

Register

Modality Markers and Writer Visibility in Norwegian ESL Argumentative Texts

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: The research topic

The field for this investigation involves the various levels of student interlanguage, as several aspects of this field are subject to much debate within language teaching. The more specific topic chosen within this field is register, as evidenced by the presence of politeness and formality in student texts written for two study programs in Norwegian upper secondary education, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (hereafter IB) and *Studieforberedende utdanningsprogram* (“programme for general studies”, hereafter SF; Udir, 2011, p. 51). The reason why this topic was chosen was because of the call in recent years for increased register awareness among students on the upper secondary level, among scholars as well as employers. As the need for a greater command of English increases in many parts of society, an awareness of and the skill to master various registers – and thus achieve a level of interlanguage much closer to the usage of native English speakers – would be crucial for further collaboration with people from other nationalities.

1.2: Politeness and formality

Bruce Fraser and William Nolan state that “No sentence is inherently polite or impolite. We often take certain expressions to be impolite, but it is not the expressions themselves but the conditions under which they are used that determine the judgement of politeness” (1981, p. 96). Thus, “politeness, in this sense, is a question of appropriateness” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 2). The appropriateness of a sentence may impact how the content and mode of expression will be interpreted in a given setting. Being brusquer or more polite than the situation requires will affect how the relation between the interlocutors develops. This may apply not only to oral language, but also to written language. The way one expresses oneself in presenting the information to the reader will ultimately affect how the reader views the information and its credibility, the credibility of the text as a whole, and in some cases, even the credibility of the speaker or writer.

With the aid of Lyons (1977) and Halliday (1978), Jenny Thomas defines register as “‘systematic variation in relation to social context’ [...] or the way in which ‘the language we speak or write varies according to the type of situation’” (1995, p. 154). She states further that formal registers in English may be manifested in various ways, such as through “lexis and forms of address, the avoidance of interruption, etc.” (Thomas, 1995, p. 154).

It is interesting to note her claim that “register, has little to do with politeness and little connection with pragmatics, since we have no real choice about whether or not to use formal language in formal situations (unless we are prepared to risk sanctions, such as social censure)” (Thomas, 1995, p. 154). She elaborates on this by stating that “choice of register has little to do with the strategic use of language and it only becomes of interest to the pragmatist if a speaker deliberately uses unexpected forms in order to change the situation [...] or to challenge the status quo” (Thomas, 1995, p. 154).

Although Thomas’s abovementioned claims may be legitimate, the idea that register is not associated with the strategic use of language and politeness proves somewhat perplexing. In using various forms of register the writer or speaker deliberately uses language in order to establish a relationship between himself and the addressee. Hence, he or she uses language for a strategic purpose. If a student chooses to write an argumentative essay in an informal register, there will always be a reason behind him or her doing this. For instance, the essay question may specifically require the student to write in an informal register. Also, the student may be asked to write with a particular target group in mind, or is not allowed any dictionary or thesaurus at the time of writing. Alternatively, the student may deliberately choose to write in a more informal register rather than a formal one. Whether or not we are considering written texts vs. spoken texts or whether or not the pragmatist is interested in register is of little importance in this case, but it is usually thought that the writer or speaker *always* has the choice between an informal and a formal register. This is regardless of the context and/or co-text in which the utterances appear. The extent to which students may argue politely or more impolitely was therefore a topic I wished to investigate more closely.

Apart from an interest in the different ways in which we express politeness, another reason for the choice of topic was because of the cultural differences I had been told of and also experienced through my personal life. Being part of a Norwegian-Filipino family and also having spent my upper secondary years taking IB at an international school made an impact on me and there were several times when I could notice differences in ways of communicating between cultures. Sometimes these differences were expressed subtly, while other times they were manifested more overtly. My year of teacher training also made me realize that register awareness in English learner texts – in particular that of formal registers – was also missing to a certain extent. This has also been pointed out by several scholars (see for instance Gilquin and

Paquot (2008), Granger and Rayson (1998) and Hellekjær (2007)). This lack of register awareness may be due to various reasons. One might be related to “differences in the politeness strategies used by different discourse communities, either in the types or frequencies of the hedges and boosters used” as well as other differences in the expression of writer stance (Neff et al, 2003, p. 212). The strategies used in the L1 culture may thus be transferred to L2 usage, which may or may not be contextually appropriate. This L1 transfer could in some cases give rise to a different interpretation than was originally intended, e.g. that the reader or hearer becomes insulted or regards the writer or speaker to be more modest and timid than necessary.

Other researchers have pointed out the type of register exposure that students receive has been too informal. In their study, Sylviane Granger and Paul Rayson suggest two main explanations to this, namely the more speech-oriented communicative approach in teaching methodology and a lack of exposure to more formal registers in the classroom (1998, p. 130). However, although perhaps partially the fault of the current teaching trends, this is by no means the whole story, as the exposure through media would also be a relevant influence on register awareness in students, as well as “developmental factors” such as the refinement of skills in various registers and taking heed of various genre requirements as years pass (Gilquin and Paquot, 2008, pp. 52, 55–57). For further information on the theoretical background for the present investigation, see Chapter 2.

1.3: Comparing IB with SF

The IB study program has its language instruction divided into various levels depending on the previous experience the student has in learning and using the language. If the student has little or no knowledge of the language and its use, he or she will most likely study the language at the *ab initio* level (IBO, 2011d). If the student has some knowledge of the language, he or she might take a B-level course instead (IBO, 2011e). Further up the ladder, the student may choose a subject at the A2 level if he or she is (near-)bilingual, and a language at the A1 level if the student is a native speaker of a language (IBO, 2011a and 2011c). This would be general requirements, although circumstances could provide a certain leniency, as demonstrated by one of the IB classes (see Section 3.1 for more details). According to the website for the International Baccalaureate Organization (henceforth “IBO”; IBO, 2011b), it is mandatory for the student to have one A1 language subject and choose a maximum of two language courses from the remaining levels, depending on what the school offers and recommends. Within each language

subject the student will also have to choose between taking the subject at standard level (satisfying the minimum requirements) or at higher level (allowing for immersion in a course topic).

Taking into account the higher-level A2 and A1 language courses (which were represented by each of the two IB classes) we see that the A2 course objectives state that the students are to learn how to “select a register and style that are *consistently* appropriate to the situation” (IBO, 2002, p. 9). This course objective may overlap with certain other objectives, such as the student’s understanding and use of “an extensive range of vocabulary and idiom” and clear, fluent and effective communication “in a wide range of situations” (IBO, 2002, p. 9). This is opposed to A1 which only mentions register in terms of “appreciation”: “[candidates will be expected to demonstrate] a command of the language appropriate for the study of literature and a discriminating appreciation of the need for an effective choice of register and style in both written and oral communication” (IBO, 1999, p. 6). This objective overlaps in turn with “an ability to express ideas with clarity, coherence, conciseness, precision and fluency in both written and oral communication” (IBO, 1999, p. 6). There is no specification on how this is to be taught, although the IBO offers teacher support material for guidance and inspiration on this. Due to a recent alteration of the IB curriculum and syllabi, the support material available so far appears to be for Language B and *ab initio* courses only¹.

The first year of Norwegian upper secondary school (Vg1) is the only year where English is a mandatory subject. Competence aims particularly directed towards register for this year for SF are similar to those for the IB. For instance, the student is expected to know how to “express him/herself in writing and orally in a varied, differentiated and precise manner, with good progression and coherence” and to “write formal and informal texts with good writing structure and coherence based on themes that interest him/her and which are important for society” (Udir, 2010, p. 6). As in the IB syllabi, the issue on register may overlap with other given SF competence aims, such as the production of “composite texts using digital media” and the understanding and use of “a wide general vocabulary and an academic vocabulary related to his/her own education programme” (Udir, 2010, p. 6).

