

## Unit 7.

# Getting Interpersonal: the grammar of social roles and relationships

## Overview

In this unit, we develop further our understanding of the interpersonal function of language, the linguistic means by which speakers and writers form and negotiate relationships, act out social roles, and represent themselves, as, for example, powerful or deferential, assertive or conciliatory, emotionally engaged or uninvolved, and so on. An understanding of the interpersonal function of language enables us to explore all manner of communicative and rhetorical issues. We are able to,

- analyse how language is used to form friendships and negotiate alliances, to avoid or provoke conflicts and to indicate deference, respect or animosity.
- analyse how writers/speakers use language to exercise power or to lay claim to authority, social standing or expertise.
- analyse the linguistic bases of conventionalised role relations and interactions such as those between doctors and patients, teachers and students, parents and children etc.
- analyse the different linguistic means by which advertisers, politicians, media commentators or academic authors use language to win over their audiences and hence to convince and persuade.
- analyse the distinctive linguistic properties of texts which seek to popularise expert or technical subjects (for example the articles in popular science magazines) and thereby to gain a general, non-expert readership for such topics.
- identify key aspects of the style, tone-of-voice or textual personae typically adopted in different types of academic prose and thereby to provide an account of what might be expected of academic writers.

## 1. Tenor and interpersonal positioning in spoken interactions

We will begin by comparing and contrasting two face-to-face, interactive spoken exchanges which, in broad terms can both be classified as ‘conversational’. I suspect that, as you read through the texts, various differences in the social roles and relationships of those involved in the texts will be fairly readily discernible to you. Our purpose in what follows will be to explore these initial impressions, to develop an account by which it is possible to explain them by reference to a systematic and explicit linguistic account.

## Activity 1

As you read through the texts, see whether you can provide possible answers for the following questions:

What type of social setting do you think the original spoken texts occurred in?

Can you connect any of the speakers with any conventionalised social roles (for example doctor or patient, parent or child, priest or religious congregation, shopper or sales assistant, wife or husband, lawyer or witness, and so on)?

Are the speakers equal or unequal with respect to their social status – for example, with respect to their power, authority or expertise?

Are the speakers socially close or socially distant?

As already suggested, some of the answers may seem rather obvious. If so, consider why this is the case, why is it so easy for you to reconstruct the original social roles and relationships even when your only evidence is this entirely decontextualised written transcript? What precisely are the linguistic indicators which enable you to deduce the social roles and relationships in this way?

Text 1.

Key to transcription:

(.) indicates a short pause (less than half a second)

||...|| indicates that the current speaker and the following speaker overlap here, that is to say, both speakers talk simultaneously

+.. indicates that the word has been cut short – the complete word has not been fully articulated or could not be transcribed due to some overlap or interruption.

[The speakers have just returned to their classroom after watching an educational film in a room elsewhere in the school. The film was on the subject of ‘mechanical advantage’ which, of course, refers to way in which devices such as levers and pulleys can be employed to apply force. The text may be a little difficult at first to follow. This is often the case with transcripts of spoken interactions since there will often be references to items in the immediate physical environment which we, of course, won’t have any knowledge of, or to other information which the interlocutors have in common but which will probably be unknown to us. In this text, the speakers refer to objects which, in the film they have just watched, were presented as examples of devices which demonstrate this ‘mechanical advantage’. Thus when they talk about, ‘a lever’, ‘a seesaw’, ‘an inclined plane’ and a ‘baseball bat’ they are referring to items which appeared in the film as examples of such devices.

S1	Alright, a quick summary of what we have just seen. Quick.
S2	Lever.
S1	Hold on.
S3	Seesaw.
S1	Right. Just wait till we are all here. Have you got enough scrap paper on your desk, please? You'll

