F) needed (Pml)** for thoughtful reflection (Ac). /// In the fall (Ac) **I (S) will (Fms)** establish (P) a committee (C) / to explore (P) alternative means [[to celebrate (P) the diversity of our student body (C)]] (C). /// **Our ultimate goal (S) remains (F/P)** [[fostering (P) a strong sense of community among all our students (C), /



including (P) all our international students (C)] (C). /// **We (S) must (Fml) never (Am)** forget (P) / that (Aj) **a public university (S) is (F)** a special institution [[that (S) respects (F/P) all individuals (C) // and (Aj) embraces (F/P) diversity (C)]] (C). ///

### Text 3

/// At SSU (Ac) **we (S) 're (F)** proud of the diversity of our student body (C). /// **In fact (Am), we think (Ao) it (S) 's (F)** a reason [[to celebrate (P)]] (C). /// **It (S) 's (F)** in that spirit (Ac) [[**that (Aj) we (S) established (F/P) the Hall of Flags (C) in the Richmond Hall atrium (Ac) in 1989 (Ac)**]] (S). /// **These flags (S) represented (F/P)** the nations [[from which (Ac) our College of Engineering (S) had (F/P) enrolled students or graduated alumni (C)]] (C). /// **Flags (S) were (F)** added (P) / as (Aj) **students from countries [never before (Am) represented (P) in the College of Engineering (Ac)] (S) enrolled (F/P)** for the first time (Ac). /// On May 10 (Ac), **I (S) made (F/P)** the very difficult decision [[to remove (P) the flags (C)]] (C). /// **They (S) had (F)** become (P) a source of division rather than celebration (C). /// Even though (Aj) **the Hall of Flags (S) was (F) never (Am) intended (P)** as a collection of political symbols (C), / **that (S) became (F/P)** the reality (C). /// **We (S) could not (Fnml)** take down (P) individual flags (C) / because (Aj) **we (S) wouldn't (Fnml)** tell (P) students from one nation (C) / that (Aj) **we (S) couldn't (Fnml)** honor (P) them (C) in the same way [[we (S) honored (F/P) students from other nations (C)]] (Ac). /// Once (Aj) **we (S) start (F/P)** down the road of [[removing (P) objectionable flags (C)]] (Ac), / how (WhAc) **do (F) we (S)** decide (P) / **which flags (S) remain (F/P)** // and (Aj) **which (S) are (F)** removed (P)? /// So (Aj) **every flag (S) came down (F/P)**. /// **This (S) includes (F/P)** the U.S. and State flags [[that (S) were (F) part of the display (C)]] (C). /// At least for now (Ac), < as (Aj) **we (S) take (F/P)** time [[to plan (P) for the future (Ac)]] (C), > **there (S) will (Fms)** be (P) no flags [[displayed (P) in the atrium of Richmond Hall (Ac)]] (C). /// However (Aj), **we (S) will (Fms)** continue to fly (P) the U.S. and State flags (C) in many places on campus (Ac), / including (P) the Central Library mall and at official university celebrations (C). /// **The U.S. and State flags (S) will (Fms) always (Am)** be displayed (P) prominently and proudly (Ac) on our campus (Ac). /// **The Hall of Flags (S) is (F)** gone (Ca), // but (Aj) [[**what (S) remains (F/P)**]] (S) **is (F)** our noble desire [[to honor (P) all our students from around the world (C)]] (C). /// Rather than (Aj) focusing (P) our efforts (C) on what [[we (S) 've (F) lost (P)]] (Ac) // or (Aj) casting (P) blame (C) / without (Aj) knowing (P) all the facts (C), / let's (S) work (P) together (Ac) / to create (P) a compelling new display (C). /// Let's (S) come (P) together (Ac) / to build (P) something even better (C) in Richmond Hall (Ac). /// **I (S) have (F)** announced (P) my intention [[to establish (P) a university-wide committee (C) / to find (P) ways of [[celebrating (P) our diversity (C) / without (Ac) making (P) statements (C) // or (Aj) using (P) symbols with divisive political meaning (C)]] (C) ]] (C). /// **A committee [including (P) students, faculty, staff and others (C)] (S) will (Fms)** be appointed (P) this summer (Aj) // and (Aj) begin (P) work (C) in the fall (Ac). /// If (Aj) **you (S) have (F/P)** a question, comment or idea for the committee (C), / please (Ao) write (P) to me (Ac) at president@ssu.edu (Ac). ///

**My hope (S) is (F) [[that (Aj) SSU (S) will (Fms) always (Am) embrace (P) students from all walks of life and all countries in the world (C)]] (C). /// Let's (S) find (P) new and enduring ways [[to celebrate (P) our rich and varied international connections (C) with pride (Ac)]] (C). ///**