The competence aims within this syllabus were introduced in 2006 and apply to all

¹ For more information on which support material that is available for Language A2-*ab initio*, see http://store.ibo.org/index.php?cPath=23_29_128 (accessed Nov. 10, 2011).

students, regardless of their previous experience in using English. This was also the year when the first textbooks for the new curriculum were introduced, so the amount of guidelines was rather scarce during that time. As time has passed, there have been increasingly more pointers available for teachers, including on the website of the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (hereafter *Utdanningsdirektoratet*). These resources are accessible not only for teachers, but for students, parents and other people partaking in the education process. Although somewhat brief and lacking in detail, there is also a page devoted to formal and informal registers (see Udir, n.d.(b)). Here oral and written genres are used to exemplify cases where one would use each type of register, and also three bullet points on what students need to look out for when writing formal English and also links to two websites dealing specifically with register awareness and use. It is interesting to note the difference between IB and SF here; as the IBO does not publish any support material that is accessible to the public, but rather encourages those interested to purchase them in their internet store. An obvious reason for this is that the IBO is an organization independent of government funding. It would thus need to support itself through other means compared to the Norwegian public school system.

1.4: Research question and plan for thesis

For my thesis project I decided to investigate aspects of formal language in student texts by taking into account certain aspects of formal registers. In particular, I wished to answer (or attempt to answer) the following main questions:

- Are students in IB and/or SF able to argue for their points of view in a polite and formal manner, and if so, how (or how do they not)? Which politeness markers² do they use to get their message across to the reader? To what extent is writer visibility prominent in the texts?
- Are there any differences between IB students and SF students? If so, or if not, what could be possible reasons for this?
- Furthermore, as an additional question: Should any measures be taken to improve the teaching of register awareness in either or both study programs? Why or why not?

This paper will by no means give an account of the whole picture of students' use and comprehension of formal registers. Focusing only on politeness strategies would most likely provide too much information to present in this paper. However, an attempt has been made to at least scratch the surface of this highly relevant issue in the study of student interlanguage.

² A definition and categorization of politeness markers will be given in Section 2.5. A description of the most central study in relation to politeness markers is given in Section 2.3.

Following this introduction will be an overview of relevant theories and studies, including a review of the study which was the greatest source of inspiration for the thesis itself, namely that by Juliane House and Gabriele Kasper (1981; see Section 2.3 for further details on this). Chapter 3 then presents the method and material that were used for the investigation, followed by the results in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 then discusses various factors that could have influenced the findings, and finally the conclusion is presented in Chapter 6, where the findings are summarized and their significance is pointed out. As part of the conclusion, there is also a brief overview with comments from students and teachers on the teaching of register awareness in the classroom, as well as a discussion on which language norms should be used in these circumstances (see Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2). Suggestions for further research are also included as a final note (Section 6.4).

Chapter 2: Theoretical background and previous studies

2.1: Introduction

This chapter starts with a description of how politeness is a part of pragmatic theory, followed by a description of various politeness theories that were relevant for this paper (Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 onwards, respectively). At least one of these theories was also mentioned in the main study which inspired this paper, namely the study by Juliane House and Gabriele Kasper (1981), described in Section 2.3. Four other studies of relevance will also be given in Section 2.4. Finally in Section 2.5 the framework and terminology used in my paper.

2.2: General theories of politeness

2.2.1: Politeness as a part of pragmatic theory

Pragmatics allows us to “talk about people’s intended meanings, their assumptions, their purposes or goals” behind what they are saying (Yule, 1996, p. 4). Politeness theories allow us to do this under more specific circumstances, placing emphasis on the interpersonal relations between the interlocutors. According to Francesca Bargiela-Chappini (2003, p. 1454), the concept of face is thought to have originated in China. Erving Goffman (1967; see Bargiela-Chappini, 2003) was one of the main developers of contemporary face theory and laid the foundation for later theories on face; among others, those of Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (originally from 1987) and Geoffrey Leech (1977). The two latter theories will be presented in the following sections. A brief review of common perceptions of indirectness by Jenny Thomas (1995) will also be given here.

2.2.2: Brown and Levinson (1999): Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage

Part of the development of theories of politeness is thanks to the work of Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson in their theory of face; that is, “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 321). Face can either be positive or negative. Positive face is defined as “the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) by interactants”, whereas negative face is “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 321). Brown and Levinson’s theory states that people cooperate in preserving each other’s faces in all kinds of interaction and that they *assume* that everyone cooperates for everyone’s best interest in terms of face. There is little reason to work in a way that will result in

the addressee's loss of face in a conversation, as one would not want to suffer any consequences of this later. In addition, the theory assumes that "the mutual knowledge of members' public self-image or face, and the social necessity to orient oneself to it in interaction, are universal" (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 322). This is the case even though there are individual and contextual differences between what is considered to be threatening one's face (see Spencer-Oatey, 2008, pp. 14–15).

Brown and Levinson list several types of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) depending on which face that is threatened, be it positive face or negative face, and whether or not the FTA is threatening the speaker's face or the listener's face. Acts that may threaten the addressee's negative face include orders, suggestions, threats, offers, compliments and "expressions of envy or admiration" (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 324). FTAs that may threaten the addressee's positive face may for instance be "expressions of disapproval" and "contradictions or disagreements" (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 324). There are also FTAs that show the addresser's indifference to the addressee's positive face, which include "expressions of violent (out-of-control) emotions" and "mentions of taboo topics" (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 325).

As for FTAs that threaten the addresser's negative face, these include the addresser expressing thanks, "acceptance of [addressee's] thanks or... apology" and "unwilling promises and offers" (Brown and Levinson, 1999, pp. 325–326). FTAs that "directly damage" the addresser's positive face include apologies, accepting compliments, self-humiliation, self-contradictions and confessions (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 326).

There are different ways by which to express these FTAs, including through positive or negative politeness. Positive politeness is "approach-based" in that it appeals to the addressee's positive face with the intention of making it seem as if addresser and addressee are equal and have the same or similar wants (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 328). By treating each other as equals, this may soften any FTA expressed by either party. Hence, using positive politeness is in a sense related to House and Kasper's upgraders. Intensifying one's utterances and reducing the distance between the two interlocutors may thus create more agreement, but also an increased risk for loss of face in cases where the speaker realizes that the addressee does not share the same opinions. Negative politeness, on the other hand, is more "avoidance-based" in that it appeals to the hearer's negative face (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 328). This type of politeness may thus

be associated with downgraders in that the utterance's impact is reduced, as in the case of using hedges or minus committers (for examples here, see Sections 4.2.2.1 and 4.2.2.4, respectively).

2.2.3: Jenny Thomas (1995): Pragmatics and indirectness

Being indirect is often associated with politeness. According to Jenny Thomas, the level of indirectness in a text, oral or written, depends on four main factors (1995, p. 124):

- The relative power of the speaker over the hearer
- The social distance between the speaker and the hearer
- The degree to which X is rated an imposition in culture Y
- Relative rights and obligations between the speaker and the hearer

As far as power is concerned, Helen Spencer-Oatey mentions five basic types of power which can influence the degree of directness between the interlocutors (2008, pp. 34–35; my emphases), namely:

- **Reward power:** When a person, A, has control over positive outcomes that another person, B, wishes to have
- **Coercive power:** When A has control over negative outcomes that B wants to avoid
- **Expert power:** When A has special knowledge or expertise that B wants or needs
- **Legitimate power:** When A has the right (because of his/her role, status, or situational circumstances) to prescribe or expect certain things of B
- **Referent power:** When B admires A and wants to be like him/her in some respect

When given an assignment to write a text, e.g. an argumentative essay, in an English class, the student must know about the *power* relationship between him or herself and the intended reader(s). If the reader is only the teacher, then the student is faced with at least four power types, namely the reward and coercive kinds (in that the teacher determines if the student is to be given a good grade or a bad grade), expert power (in that the teacher knows – or is supposed to know – what constitutes a well-written argumentative essay) and legitimate power (in that the teacher has the right to expect e.g. that the student does his or her best). The student may also be requested to pretend that he or she is to write to another target group, which would then require another set of power factors as well. For example, if the student were to write a letter to the editor of a broadsheet newspaper with readers of various backgrounds, this may give rise to a much more different power relationship than that between the student and a group of academics with expertise in the topic of discussion.