	<p>probably only need two or three pieces. Right, you may have to use the stand (.).</p> <p>Steven and Brad, the sun is shining inside?</p> <p>Alright, thank you. Solved your problem?</p> <p>You'll probably need to see that film tomorrow, as an extra, to get you (.) to get your ideas really sorted out.</p> <p>Right. Let's have a summary of what was the film basically about. They seem to mention two basic machines. Um, Andrew?</p>
S2	Levers. ( <i>pronounces the word with an American accent as in the film</i> )
S1	It has an Australian pronunciation.
S3	Levers.
S1	Yeah, leave her alone. ( <i>said as a joke – 'leave her' = 'lever' - everyone laughs</i> ). Lever and ...(.)
S4	An inclined plane
S1	An (.) inclined plane   . <overlap>
S5	Baseball...
S1	Hold on, hold on, now they extended these two basic machines, (.) into five separate machines. In that movie they extended them out, they extended out some of the machines. They used the lever.    <overlap>
S5	Baseball...
S1	Hold on, hold on. Joanne?
S6	Lever.
S1	No, we've done a lever.
S5	Baseball bat.
S1	Baseball bat. (.) Any bat really.
S7	Flying fox. ( <i>said very quietly</i> )
S1	Pardon, flying fox?
S8	Clothesline.
S1	And what with it?
S8	A wheel.
S1	A wheel. Yeah, no you're right. Clotheslines. That was a... ( <i>interrupted</i> ) what did she use on the clothesline?
SEVERAL	Pulley.
S1	A pulley, which is a type of (.) lever. Except of course,

	you've got also a what with it? A (.) wind... (prompting) ...lass. Anything else that wasn't mentioned that possibly uses the principles of a lever.
S3	Door handle.
S1	A door handle, good one, hey. Yep. Righto, let's have a look at an inclined plane one (.) well actually that is a type of tool which you have seen in action, come to think of it. Maybe we can get six uses of an inclined plane. Um Aranthi?
S4	Stairs.
S1	Stairs, right. Great answer.

(Text from Martin, Martin, Matthiessen & Painter 1997 – pages 88-89, data originally collected by Frances Christie.)

### Text 2.

(The speakers are looking at and discussing the photograph of a British pop group, 'Hearsay'. The group was formed in 2001 as the result of a television talent-quest program in which young people wanting to become members of a pop group auditioned in front of television cameras, with the auditions being broadcast as part of the 'Pop Stars' television program. Their performances were assessed, on air, by celebrity judges, some of whom became notorious for the negativity of their comments. Half way through the transcript, the speakers refer to one such judge, 'Nigel'. The speakers begin by discussing the appearance of one of the members of the group 'Kym'. )

S1	(1) Hold up the picture of her a minute with the (.) I just want to see her hair
S2	(2) She looks stupid, but they look like hair extensions, how can you (.) they're    supposed to look natural aren't they
S1	(3) extensions look crap but I don't understand why they couldn't do it (.) why they couldn't do it to make it look natural   her
S2	(4) it looks like ooh    I've got a bob... <turn continues below – see next S2>
S1	(5)    coz it's not that hard
S2	(6)    then long straggly bits.    What's the point of that
S3	(7)   She is quite big actually isn't she (.)    in that picture they all look quite big
S1	(8)    that's what I was going to say (.) the whole thing is that I don't actually think that they're big (.) but in comparison to say like (.)    <turn continues below – see next S1>
S3	(9)    like
S1	(10)    Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears and all that lot, even just
S2	(11) Yeah compared to other popstars, exactly    and she's got (.) quite a few things that are like going against her I reckon (.)
S3	(12)   Are you talking about Kym

S2	(13) Yea Kym (.) She's like (.) she's not (.) young (.) slim (.) gorgeous type of person is she   which is <turn continues below – see next S2>
S1	(14)    she's not
S3	(15)    yeah
S2	(16) really bad to be like criticising her for that but she's not the kind of (.) ideal pop star
S3	(17) yeah but she's the 24-year-old with two kids that's put on a few pound over Christmas (.)    that's all the comment is
S2	(18)    but maybe (.) yeah maybe it's good that she's not
S1	(19) How thin do they want them to be as well
S3	(20) Well he said that they need to have a new diet (.) and a fitness regime, need to go to the gym (.) and all that, doesn't it, doesn't it say
S1	(21)    in the programme are they talking about that
S3	(22) yeah yeah
S1	(23) last night
S3	(24) Nigel was yeah
S2	(25) Nige
S3	(26) Nige
S2	(27) Our Nige
S3	(28) And even the lads as well need to go out and
S2	(29) yeah but the thing is actually the pressure's all on the girls not the blokes like (.) the blokes just have to go to the gym, they're already quite buffed up anything, it's just the girls, like, have to get skinny
S3	(30) but the say that they're always, they eat so mu so many takeaways and curries, look (.) here we go.
S2	(31) yeah but then they're like oh they want them to be like (.) normal people that's what normal people do, how much (.) rubbish do we eat all the time, it's like crisps and all that stuff.

