**Bernie Dodd**

The immediate context of situation of the Bernie Dodd text is that of a short reading comprehension as part of a Cambridge exam paper. The text might thus be a genuine letter to a newspaper, for example, or invented for the purpose of the exam. Or it may be an original that has been adapted.

At a further remove the context of situation is that of a contribution to the debate over the building of a new airport for London. As such it fits the context of culture in which the question of the environment is a controversial topic, particularly in Britain in this case.

The field in this case is thus the airport debate and the tenor is that of (a) a Cambridge examiner providing an exam question to a large number of candidates all over the world and (b) a concerned contributor trying to persuade an unknown public of his views. The mode is semi-formal written text to be read and considered.

The main function of the text is persuasive, the ideational function is precisely that of presenting a cogent argument against the use of the Thames Estuary as an airport site. The interpersonal function is thus that of a concerned individual with some relevant knowledge attempting to convince others, who may be unknown or may be a devoted readership, to agree with him. The use of the first person plural ‘we’ is designed to create a sense of solidarity. The level of affect is low in that it is unlikely that writer and reader know each other and thus are distant. There is no way of allocating status for the same reason, though the writer has the advantage of initiating the debate.

Textually speaking, the themes of the first two sentences are indeed ‘we’ and ‘Our….’, picked up again in the final clause ‘let’s’. In the rest of the text we see use of marked minor themes eg textual themes ‘Yes’, ‘but’, ‘Besides’, interpersonal themes, ‘maybe’, ‘which add a colloquial, and thus more friendly touch to the writer’s plea.

Typical cohesive devices are present, such as the repetition of ‘we’ and ‘ourselves’ in the first sentence, picked up again in the second sentence with ‘Our’ and ‘ourselves’. The noun phrase ‘Constructing an airport in the Thames estuary’ is referred back to anaphorically with ‘it’ twice. Similarly the whole noun phrase ‘the claim that a new airport would reduce noise and improve air quality’ is also picked up anaphorically by a simple ‘it’ in the next clause.

The semantic field of airport construction is represented by a whole string of terms – environment, constructing, airport, noise, air quality, air travel. The use of (near) synonyms can be seen in ‘other species’, ‘other inhabitants’ and ‘wildlife’; ‘harmful’, ‘destructive’ and ‘damaged’.

The text consists mostly of material clauses, though the second and third sentences are relational through the use of ‘is’ and ‘would be’.

The writer employs standard metaphors in expressions like ‘to bite the bullet’, ‘doesn’t hold water’ and ‘dying down’ meaning respectively in congruent language ‘make a potentially unpopular decision’, ‘is not credible’ and ‘decreasing’ . Standard collocations are also to be found in the expressions ‘wanton disregard’, ‘wreak havoc’, ‘air quality’, ‘air travel’ and ‘limit damage’.

The text consists of approx. 124 words of which 73 are content words (nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs) giving it a lexical density of approx. 60%. This is quite a high score indicating that the text is relatively informative, which is to expected in a persuasive journalistic text of this type.