The *distance* between the writer and the reader would also have to be taken into consideration in that familiarity between the two parties will affect one's use of language in one

way or another. The more familiar one is with someone, the more each party can permit themselves to be direct, unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

Size of imposition relates to the cost made by the addresser to the addressee. Thomas exemplifies this by drawing on the concept of information that can be freely given to others without any hesitation and information that is “none of your business” (Thomas, 1995, p. 130). Depending on the circumstances and culture, asking someone in a restaurant where the salt shaker is would be more accepted than to exchange information about one’s income. Thomas relates this concept to Goffman’s notions of “free” and “non-free” goods (Thomas, 1995, p. 130). Free goods can be used “without seeking permission”, as in asking about the salt shaker, whereas asking about one’s income, weight, age, politics and religion may be considered non-free information, even taboo (Thomas, 1995, pp. 130–131). Thus, theoretically speaking, the higher the cost and imposition the act has to the hearer, the more circumlocutionary the speaker’s utterance(s) will be.

The *rights and obligations* of the speaker are very much related to the previous three factors described. According to Thomas, “this dimension is needed in order to explain a situation in which a speech act involving a major imposition is performed with a minimal degree of indirectness” (1995, p. 131). Thus, a policeman telling someone directly “Move this vehicle” can be explained as he is entitled to do so because of his job (Thomas, 1995, p. 131). Similarly, if in an argumentative essay a student wishes to express his or her fervent disagreement against a provocative statement, he or she might not necessarily choose to do so indirectly. If circumstances allow this, e.g. if the teacher wishes to provoke reactions from the student, or if the student is to imagine the essay being published in a debate section in a given newspaper, the student may choose to use more direct language instead of indirect language.

2.2.4: Geoffrey N. Leech (1977): Language and Tact

Closely related to indirectness is the concept of tact. Tact is defined by Leech as “strategic conflict avoidance, [which] can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation. Thus, in general, the more tactful a directive is, the more indirect and circumlocutionary it is” (1977, p. 19). He goes on formulating the tact maxim as follows: “assume that you are the authoritee and that your interlocutor is the authoritor”, or, as Jenny Thomas formulates it: “Minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other” (Leech, 1977, p.20; Thomas,

1995, p. 160). Leech argues that “in socially perilous situations, the tact maxim overrides H.P. Grice’s Cooperative Principle and its maxims, “since the maintenance of friendly, peaceful human relations is a prerequisite for cooperative behaviour” (Leech, 1977, p. 25). If the power relationship between the two interlocutors is such that if the authoritor (*s*) wants the authoritee (*a*) to do something and *a* does it, then using tact would serve the purpose of avoiding conflict between *s* and *a* (see Leech 1977, p. 16). For instance, telling someone “Give me some money” is less tactful than saying “I want you to give me some money”, as a declarative construction “does not require an action as its response, so that *a* is left a choice as to whether carry out *s*’s wishes or not” (Leech, 1977, p. 20).

This maxim does not necessarily work without problems, however. Still with the above example in mind, if *a* obeys *s*, this means that *s* is forcing *a* to do what he wants and thus breaks the tact maxim himself in that he places himself as the authoritor instead of the authoritee. As a response to this, Leech proposes a “meta-maxim”: “Don’t put your interlocutor in a position where either you or he have/has to break the tact maxim” (1977, pp. 20–21). Hence, *s* may opt for other alternatives such as “Will you/Are you willing to give me some money?” or “Can you/Are you able to give me some money?” (Leech, 1977, p. 21). Using interrogatives is, according to Leech, even more tactful than statements, as it gives *a* the option to decline the request and *s* places himself in the role as the authoritee much more explicitly (1977, p. 21). The notion of tact can thus be related to the use of downgraders and upgraders.

2.3: Juliane House and Gabriele Kasper (1981): Politeness Markers in English and German

The inspiration for this study was first and foremost the study conducted by Juliane House and Gabriele Kasper (1981) where they investigated modality markers in English and German in relation to the distance between the interlocutors. Due to their own observations that “the verbal behavior of German learners of English is often considered impolite by native speakers”, they wished to address the following question: “Are such “pragmatic errors”... due to the learners’ simply not knowing the formal English equivalents of what they would say in their native language, or are there perhaps different social norms in the two speech communities which affect the linguistic behavior of native speakers in terms of its politeness?” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 158) They hypothesize that if the latter suggestion is found to be true, there may be an instance of “pragmatic interference”, where the German speakers would apply the politeness norms of their

speech community to contexts of other cultures, hence creating a potential clash between the expected linguistic behavior and the manifested one (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 158).

House and Kasper elicited their conversational data through role play, using native speakers of German and English as informants. These informants were all students, and were divided into monolingual pairs where they were to perform 24 invented “informal everyday situations” involving complaints and requests (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 158). Each circumstance would then consist of one individual having an authoritative role and another with a subordinate role. Including the variable for “social distance” (whether or not the informants in each pair knew each other) each scenario would then encourage the use of varying degrees of politeness (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 158). Based on politeness theories by Leech and Grice, House and Kasper worked according to the idea that “[t]he higher the optionality factor and the benefit factor and the lower the cost factor is relative to the addressee, the more polite is the utterance of the speech act in question.” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 158). In other words, the more the addressee is permitted to choose whether to decline or agree to whatever is being said and the greater the benefit the topic of the utterance has on the addressee, the more polite the speaker’s statement is. Moreover, as already stated, “the more tactful a directive is, the more indirect and circumlocutionary it is” (Leech, 1977, p. 19). Naturally there might be other factors that also determine whether or not an utterance is to be perceived as polite or impolite, but for the sake of clarity – and perhaps to a certain extent simplicity – it appears that House and Kasper relied heavily on the idea of directness indicating politeness (see House and Kasper, 1981, p. 158).

In analyzing their data, House and Kasper constructed a schema with eight directness levels for complaints and requests, two in each category (1981, p. 159):

1. P [the action] is mentioned implicitly or explicitly [levels 1 and 2]
2. X’s [speaker’s] negative evaluation of P is expressed explicitly [implicit expression and explicit expression for levels 3 and 4, respectively]
3. Y’s [addressee’s] agentive involvement is implicitly [level 5] or explicitly expressed [level 6], and
4. the negative evaluation of both Y’s action and Y himself are implicitly or explicitly expressed [levels 7 and 8, respectively]

After each categorization, the results for each section followed, where German speakers and English speakers were compared in terms of how frequently they used each of the directness levels. As this is not directly relevant to the current research project, this part will be overlooked in this overview.

The most relevant section, however, is their categorization of modality markers with respect to the levels of distance for requests and complaints. A brief review of the various categories of downgraders and upgraders is given in Section 2.5 of this paper (“Framework and terminology used in the present study”). It should be noted that not all of the categories had been used in my project, as there were some which were less relevant for the genre investigated, as for instance *politeness markers* (involving the use of e.g. “please”) and *consultative devices* (e.g. “Would you mind if...”; House and Kasper, 1981, p. 166). Furthermore, some of the categories that were used were added or had to be modified slightly in order to correspond more to the genres of the student texts (see Chapter 6 for details³).

2.3.1: The use of distance levels in English and German

As regards to the use of modality markers in complaints, the lowest level for upgraders was slightly different between the two languages; English had its lowest point on level 4, while German had its lowest point on level 2. The highest directness level for upgraders in English was on level 6, while this extended to level 8 for the German speakers. The much wider distribution of the use of upgraders in German may reflect the observation that “the verbal behavior of German learners of English is often considered impolite by native speakers” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 158). Using upgraders in even the most direct conversational circumstances may be regarded as inappropriate and rude in some cultures. As for frequency, level 6 was pointed out to be much more frequently used in German than in English. On this level, English speakers used upgraders sixteen times whereas German speakers used it forty times (see Tables 3–4 in House and Kasper, 1981, pp. 172–173). Level 6 was also interesting in that this was the level where “the highest frequency of upgraders and the lowest occurrence of downgraders is to be found... in the English data” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 171). Although every other complaint was found to not be modulated at all in English on level 6, “a German complaint [on the same level] contain[ed] 3 downgraders” on average (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 171).