## 1 a. Relative social status (equality/inequality)

**Speech Acts**

**Topic choice**

**Turn management**

**Naming/forms of address**

**Evaluations/Assessments**

## **Activity 2 - text 2.**

We can now turn to the second of our two texts. In the light of the discussion just completed, would you say that the social situation is quite as easy to deduce as that of text 1? Is there any linguistic evidence by which you might make an informed guess as to the gender of the speakers or their age? The social setting of the conversation is a Western one (specifically the UK). Are there any aspects of the way in which social roles and relationships are acted out in this text which might be specific to such a cultural context?

You might like to return briefly to text 2 and consider it specifically in terms of the linguistic aspects we just observed: speech acts, naming/terms of address, topic selection, turn management, passing of judgements and assessments, as well as any other features which seem relevant.

### **Use of speech functions**

Compare each speaker's use of statements, questions, commands and offers. Is there any evidence here to suggest differences between the speaker in terms of their access to these different functions or do they appear to be essentially equal in these terms?

### **Topic choice**

Does one of the speakers take the lead in determining the direction the discussion takes or are they all essentially equal when it comes to topic selection?

### **Turn management** (who gets to speak, when, and for how long)

Are the speaker's largely equal in terms of how much speaking they do or does one (or more) of the speakers dominate in terms of amount of talking?

Is there one speaker who seems to be dictating who gets to speak - for example by interrupting.

### **Evaluations/Assessments**

How do the speakers compare in terms of their apparent authority to pass positive or negative judgments. All three speakers freely offer positive/negative assessments. For example,

S2: 'She looks stupid'

S1: 'her extensions look crap'

S3: 'she's quite big actually'

### **Text 2: deducing social roles and social setting.**

Conclusions based on this analysis:

Is the relationship between the speakers one of social equality or inequality? What are the primary linguistics indicators of this?

Can you formulate a hypothesis as to the speakers' gender? If so, what were the linguistic indicators at work here?

## **2 a. Social distance**

Our analysis, then, provides us with evidence by which we can make clear proposals about the relative social status of the speakers in the two texts and by which, in some

cases, we can identify the social roles and identities of those speakers. But as has been indicated in earlier units, this variable of relative social status (equality/inequality) is only part of the interpersonal picture. We turn now to another equally important parameter by which the Tenor of a text may vary – that of social distance. Here, as you will recall from earlier units, we are concerned with the degree of connection or closeness between the speakers, the degree to which speakers by their language suggest they are on familiar, intimate or friendly terms, or, alternatively, on not so familiar or friendly terms. You will also recall that some of the key linguistic indicators of social closeness/distance are as follows

- Greater or lesser degrees of closeness, familiarity, friendliness or intimacy are indicated via informal linguistic forms – for example, colloquial, slang vocabulary; contracted and elliptical forms.
- Familiarity/contact is also indicated by the use of words/phrases which rely on the speaker and addressee having specific or specialised experiences in common.
- A different type of familiarity or contact, that of being members of an ‘in-group’ of experts who share some specialist knowledge, may be indicated by the use of specialist/technical vocabulary.
- Social distance or lack of contact is indicated by the use of formal modes of expression.

### **Text 1 – social distance.**

Australian primary school teachers and their students are in quite frequent contact – typically five days a week over the school year. Theirs, however, is not typically the closeness or intimacy of family members or close friends. Accordingly we might classify the Tenor of such a relationship as familiar but not intimate. The language choices of text 1 are in conformity with this scenario. We observe a relatively high frequency of colloquial vocabulary choices on the part of the teacher,

Alright, Hold on (in place of the more formal wait), really (as a colloquial/less formal intensifier), Yeah, good one, hey, Yep, Righto.

We also observe the use of some contractions,

You’ll, we’ve, you’re,

as well as a few clause constructions involving the types of ellipsis typically associated with more informal settings. For example,

‘Alright, a quick summary of what we have just seen’  
(in place of the more formal) ‘Alright, let’s do a quick summary...’;

‘Solved your problem’  
(in place of the more formal) ‘You have solved your problem’ etc

The fact that the teacher uses the children’s first names to address them is also indicative of some degree of social familiarity. Such usage is customary in Australian schools today, especially at the primary school level.