APPENDIX C

TENSE AND SPEECH FUNCTION ANALYSIS

## Text 1

Clause No.	Subject	Finite	Tense	Mood	Speech Function
1	Some Vietnamese-American students and members of the community	have	present	declarative	statement
2	Twenty-three international students from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam	are	present	declarative	statement
3	The flag of Vietnam	represents	present	declarative	statement
4	A ---			(non-finite)	
	B the Vietnamese flag	is	present	declarative	statement
5	A ---			(non-finite)	
	B that same flag	is	present	declarative	statement
6	A Memories of the gut-wrenching events from a generation ago	remain	present	declarative	statement
	B ---			(non-finite)	
7	It/that we have assured our Vietnamese-American students that the Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom Flag, the flag of the former nation of South Vietnam, will represent them on our campus	is	present	declarative	statement
8	The university	will	future	declarative	statement
9	More than 10 percent of our students	come	present	declarative	statement
10	A We	have	present	declarative	statement
	B the Hall of Flags	is	present	declarative	statement
	C which	is	present	declarative	statement
11	The hall	represents	present	declarative	statement
12	A International students	request	present	declarative	statement
	B their home nation's flag			(non-finite)	
13	A the flag	is	present	declarative	statement
	B it	remains	present	declarative	statement
	C ---			(non-finite)	
14	The Hall of Flags	makes	present	declarative	statement
15	A Flags from 123 countries	are	present	declarative	statement
	B none	is	present	declarative	statement
16	A ---			(non-finite)	
	B the university	is not	present	declarative	statement
17	We	are	present	declarative	statement
18	The flags	represent	present	declarative	statement
19	A We	have	present	declarative	statement
	B we	have	present	declarative	statement
20	we	have	present	declarative	statement
21	A The President's Office	has	present	declarative	statement
	B ---			(non-finite)	
	C ---			(non-finite)	
22	A my colleagues and I	have	present	declarative	statement
	B we	have	present	declarative	statement
	C ---			(non-finite)	
23	We	look forward to	present	declarative	statement
24	A SSU	welcomes	present	declarative	statement
	B SSU	embraces	present	declarative	statement

## Text 2

Clause No.	Subject	Finite	Tense	Mood	Speech Function
1	A Southern State University's Hall of Flags	was	past	declarative	statement
	B ---			(non-finite)	
2	These flags	were not	past	declarative	statement
3	A the Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom Flag	represented	past	declarative	statement
	B the flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam	represented	past	declarative	statement
4	A a heated controversy	emerged	past	declarative	statement
	B Vietnamese-American students and their community	protested	past	declarative	
	C ---			(non-finite)	
5	I	have	present	declarative	statement
6	A cooling off period	is	present	declarative	command
7	A I	will	future	declarative	statement
	B ---			(non-finite)	
8	Our ultimate goal	remains	present	declarative	statement
9	A We	must	present	declarative	command
	B a public university	is	present	declarative	

### Text 3

Clause No.	Subject	Finite	Tense	Mood	Speech Function
1	we	're (are)	present	declarative	statement
2	A we	think	present	declarative	statement
	B it	's (is)	present	declarative	
3	It/that we established the Hall of Flags in the Richmond Hall atrium in 1989	's (is)	present	declarative	statement
4	These flags	represented	past	declarative	statement
5	A Flags	were	past	declarative	statement
	B students from countries never before represented in the College of Engineering	enrolled	past	declarative	
6	I	made	past	declarative	statement
7	They	had	past	declarative	statement
8	A the Hall of Flags	was	past	declarative	
	B that	became	past	declarative	statement
9	A We	could not	past	declarative	statement
	B we	wouldn't	past	declarative	
	C we	couldn't	past	declarative	
10	A we	start	present	declarative	
	B we	do	present	interrogative	question
	C which flags	remain	present	declarative	
	D which	are	present	declarative	
11	every flag	came down	past	declarative	statement
12	This	includes	present	declarative	statement
13	A we	take	present	declarative	
	B there	will	future	declarative	statement
14	A we	will	future	declarative	statement
	B ---			(non-finite)	
15	The U.S. and state flags	will	future	declarative	statement
16	A The Hall of Flags	is	present	declarative	statement
	B what remains	is	present	declarative	statement
17	A ---			(non-finite)	
	B ---			(non-finite)	
	C ---			(non-finite)	
	D let's	---		imperative	command
	E ---			(non-finite)	
18	A Let's	---		imperative	command
	B ---			(non-finite)	
19	I	have	present	declarative	statement
20	A A committee including students, faculty, staff and others	will	future	declarative	statement
	B A committee including students, faculty, staff and others	will	future	declarative	statement
21	A you	have	present	declarative	
	B ---	write		imperative	offer
22	My hope	is	present	declarative	statement
23	Let's	---		imperative	command

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