Taking into account all the findings in terms of distribution and frequency, it can be said that “German speakers use more modality markers with complaints than English speakers (3:2.3); in particular, they employ twice as many upgraders” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 171). Again,

³ See in particular Section 4.2.2.1, *a little* and *a bit* in Section 4.2.2.2, *probably* in 4.2.2.3, *I would not say* and *feel(ing)* in 4.2.2.4, *a person* in 4.2.2.6, *positively* and *extremely* in 4.3.2.1, *clearly* in 4.3.2.3, and Section 4.3.2.5.

this more frequent use of upgraders appears to correspond to the idea of German verbal behavior being much ruder than English verbal behavior.

2.3.2: Types of downgraders used in English and German complaints

As far as the types of downgraders that were used, the downtoner was the most frequent one used in the German data, reaching around 30 per cent of all downgraders used (House and Kasper, 1981, pp. 171–173)⁴. Interestingly enough, the downtoner was also the category with the lowest frequency in the English data (“3.75 per cent”; House and Kasper, 1981, p. 171). The agent avoider was also found to be used much more often in German than in English. Moreover, it was also found that this downgrader was often used with directness level 6 (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 171). Thus it is interesting to compare this finding to the aforementioned statement by Leech regarding tactful language being indicative of indirect and circumlocutionary language. Based solely on downtoners used on level 6, it appears that German speakers are much more tactful than the English speakers and are consequently more polite. Compare the following utterances (House and Kasper, 1981, pp. 171, 174; my translation from German to English):

(21) (a librarian notices scribbles in a book which a student is returning)
Y: ich meine so läuft das wirklich nicht wenn *jeder* hier reinschmiert und so weiter nä
[I mean it really does not work that way when *everyone* scribbles here and so on eh]

(23) (as 21)
Y: well you know *you* shouldn't mark library books Mr Robinson

In English the most frequently used downgrader was the hesitator. Of all downgraders used, the hesitator made up 29 per cent of the total findings (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 174); the downgraders that were most utilized in both languages reached approximately the same percentage level.

The researchers also commented on the fact that English speakers also prefer playdowns as opposed to Germans. In fact, its “relative frequency is almost twice as high in English as it is in German” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 174), and was mostly found at distance level 4. However, “the *hedge* [was] employed more frequently by German than by English speakers (0.15:0.09) and mostly so on level 2” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 175).

Apart from the similar percentages in both languages for the most frequently used downgraders, English and German were also found to be similar in their use of scope staters. The frequency in German was found to be 0.11, whereas the frequency in English was at 0.15. The

⁴ For definitions of the various types of modality markers, see section 2.5.

distance levels at which they were mostly found was level 7 in German and level 6 in English (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 175).

2.3.3: Types of upgraders used in English and German complaints

Both languages used the plus committer the most out of all upgraders, with German having the highest frequency of 0.37 and English with 0.21. According to the findings, the plus committer was mostly used on distance levels 1, 3 and 6, “in German also occurring on level 7” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 175). The lowest values for both languages were for the overstaters, rhetorical appeals and lexical intensifiers. However, what the results also showed was that “*Intensifiers* are used over three times as frequently by German speakers [...], *aggressive interrogatives* over twice as frequently” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 176). Thus, the conclusion of the researchers was that “German speakers display more aggressive verbal behavior in socially delicate situations” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 177). However, what should be considered is that this interpretation may appear to be somewhat influenced by English-speaking standards instead of taking a more objective stance to the findings. In other words, the wording used here appears to disregard the idea of linguistic relativity. Therefore, the “socially delicate situations” may be considered appropriate conditions for the use of perceived “aggressive verbal behavior” in some cultures. House and Kasper acknowledge this issue in their conclusion (1981, p. 184).

2.3.4: Types of modality markers used in English and German requests

Generally, upgraders were found to be used rather infrequently with requests in both languages; the English speakers hardly using them at all. Moreover, German speakers were found to use them 4.6 times as often as their English co-students. This has been interpreted as typical for the request speech act in itself; “speakers of both languages – and English speakers even more so – seem to sense the social impact of a request as being stronger than that of a complaint” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 177). The fact that requests tended to occur before the desired event would make it more likely for downgraders to be used, so as to ensure the listener that the speaker would be aware of the action being at a cost to the listener and in order to avoid any further conflict as a result of the listener losing face (see section 2.2.2 above for information regarding Brown and Levinson’s face theory). Because of this assumption and the overall low upgrader frequencies, the downgrader results were the ones that were focused on in the article.

Downgraders were found to be used 1.5 times more often by English speakers in comparison to the German speakers and were used “2.7 times as often as with complaints”

(House and Kasper, 1981, p. 177). This was consistent with the abovementioned pragmatic assumption regarding the cost of the requested action for the listener.

What is interesting to note is that directness levels 1 and 2 had rather low frequencies for requests in both languages. Despite this, they had the “highest relative occurrence of downgraders” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 177), English reaching its highest point on level 1 and German on level 2. Furthermore, the categories of downgraders that were most represented in each language were identical to those for the complaints; “downtoners in German [...] and hesitators in English” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 177). However, whereas the German downtoners could be found with the most frequently used directness level – level 6 – the English hesitators were mostly used on level 1, which was not the most frequently used directness level at all. This was found to be level 3 instead, where the playdown was also found to have the highest frequency. The playdown was only second to the hesitator in terms of frequency of usage (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 178). Thus, the results between the languages were found to be different from one another and, as far as English goes, show a slightly skewed relationship between the most frequently used directness level and the most frequently used downgrader type. The researchers explain these differences with the idea of “English speakers’ preference for using syntactic means as modal qualifiers, while German speakers, on the other hand, tend rather to use lexical means” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 180).

Although these findings may be interesting enough and show tendencies in the use of modality markers between two language groups, there are certain issues in the study that should be considered when interpreting these results. Firstly, the results may not necessarily be applicable to real life as the study was conducted under controlled circumstances. Thus, external factors such as where and when the conversation takes place and with which types of people surrounding the two interlocutors cannot be taken into account. However, this can be justified in the sense that if the setting was not controlled there would be less of a possibility to draw any firm conclusions or observe any general trends in the language in isolation.

There are also certain issues that the article does not explain with respect to the informants themselves. Did they belong to different generations? From which countries did the English and German speakers come from and which areas within these countries? These variables might present some differences between the informants and also influence the results.

2.4: Other relevant studies of EFL language and modality in EFL language

2.4.1: Karin Aijmer (2002): Modality in advanced Swedish learners' written interlanguage

The aim of Aijmer's study was to "compare modal forms, meanings and uses in compositions produced by non-native speakers (NNS) and native speakers (NS)" by using material from the ICLE corpus⁵ (Aijmer, 2002, p. 56). The modal forms she investigated were modal auxiliaries, modal adverbs and their combinations. The sub-corpora used were the Swedish, French and German ones (Aijmer, 2002, pp. 56, 59). Each sub-corpus contains "200,000 words of argumentative texts written by university students having reached a relatively advanced level of proficiency" (Aijmer, 2002, p. 59). The results from the NNS corpora were then compared with findings from argumentative essays taken from the LOCNESS corpus⁶. Texts from this corpus were written by British NS. Due to the use of corpus material, there were less means to control the topic of each text, as opposed to House and Kasper (1981). Despite the difference in topic, she regarded the essays to be similar enough to be used for comparative purposes. She also stressed that "the quantitative results must be interpreted with caution", as factors such as the essay topic may have a certain influence on the expression of modality (Aijmer, 2002, p. 60)⁷.

The findings of this study revealed that the learner corpora had a "striking overuse" of the modal expressions investigated (Aijmer, 2002, p. 72). Examples of these were *will ('ll)*, *have (got) to* and *might*, which were shown to have much higher values for the non-natives compared to the natives (see Aijmer, 2002, p. 61). This was also the main trend for modals combined with adverbs and adverbs denoting certainty or uncertainty, e.g. *probably* and *of course* (see Aijmer, 2002, p. 69–70). Over all, these kinds of overuse created a "direct and emphatic style of persuasion" in the text, although it very much depended on the essay topic (Aijmer, 2002, p. 65).