Recall that above we noticed as well that there are a couple of occasions where the students actually interrupt their teacher, or offer answers before being invited to do so. Such interruptions and overlaps are associated with contexts of social closeness rather than distance.

### Activity 3: Text 2 – social distance

In the light of this discussion, return to text 2. Can you now systematically identify any specific indicators of social contact/distance. For example, can you identify instances of colloquial or slang vocabulary or instances the contractions and ellipses which we might associate with informal rather than formal contexts. On the basis of this, how would you characterise the relationship between the speakers.

## 2. Analysing Tenor in non-interactive texts

We turn now from considering Tenor in spoken interactions to considering Tenor in written texts directed at a non-specific, unknown or mass audience – for example, media reports, academic articles, text books, public information brochures, print advertising and political electioneering materials. It will probably come as no surprise that we need to make some adjustments to our analytical methodology when we make this shift. Obviously there are going to be some fundamental differences in terms of social roles and relationships between texts where there are verbal interactions between multiple communicative participants who are known to each other in some way, and texts where there is just the one speaker/writer directing his/her words to a mass audience.

For a start, the issue of relative social status (equality/inequality of power, authority, expertise) is no longer quite such a straightforward matter. With spoken interactions we are able to compare and contrast the communicative contributions of the various speakers in order to discover whether there are any interpersonally significant disparities. Obviously this avenue is not available to us with monologic written texts - we have only the words of the text's author to consider. Now we might perhaps postulate that the writers of such texts are all powerful on the grounds that they do all the communicating and those to whom their words are directed have no opportunity to contribute to the text's construction and cannot interact with the text producer until after the text has been published or presented. (This is not to imply that listeners/readers are passive participants. They, of course, are actively involved as interpreters of the text.) And yet against this, there is the obvious point that authors of written texts definitely do not always come across as equally powerful, authoritative or expert. It is quite possible, in fact, for authors to variably present themselves as more or a less powerful, authoritative or expert. Accordingly we need an analytical framework by which we can investigate the means by which particular levels of authoritativeness are constructed in written texts.

The issue of social contact/distance poses a somewhat similar problem. In the case of spoken interactions it makes sense to consider whether those involved have some past history. Have they had prior social contact, and if so, of what type? But such questions are not so readily applicable to the written monologue directed to a mass audience. Our first thought here might be that, well, since the author doesn't actually know those to whom their words are directed, then there can't be any prior relationship and accordingly we might expect them to choose language appropriate for communicating with strangers. But we know that this is by no means always the case. Once again, there is a great deal of variability in terms of how authors choose to present themselves to their audience. While some may present themselves as distant,

as having no prior acquaintanceship, others adopt the opposite approach and very clearly present themselves as on quite familiar, friendly or even intimate terms with those whom they address. Accordingly, we need a methodology for explaining just how it is that writers of this type of text can go about constructing this sense of connection or intimacy with their unknown, mass audience.

With these points in mind, our approach in analysing the Tenor of written, monologic texts will be one in which we focus on the way in which authors of written texts construct for themselves a particular presence, a particular identity or persona which they present to their readers. In order to conduct analyses of this ‘authorial presence’ we will be attending to the following issues:

- **Authoritativeness (power positioning)** To what degree is the writer presented as expert, authoritative, having social standing or in a position to control the actions or beliefs of others? To what degree do they present themselves as in some way subordinate, lacking in expertise, deferential or dependent on others?
- **Proximity (contact/distance):** Is the writer presented as intimate with or at least on familiar terms with those they address, or are they presented as unfamiliar with, or distant from those they address?
- **Stance: [Attitudinal positioning and alignment/disalignment with actual or potential interlocutors]** What position does the writer take with respect to (a) the material with which they are dealing and (b) to those who have previously spoken on the current matter or those who might respond in the future (including those being addressed.)

This issue of stance can be further broken down in to the following:

(a) What sorts of attitude does the writer demonstrate towards the events, circumstances or participants being referenced? For example are they overtly positive, negative or neutral? Are they more covertly (more implicitly) positive or negative?

(b) What propositions does the writer hold to be true and which false; and which proposition do they hold to be still negotiable or subject to differences of opinion? What propositions do they ‘take-for-granted’ (hold to be commonsensical and shared by ‘all’) and which do they present as novel, contentious or in some other way problematic?

(c) Do they present themselves as aligned with those who have previously spoken on the current subject or at odds?

(d) Do they assume themselves to be in agreement with those they are addressing or at odds?