A reason for the overuse of modal auxiliaries could be that the learners tried to adopt "a more speech-like style in their writing than the native writers" (Aijmer, 2001, p. 61). As far as the Swedish learners are concerned, this could be partly due to interlingual factors, such as an overuse of certain modal verbs in the L2 which corresponds to L1 use (Aijmer, 2002, pp. 62, 72).

⁵ International Corpus of Learner English. For more information, see <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-icle.html> (April 27, 2012).

⁶ Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays. For more information, see <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-locness.html> (April 27, 2012).

⁷ Here Aijmer refers to the following studies and articles:

Dagneaux, E. (1995). *Expressions of epistemic modality in native and non-native essay-writing*. Unpublished MA dissertation. Département d'Etudes Germaniques, Université Catholique de Louvain.

Hinkel, E. (1995). The use of modal verbs as a reflection of cultural values. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(2), 325–343.

The results could also be explained by the focus of the teaching of English in Sweden, as “many textbooks devote an unjustifiably large amount of attention to modal verbs, neglecting alternative strategies” (Aijmer, 2002, p. 67). However, as she points out in her article, there are numerous other factors that could explain “learner-specific modal realisations or patterns”, differing in type and strength (Aijmer, 2002, p. 73).

Aijmer also noted an overuse of “epistemic modal verbs” *I think/I believe* by the Swedish non-natives (2002, p. 71). Although this could be explained by the influence of spoken language, as suggested by Aijmer herself, it is also possible that this is a case of negative transfer from L1 language use. Although not mentioned in the article itself, it may be the case that Swedes (or Scandinavians in general) tend to use *I think/I believe* more often than native speakers of English. In any case, it is important that the non-native learners of English be made aware of these cross-linguistic differences (Aijmer, 2002, p. 73). In that respect necessary training for the students would be even more important, so they could adjust their language according to these notions and the expected register. Further corpus investigations with a tighter control for topic and “a wider variety of learner corpora” would then be of help in this process (Aijmer, 2002, p. 74).

2.4.2: Tove Waller (1993): Characteristics of Near-Native Proficiency in Writing

The aim of this study was “to see if, and if [so], then how, the written production of near-native speakers of English differs from that of native English speakers” (Waller, 1993, p. 193). Twenty texts, consisting of letters of reference, essays and articles⁸, were to be read and commented on by English native-speaker students from the University of Sheffield. Some of the texts were written by native speakers, while others were written by Finnish non-native speakers. In order to not reveal the linguistic background of the author, the texts were edited so as to remove any trace of this through “content (i.e., explicit references to Finland, knowledge of Swedish/Finnish etc. have been left out), spelling mistakes and a few grammatical mistakes” (Waller, 1993, pp. 193–194). These students were asked to “comment as thoroughly as possible on all texts, and to give as specific examples as possible in six different categories: lexical inadequacy, syntactic constructions, conceptual confusion, rhetorical ineptitude, mixing of norms (e.g. British-American), and other reasons” (Waller, 1993, p. 194). Moreover, the students were also to categorize the texts according to the following scale (Waller, 1993, pp. 194–195):

⁸ The essays and articles had been published in HUS, “the journal of the English department of Åbo Akademi, written mainly by university students of English” (Waller, 1993, p. 193).

- “clearly written by a native speaker” (Numerical equivalent for analysis: 1)
- “might possibly have been written by a non-native speaker, but most probably written by a native speaker” (Numerical equivalent for analysis: 2)
- “might have been written by a native speaker, but most probably by a non-native speaker” (Numerical equivalent for analysis: 4)
- “clearly written by a non-native speaker” (Numerical equivalent for analysis: 5)

The average results for each text and for each native speaker were then calculated, in order to show any differences more clearly. Also, “the native subjects’ intuitions and comments, other previous research, normative grammars, wordlists and other linguistic material [were] used in order to make the study as comprehensible as possible” (Waller, 1993, p. 194).

The results show that there are several cases where the native speakers failed to distinguish between native-speaker language and non-native-speaker language. In fact, in 37.50% of the cases, native speakers were wrongly categorized as non-natives and in 35.23% non-native speakers were categorized as natives (Waller, 1993, p. 260). In total the incorrect classifications amounted to 35.80%. There were only two texts that were correctly identified as either native or non-native by all native informants (Waller, 1993, p. 260). There was also one case where the distribution of grades was rather even, being classified in the middle range.

In regards to lexical sophistication⁹, it was found that the native speakers of English had reached a much higher level than the non-native speakers. However, based on the limited amount of texts, Waller argued that it would be better to have “a larger and more homogenous corpus” in order to determine more clearly whether or not this finding may represent Finnish non-native speakers versus native speakers (1993, p. 222).

Waller also commented on the expression *I think*, which was found to be overused by non-native speakers quite often. Although its usage may have been the result of interference from Finnish (their L1), this argument would not be as convincing, since the Finnish equivalent *luulen* could apparently not be substituted in all cases (Waller, 1993, p. 231). Furthermore, although the use of *I think* is not incorrect, the phrase was not found “in any of the texts written by native speakers” (Waller, 1993, p. 257). This may be a cultural issue – e.g. “that English people are more self-confident and therefore state their opinions without the softening “I think”” – but it would not agree with the so-called “ego-centrism” found in two of the texts, for instance seen through the use of “far too many ‘I’s” (1993, pp. 257, 259). The other text contained an awkwardly constructed expression, “...*gotten used to caring about myself only*” (Waller, 1993, p.

⁹ Determined by calculating “the highest percentage of words outside the most common 2000 English words” (Waller, 1993, p. 221)

259). Though more could be said about the elements that point towards self-reference in this expression, Waller specifically pointed out that the choice of preposition “implies an ego-centrism that would not be found in an English text” (1993, p. 259).

Other lexical problems of relevance revolved around adverbs, which is perhaps the most salient category when considering the present study, although few downgraders were mentioned. One non-native text used *extraordinarily* in the context “since it was so extraordinarily cheap” and was considered by a native speaker as being “a little wordy-zealous as m. adj. (**sic!**) and unnecessary after ‘so’” (Waller, 1993, p. 233).

The findings in Waller’s study suggest that there is no clear way to determine whether or not a text is written by a native speaker or a non-native speaker, or even what native proficiency really is, “since all native speakers involved unquestionably have a native proficiency in their language” (1993, p. 260). However, the study sheds light on certain typical characteristics of native and non-native texts, e.g. that non-native texts even at an advanced level experience difficulties regarding collocations and also that the authors tend to resort to “extravagant rhetorics [and] write either formally or colloquially” whereas native speakers would be more able to mix those two registers (Waller, 1993, p. 261). Whenever non-native speakers shift register in a text this often becomes obvious (Waller, 1993, p. 261). In order to counter such characteristics, Waller suggests a greater focus on stylistics by taking into account e.g. various rhetorical devices and cultural differences (1993, p. 261).

2.4.3: Angela Hasselgren (1994): Lexical teddy bears and advanced learners: a study into the ways in which Norwegian students cope with English vocabulary

The aim of Hasselgren’s study was to investigate how “Norwegian advanced learners – first year university students and upper sixth-formers – cope with English vocabulary in their written language” (1994, p. 237)¹⁰. To do this, she split her study into two parts. The first one aimed to investigate *why* the students chose wrong words (“influences”); *how* they chose the wrong words (“routes”); “*what* is wrong with the choice of word” (“effects”); and other factors influencing “lexical misselections” (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 238). This part will not be dealt with in this chapter, as it is not as relevant as the second part of her study. First, Hasselgren created an overview of the influences, routes and effects in the first part (including patterns in divergence and “the relationship between types and tokens per type with respect to routes”; Hasselgren, 1994, p. 249).

¹⁰ For a definition of lexical teddy bears, see Section 2.5.

The second part of her study was dedicated to “pinpoint[ing] some of the areas where differences between Norwegian learner-language and native speaker English are likely to be found” by “testing for an aspect of wrongness linked to divergence” (1994, p. 251). Divergence, according to her, is related to differences in lexicon and lexical fields between two or more different languages. She exemplifies by referring to cases when “a Norwegian learner wrongly refers to a building as a *house*, it is because Norwegian *hus* occupies a wider slot in the lexicon than English *house*. A single L1 term diverges into (and can be translated by) several L2 terms” (Hasselgren, 1994, pp. 243–244).

The method of this part of her study consisted of a test with five exercises (A to E), where exercise A dealt with “wrongness [related to divergence] and was given to Norwegian students only” (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 251). Exercises B and C “tested for the usage of specific collocation versus core items, task D tested for the ability to supply phrasal versus single-word verbs, and task E investigated the feeling for covert connotations of certain words and phrases” (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 251). Exercises B through E were given to “Norwegian students of English (first year university and upper sixth-form) and English sixth-formers (studying A-Level English) in three schools in the northeast of England. Each of the two groups consisted of 50–60 informants” (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 251). Only the results from tasks A through C were commented on in Hasselgren’s article.

Task A took into account the use of four different words in Norwegian which could have different English renderings depending on the context. These were *love* (*promise/guarantee*), *ønske* (*wish/request*), *utvide* (*extend/expand*) and *samle* (*collect/gather*; Hasselgren, 1994, p. 252). Her findings showed that “there are some L1 words [...] that have a single, generally agreed upon ‘equivalent’ in the L2, and the scores clearly show that there is an even greater tendency to spread the words in this group” (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 253). This was particularly demonstrated by *love* and *ønske*, which were most frequently translated into *promise* and *wish* respectively. These findings indicated a strong use of what Hasselgren coins as “perceived equivalents”, as these L2 translations would “[block] the production [or use] of alternatives” (1994, pp. 241–242, 253).

Task B and C aimed to “test if a group of learners produce their own sets of patterns and, if so, whether these match the native speakers’ or whether they show a preference for ‘core words’, briefly defined as widespread in usage, neutral in style or connotations, and high in frequency”

(Hasselgren, 1994, p. 253). Task B – the part most relevant to the present study – asked the students to “supply an intensifying adverb or adjective, dependent on the context”; thus investigating how the students were able to pick up on certain collocations (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 253). The meaning of the missing element was more or less the same throughout the test and in theory “the same one or two items, slightly adapted, could be used throughout the task, e.g. *very (much)* or *a lot (of)*” (Hasselgren, 1994, pp. 253–254). Her findings showed that the top collocations for the verb *apologize* had *very (much)* as the highest ranking intensifier, followed by *a lot* and *sincerely*, the two latter intensifiers with under half of the value for *very (much)* (see figure 6 in Hasselgren, 1994, p. 254). Comparing these results to a roughly equal number of British native speakers, however, Hasselgren found that their top three collocates were *profusely*, *sincerely* and *a lot* (fig. 6; 1994, p. 254). Juxtaposing this with other findings, she suggested that “while learners in some cases favoured the same item as the native speaker group, there were enough discrepancies to conclude that the learners were often unaware of, or at least unable to actively produce, a native speaker-like collocation for a word that they obviously have no problem in understanding” (1994, p. 254). Furthermore, she also stated that:

learners have a distinct preference for ‘core items’ [words/elements that can be used in most contexts]. [...] When the native speakers favour rather unrestricted items such as *great* or *pure*, the learners tended to follow suit. However, when the favoured native item was restricted, as in the case of *profusely* [...], the two groups parted company. Items typically ranked highly across the board by the Norwegians were the very general and neutral *very (much)*, *a lot (of)* and *extremely*.

(Hasselgren, 1994, pp. 254–255)

Related to task B, task C aimed to “test the extent to which transitive core verbs would be used by learners and native speakers” (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 255). The direct objects investigated were *treatment*, *identity*, *reputation* and *sympathy*, while the core verbs Hasselgren identified were *give*, *get*, *take*, *show*, *have*, *know*, *keep*, *tell* and *make* (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 255). Her findings showed that the core verbs were most frequently used by native speakers and learners, the exception being the collocates of *treatment*. Nonetheless, although both groups were found to frequently use core verbs, the learners were found to use these “relatively more” often than the native speakers (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 256).

As even advanced learners such as Norwegian university students are still found to use lexical teddy bears, Hasselgren suggests that if the dependence on such words is to be overcome, “more work must be done in building up their sense for native speaker patterning” (1994, p. 256).

More knowledge on this field will no doubt aid the students and the teachers in the classroom as a better understanding of learning the target language is conveyed.

2.4.4: Annelie Ädel (2008): Involvement features in writing: do time and interaction trump register awareness?

As partially indicated by the title of her article, Ädel's study had as its purpose to investigate the use of involvement features in written texts. Involvement features are defined as "ways in which speakers/writers show involvement with their audience", for instance through the use of first-person singular pronouns and questions (Ädel, 2008, p. 36). She compared the use of such involvement features between two corpora: The Swedish branch of the International Corpus of Learner English (SWICLE) and the Uppsala Student Essay corpus (USE). The SWICLE corpus contains "350 [full-length] argumentative essays" written by Swedish university students of English, whereas the USE corpus contains 1489 essays which were argumentative to varying extents (Ädel, 2008, p. 39; Uppsala University, 2011). Ädel only used the argumentative section of the USE corpus for her study.

The criteria that were investigated include the impact of time restrictions to the use of involvement features and access to other sources. Ädel divided the SWICLE into two parts in this respect; one group containing timed essays and another containing untimed (Table 6 in Ädel, 2008, p. 45). This was not necessary for the USE corpus, as all of the essays were untimed (Table 4 in Ädel, 2008, p. 43). Access to other sources was also controlled in the sense that none of the SWICLE texts had any access to sources whereas the USE did (Table 4 in Ädel, 2008, p. 43). The involvement markers investigated were identical to those used in a previous study conducted by Bengt Altenberg (1997) and included the use of the first-person singular pronoun, various disjuncts (e.g. *of course*, *naturally*, *unfortunately*), questions, exclamations and two discourse markers (*well* and *you see*; Table 6; Ädel, 2008, p. 45).

In general, the timed SWICLE essays were found to have the highest frequency of involvement features, followed by SWICLE Untimed and lastly the USE essays (Ädel, 2008, pp. 45–46). The individual findings show that the timed essays generally display much more frequent use of the first-person singular pronoun than do the untimed essays, regardless of whether they are part of SWICLE or USE (Table 6; Ädel, 2008, p. 45). This is especially evident in the use of *I*, where "SWICLE Timed has almost a third more occurrences [...] than either SWICLE Untimed or USE" (Ädel, 2008, p. 44). Similar findings were also shown for disjuncts, as SWICLE Timed had the highest frequency, but the greatest difference overall was found between

SWICLE Untimed and USE (Ädel, 2008, p. 44). As for questions and exclamations, both SWICLE corpora were found to have similar values and USE had the lowest (Ädel, 2008, pp. 44–45). The discourse markers *well* and *you see* had very low values overall, which Ädel suggests would indicate that “this is not a major problem area for Swedish learners” (2008, p. 44).

When the “intertextuality factor” was investigated – i.e. the access to other sources while writing the essays – another picture emerged. Here the use of the first-person singular pronouns was “not affected, but the use of disjuncts, questions and exclamation is affected significantly” (Ädel, 2008, p. 46). More specifically, the students used disjuncts, questions, exclamations and discourse markers to a much less extent when they had access to other sources than if they did not. The significant difference in the use of first-person singular pronouns was only demonstrated between the SWICLE Timed and Untimed corpora, and thus would not be relevant with respect to intertextuality (see Table 7; Ädel, 2008, p. 45).