(e) Do they make allowances for those who might hold differing viewpoints (indicating willingness to include them in the dialog) or do employ verbal mechanism by which those holding to differing viewpoints are ignored or excluded from any continuing ‘dialog’?

## Activity 2

Compare the following two texts in terms of their 'attitudinal positioning'. Identify all points in the two text where the writer overtly indicates either a positive or negative viewpoint. While you are doing this, identify precisely what or who it is that is being targeted for evaluation – for example is it a person, a thing, a happening, some action, a state of affairs and so on?

Text 1

Dear Mum and Dad,

On Thursday 2.2 went on an excursion to observe plants.

First we went to Port Kembla Beach. There were not many plants because of the salt and the sand. Then we got back on the bus.

Next we went to the steelworks. We sat on a hill and observed the plants. We saw bushes and grass. Not many plants grow because of the pollution.

We got back on the bus and went to Mt. Keira rain forest. We got off the bus and ate our little lunch in the clearing area. We saw many different types of plants and trees. We saw wattle trees, tall trees, thin trees and rock plants.

After that we got back on the bus and went back to school. We arrived at school at 12 o'clock. Then we went into school and talked about our excursion.

We had GREAT fun!!!!

Aneta

Text 2

Dear Aunty Sally,

How are you? Thankyou for the birthday money. For my birthday I got to choose what I wanted to do.

In the morning I opened my presents. I got a fishing rod. We went fishing in the lake even though it's dirty. Dad told me that dough with cotton on it was good for medium sized fish. He sure was right as we caught a big cat fish with streaks on it.

In the evening I chose to go for pizza at the Croc Hotel. When we got there it had a skeleton hanging off the roof with the cotton over it for the web. That was for Halloween. After we finished our pizza, we ran around the hotel and even splashed around a bit in the pool. You're not supposed to but nobody caught us.

We had a great night and we didn't get home until about 11 o'clock. I'm looking forward to coming down as the mozzies are as bad as. See you in a few weeks.

Love Alex

## Activity 3

Below you will find three short extracts taken from the news page coverage of the same event by three different British newspapers. They are all the headlines and first few sentences of news reports concerned with a state visit to the United Kingdom by the then Chinese head of state, Jiang Zemin, in October 1999.

**extract 1.**

(from *The Sun*)

## **RIFLES RAISED BY GUARDSMEN TO STOP RIOT OVER HATED PRESIDENT**

Queen's China crisis as coach is charged

Bayonet fixed and rifle raised, a soldier comes to the rescue of his Queen yesterday. The trooper went into action when human rights protesters charged at her carriage as she travelled towards Buckingham Palace with the Chinese president

### **extract 2.**

(from *The Daily Telegraph*)

#### **Anti-China protests brushed aside**

The first Chinese state visit in British history began yesterday with a lone, Tianmen Square-style attempt to disrupt the royal procession in the Mall and muted protests elsewhere.

As the Queen and President Jiang Zemin travelled to Buckingham Palace, a 34 year-old-man jumped over the barriers and attempted to unfurl the Tibetan flag in front of their coach

### **extract 3.**

(from *The Independent*)

#### **Leader of the unfree world is feted by the Queen as protesters arrested**

Ceremonially speaking, President Jiang Zemin, the first Chinese head of state to visit Britain, was yesterday given the full monty.

A public greeting from the Queen was followed by an inspection of the guard and a carriage trip down the Mall, with Union Jacks and red flags fluttering harmoniously in the breeze.

Consider how these extracts operate in terms of attitudinal positions.

Do you feel any of the extracts are more 'subjective' or 'evaluative' than the other extracts. If so rank the reports on a scale from most subjective/evaluation to least subjective/evaluative?

If you felt that any (all?) of the extracts were evaluative in some way, indicate just what is the viewpoint being indicated. That is to say, towards what or whom does the writer indicate they are positively or negative disposed?.

Work through the three extracts, identifying all words or phrases which you feel are overtly or explicitly evaluative (i.e directly a positive or negative assessment rather than just implying one.). How do the extracts compare in this regard. For example, do they differ the frequency with which such overtly attitudinal lexis is employed?

## **Activity 4**

Some further texts for analysis. 1. Another text concerned with visit to the UK in 1989 by the Chinese president, Jiang Zemin - this time an 'editorial' rather than a news item.