The results therefore seem to indicate that in order to avoid using involvement features as much as possible, the best circumstances would be to have unlimited time restrictions and access to other sources. Consequently, according to Ädel, “[the] conclusion to be drawn is that the overuse of involvement features cannot just be attributed to lack of register awareness” (2008, p. 46). Although register awareness is still valid to some extent, this would not be the only factor playing a role in the use of involvement features in texts. Thus, as a final note, Ädel recommends further research in order to present clearer findings with respect to using secondary sources (2008, p. 49). Moreover, based on the findings from her study, she also states a preference for untimed rather than timed essays and the need for essay writers to be given “other texts as input and to serve as point of departure for their writing” (Ädel, 2008, p. 50). Drawing information from other sources would only improve their “general argumentation and their writing style” (Ädel, 2008, p. 50).

2.5: Framework and terminology used in the present study

There are several ways of defining *politeness*. One of them is “the means of minimizing or avoiding conflict, as the use of language to maintain smooth and harmonious interpersonal relations, as the use of socially appropriate behaviour, and to refer to an evaluative judgement regarding social appropriateness” (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p. 334). This may be done through the observance of one’s own and the addressee’s face while considering the impact of various factors such as social distance and power.

One way in which politeness can be expressed is through the use of *modality markers*. These are elements in a clause which reduce or intensify the effect that an utterance may have on a listener/addressee. A categorization of various modality markers can be found in a study conducted by House and Kasper, where they differentiated between downgrading modality markers (“downgraders”) and upgrading modality markers (“upgraders”). Downgraders are “markers which play down the impact X’s utterance is likely to have on Y [the addressee]” and comprise the following categories (1981, pp. 166–168¹¹):

1. *Politeness marker*: “Optional elements added to an act to show deference to the interlocutor and to bid for cooperative behavior, e.g. *please* [...]” (p. 166)
2. *Play-down*: “Syntactical devices used to tone down the perlocutionary effect an utterance is likely to have on the addressee” (p. 166). Examples of these devices are (p. 166):
 - a. Past tense: *I wondered if...*
 - b. Durative aspect marker: *I was wondering if...*
 - c. Negation: *Mightn’t it be a good idea...*
 - d. Interrogative: *Mightn’t it be a good idea?* (Another alternative is *Might it be a good idea?*)
 - e. Modal: *Mightn’t...* (In this subcategory it is possible to include modals in positive declarative constructions, e.g. *It might be a good idea...*)
3. *Consultative Device*: “Optional devices by means of which X seeks to involve Y and bid for Y’s cooperation; frequently these devices are ritualized formulas, e.g., *Would you mind if...*” (p. 166)
4. *Hedge*: “Adverbials – excluding sentence adverbials – by means of which X avoids a precise propositional specification thus circumventing the potential provocation such a specification might entail” (p. 167). X then reduces the force of his intent on Y, for example by the use of *kind of, somehow, and so on* and *rather*.
5. *Understater*: “Adverbial modifiers by means of which X underrepresents the state of affairs denoted in the proposition” (p. 167). Examples of these are *a little bit, not very much* and *just a trifle*.
6. *Downtoner*: “Sentence modifiers which are used by X in order to modulate the impact his utterance is likely to have on Y”, for instance, by using *just, simply, possibly, perhaps* and *rather* (p. 167). As can be seen, *rather* has two different senses in this categorization.
7. – (“minus”) *Committer*: “Sentence modifiers which are used to lower the degree to which X commits himself to the state of affairs referred to in the proposition” (p. 167). By specifying that the proposition is simply his own personal opinion, he reduces the force of his utterance. Examples of such modifiers are *I think, I guess,* and *in my opinion* (p. 167).
8. *Forewarn*: “A kind of anticipatory disarmament device used by X to forewarn Y and to forestall his possible negative reactions to X’s act” (p. 167). This may be done through X commenting on what he is about to do, pay a compliment to Y to

¹¹ All quotes and examples used are taken from the pages referred to.

prepare Y for the negative utterance, or a part in the utterance where X prepares Y that X is about to break a cooperative principle. Examples of such devices are *you're a nice guy, Jim, but...*, and *this may be a bit boring to you, but...* (p. 168).

9. *Hesitator*: “Deliberately employed malformulations” such as *erm, er* and *uh* (p. 168).

10. *Scope-Stater*: “Elements in which X explicitly expresses his subjective opinion vis-à-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition, thus lowering the assertive force of his utterance” (p. 168). Examples are: *I'm afraid that you're in my seat; I'm a bit disappointed that you did P [the action]; I'm not happy about the fact that you did P* (p. 168).

11. *Agent Avoider*: “Syntactic Devices [sic.] by means of which it is possible for X not to mention either himself or his interlocutor Y as agents, thus, for instance, avoiding direct attack” (p. 168). This can be done by implementing passive constructions using other impersonal subjects such as *people, you, one* and *they*. This also includes passive verb constructions, i.e. *BE + participle* (p. 168).

Upgraders are the counterparts of downgraders and have as their function to “increase the force of the impact an utterance is likely to have on the addressee” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 169).

House and Kasper list six types (1981, pp.169–170):

1. *Overstater*: “Adverbial modifiers by means of which X overrepresents the reality denoted in the proposition in the interests of increasing the force of his utterance” (p. 169). Examples of such adverbials are *absolutely, purely* and *frightfully* (p. 169).

2. *Intensifier*: “Adverbial modifier used by X to intensify certain elements of the proposition of his utterance”, such as *very, so, such, quite, really, just* and *indeed* (p. 169).

3. + (“plus”) *Committer*: “Sentence modifiers by means of which X indicates his heightened degree of commitment vis-à-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition”, for instance, through using *I'm sure, certainly, obviously* and *really* (p. 170).

4. *Lexical Intensifier*: “Lexical items which are strongly marked for their negative social attitude”, as in the case of swear words and words close to being swear words, e.g. *bloody* in *That's bloody mean of you* (p. 170).

5. *Aggressive Interrogative*: “Employment by X of interrogative mood to explicitly involve Y and thus to intensify the impact of his utterance on Y” (p. 170). In many cases this can be viewed as taking a confronting stance against the hearer, e.g. *Why haven't you told me this before?* (p. 170).

6. *Rhetorical Appeal*: Here “X attempts – by claiming or implying the non-possibility of not accepting that P [the action] – to debar Y from not accepting that P”, as in statements including: *you must understand that...* and *it is common knowledge that...* (p. 170).

In the current study, the categories have been modified somewhat, as some of them are not easily transferrable to written texts. This will be explained further in Chapter 3.

A *lexical teddy bear* is defined by Levenston and Blum as “a ‘general’ term – usually a common word with a wide range of meanings, learnt in the early stages” (cited in Hasselgren, 1994, p. 237). According to Hasselgren, this term is “systematically overgeneralised by advanced learners” (1994, pp. 237–238). Lexical teddy bears are often considered to be ‘safe words’ by learners in that they are general enough to be used in many different settings, although they may not necessarily be used correctly when comparing this to more advanced or native speaker use of the language. An effect of this is that the text’s register becomes more informal than intended. This effect will be investigated when analyzing the modality markers in the texts used in the present study. Types of lexical teddy bears that might be relevant for triggering a more informal register may, for instance, be so-called “core” words, i.e. words that are “shown basically to be those that are ‘central’ in meaning, neutral in discourse and collocating widely, in other words, the ‘general’ words so favoured by learners” (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 242). Other categories might also be “perceived equivalents”, i.e. words that appear to be “instinctively... chosen under the influence of particular L1 items, yet having no formal resemblance to them” and synonyms (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 241).

Writer visibility and *reader visibility* are also concepts which may indicate a formal or an informal register. The extent to which the writer uses the first person singular and the second person singular (or plural) pronouns may for some indicate a kind of directness that is inappropriate for formal registers and argumentative essays. The use of these pronouns may be related to the plus and minus committers in House and Kasper’s (1981) overview of modality markers.