The behaviour of the Government and the police during the visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin was nothing short of disgraceful.

To see police brutally manhandling demonstrators was not only shocking but representative of more repressive regimes, such as China.

As for Labour's "ethical foreign policy" the visit exposed that as a sham. The message from Labour is clear: ethics, morals and ideals are not a consideration in foreign policy when exports have to be contemplated  
<...>

Having behaved so dishonourably, one would have thought the Government would decide to keep its head down, if not to avoid the flak then at least in shame.

But no. Outrageously un-named Cabinet Ministers have spoken of their displeasure at the behaviour of Prince Charles for not attending the official banquet given by Mr Zemin at the Chinese Embassy last Thursday.

The Prince felt duty-bound to attend the state banquet given for Mr Zemin at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday but his conscience obviously led him to snub the Chinese President later.

While such a snub was embarrassing to the Government, the Foreign Office and the Monarchy, it was the act of a man who felt that to sup with the devil once was his duty but twice was morally wrong.

However, the Prince's ethical stance and support for such basic ideals as human rights has clearly upset Labour.

"It is not Charles's job to cause this kind of grief for us or for the Cabinet," a Minister was reported as saying yesterday.

But if the Government places the heir to the throne in a position where he has to meet and rub shoulders with the head of one of the most infamous and brutal regimes in the world can they really expect him to kowtow without an objection?

<...>

What Prince Charles did struck a chord both with civil rights groups and with a much wider section of the public who were rightly infuriated that such hospitality should be given to a dictator.

Mr Tony Blair has realised the sensitivity of the visit but has refused to make a clear public statement on human rights and the visit of Mr Zemin.

In this instance Mr Blair has put trade before ethics, economics before human lives.

(Birmingham Post – leader page, October 30, 1999)

How would you characterise the tone of the article? What sort of authorial persona is constructed here? What are the linguistic means by which these effects are achieved.

2. Here the editor of the *Guardian* newspaper's reviews pages responds, by way of an open letter published on a web site, to criticisms that a film review column published by the *Guardian* had been 'racist'. (The review was by Charlotte Raven, who is mentioned in the letter.)

Dear (angry) reader,

I apologise for not replying to all of you personally, but since most of you have made similar points about Charlotte Raven's column, I hope you don't mind if I address them together.

Broadly most of you have written or mailed me to say that you thought Charlotte's column about Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon was racist because it invoked the old stereotype of the Chinese being inscrutable.

Some of you made more specific points about Charlotte's lack of appreciation for Chinese cinema, and someone went as far as to suggest that by using the phrase "it seemed to contain multitudes" to describe the performance of the cast, Charlotte was alluding to Western images of "Chinese masses".

In e-mail correspondence and conversations with some of you I have defended Charlotte's column quite robustly.

It is absolutely clear to me that what Charlotte was arguing was that Crouching Tiger was a bad film to which liberal audiences imputed a significance shaped by their own prejudices about Chinese cinema and the Chinese in general.

I thought it was a good point and, interestingly, so did the actor David Yip when we discussed this issue on BBC Scotland's the Mix last Sunday.

Given the number of you who were offended by the column, I think it's now pretty clear that the column wasn't as clear as I thought.

I also think that we perhaps underestimated the offensiveness of the word 'inscrutable' when used in a Chinese context - even though I am satisfied that Charlotte was using the word to describe the audience's perception of the performances in Crouching Tiger, rather than describing them herself.

To put it another way, putting quotation marks around the word inscrutable would have made Charlotte's intended meaning clearer (though I suspect many of you would still have felt its use unacceptable.)

I still think several of the points made about Charlotte's column have been misguided, most conspicuously the one about her reference to multitudes. (From the website at [www.dimsum.co.uk](http://www.dimsum.co.uk), accessed June 2001, no longer available online)

How would you characterise the tone of this extract? Is it as forthright or as assertive or as accusatory as the previous text? Does it use categorical declarations to the same degree? More specifically you might attend to the following types of questions:

1. Are there instances where the writer's viewpoint is presented as only possible or probable rather than as absolutely the case?
2. Are there instances where the author explicitly acknowledges that these are only his opinions and hence that others may hold a different view.
3. Does he characterise any of his proposition as involving some degree of speculation and hence as not categorical.
4. Are any of his propositions attributed to an external source, hence allowing for the possibility that, while at least some people hold this to be the case, others may take a different view.