Argumentative essays written by students were used in this investigation as samples of persuasive writing by students. As may be deduced by looking at the term itself, an argumentative essay has as its function “to show that your assertion (opinion, theory, hypothesis) about some phenomenon or phenomena is correct or more truthful than others” (Argumentative essay writing, 2010). The website for the Norwegian SF textbook *Access to English: Social Studies* uses another term instead – the “expository essay” – explaining that this genre provides “a way of getting to grips with an issue and finding out what your own viewpoint is” (The Social Studies Essay, 2008). Another term provided by *Utdanningsdirektoratet* which describes more or less the same type of text is the “article” (n.d. (a)). Here the basic five-paragraph structure is presented, followed by an elaboration of “General Rules of Writing” which covers basic

distinctions in language between objective and subjective articles. The webpage also provides examples of essay structures for both types of articles as well as a basic guideline on the language that is expected for this genre. Information on expected language is rather limited in the three abovementioned sources, although *Access* includes two brief paragraphs on formality and argumentation, respectively.

The three terms may well be used in describing this particular type of text. However, for the sake of convenience, the term “argumentative essay” will be used for this paper, as it would be less associated with the Norwegian *artikkel* (though the two are related) and also less evasive compared to using “expository essay”.

Chapter 3: Method

3.1: Procedure

Fieldwork was considered necessary for this study, in order to guarantee for texts specifically from IB and SF. Although there are other learner corpora available with argumentative texts from the upper secondary levels (for instance VESPA and ICLE)¹², there was no way to control for study programs. Hence, texts had to be gathered manually through contacting schools that might be interested and convenient to visit. Moreover, this would also guarantee for text samples that would be rather recent and make the results as relevant to present-day teaching as possible.

Contact with schools was first established during the spring of 2011. A list of the 22 Norwegian IB schools offering the Diploma Programme was given at the IBO website (see IBO, 2012), so schools in southwestern and eastern Norway were contacted by email. This email contained a short description of my aim for the project and the genre I wished to investigate (argumentative essays), although if this was not available, other formal genres would also be accepted. I also expressed a wish to interview students and/or teachers on how they viewed the use of writer stance in a formal text; experiences in the classroom with respect to the teaching of formal registers; and what teachers and students believed a formal text should contain in terms of language. However, the idea of interviewing students was later discarded, as it would take up more valuable class time than necessary. A survey was therefore ultimately chosen as the main source of information for this, as well as interviews with teachers by telephone at a later date for those who were available at that time (see Appendices 3 and 4 for a copy of the survey and the interview guide).

The reason why the southwestern and eastern parts of Norway were chosen was for the sake of convenience in traveling. I also had contacts at some of these schools already. Several of the teachers and IB coordinators contacted were more than willing to pass on the information to their colleagues, but few expressed an interest in participating. Ultimately two IB schools returned a positive reply, both located in eastern Norway.

The Norwegian SF schools were contacted in a similar way. Again, the main regions in focus were the southwestern and eastern parts of Norway and the schools were contacted by email after having looked at the schools' internet sites and contacting my own former teachers.

¹² The *Varieties of English for Specific Purposes dAtabase learner corpus* and the *International Corpus of Learner English*, respectively (see <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-vespa.html> and <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-icle.html> for more details; viewed April 19, 2012).

The email sent to these schools was largely identical to the one sent to the IB schools. The staff that was contacted was also very much willing to pass on the information of my project to their colleagues, but again there were few replies except from two upper secondary schools in southwestern Norway.

After having received positive replies from the four schools, the project description was sent to the teachers so that they would have an overview of what would be investigated, what was required of their classes and themselves as teachers and also a preliminary (though tentative) timeline outlining when the project was to start and the data would be collected. They also received my contact information so that they could reach me if they had any questions.

It would be more beneficial if both SF and IB were represented in both regions in order to point out any regional differences between the material from each study program and also make the results more evenly distributed. However, given the time allocations for this project, the schools that gave me a positive response, this could not be done.

The Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research was also contacted in order to thoroughly check for any further ethical considerations with respect to the completion of the study. Once the project had been approved by the Official, a consent form for the students was distributed to the teachers (again via email; see Appendix 2), along with an electronic copy of the survey that was to be distributed to the students upon my visit to the schools (see Appendix 3).

Appointments for meeting the teachers and the students were then set up in order to complete the data collection. These visits would also provide an opportunity to present more details about the project and give the students (and the teachers) the chance to ask any questions they might have regarding the project and their involvement in it. Only the most general information was given, in order to influence the students' responses to the survey as little as possible. During these visits, the confidentiality of the material during the project and the students' anonymity upon the publishing of the results were also stressed.

There were challenges during the data collection process in some cases, in particular in relation to one of the IB schools (School 3; see Section 3.2.3 for more details on the essays). During the visit to the class, 21 of the students were present and signed their consent forms. I was given some class time to talk about my project, but the survey was completed at another date. A total of 17 students attended this session. Only ten students were found to have a full match between consent form, survey and essay. The remaining seven students had only filled out the

survey. These responses were kept and used, as these students had already agreed to participate in the project.

Copies of the student essays from this school were also to be collected during the time when the students were to fill out the survey, but due to a misunderstanding, only 17 were received from a mixture of students who had consented to participate and students who had not. One essay had to be discarded, as the student had not signed the consent form. There were also four essays which had no name on them, so these were also discarded. Thus, all in all there were twelve essays that could be used from this class.

The essays that were sent in paper format or had been scanned into the computer were typed up manually and converted into plain text format in order to be used in the corpus software used for this project (AntConc). Corrections made by the teachers were not taken into account, as these did not demonstrate the students' own language, although the most severe orthographical mistakes were corrected so as to ease the text analysis.

Subsequent contact with the teachers was made some months later in order to conduct the telephone interviews with those who were available and follow up some of the results obtained after having analyzed them. Both SF teachers as well as one of the IB teachers were available (see Section 5.2.1.2 for more details).

3.1.1: Data processing

Each text was given a number for which school it belonged to, i.e. a text from School 1 would start off its unique code with *1*. The texts were then placed in alphabetical order (according to first names) and a random sequence generator was used in order to give each text a number. Each school had its own unique random sequence¹³. Each number used was then replaced by a letter in the alphabet, i.e. the number 1 would be replaced by letter *A*; number 2 would be replaced by letter *B*, etc. The topic of the text was also accounted for in the alphanumeric code, represented by the following acronyms:

- LA – Literary analysis
- CC – Comparative commentary (comparison between two texts)
- HA – Historical account
- SO – Social topics

¹³ The random sequence generator used can be found at <http://www.random.org/sequences/> (Jan. 23, 2012).

The texts used were written either as part of their homework, as Extended Essays, or as test practice, either for mock exams, mid-terms, or for other kinds of evaluation during the school year. This was also accounted for in the alphanumeric codes for each text:

- HW – Homework
- TE – Test
- EE – Extended Essay

Thus, the template used for generating the codes for each essay was: (*School number*) (*Text letter*). (*Essay topic*). (*Homework/test*). An example of this is for instance *3K.LA.HW*.

The corpus software used for analysis was the freeware AntConc¹⁴. The search strings used for the data analysis were the ones listed for the modality markers in House and Kasper's article, as well as certain others that were found to be recurring in the texts and/or that came to mind (see Chapter 4). The texts were stored into a computer in a plain text format and were then uploaded to AntConc class by class in order to obtain the results given in the tables in Chapter 4. The raw frequencies were counted manually and the relative frequencies per thousand words were calculated by dividing the total number of words in each school by 1000 and then dividing the total number of downgraders, upgraders and modality markers per school by the obtained quotients (see How to Calculate Prevalence Rates, 2012).

3.2: Material

3.2.1: Introduction

The texts that were collected for this project were argumentative essays, i.e. essays where the author discusses a topic and writes about different viewpoints; in some cases defending one viewpoint at the cost of another (see Argumentative essay writing, 2010). One reason why this genre was chosen was because a (semi)formal register would be expected most of the time, which would then allow for an easier way to pinpoint any lexical teddy bears and words or phrases that could be appropriate or inappropriate for the expected register. Another reason was that these texts would most likely be longer and thus provide more data than if other formal and “persuasive” genres were used, e.g. letters to the editor or job applications.

The total amount of data was collected from two second-year classes and two third-year classes from Norwegian upper secondary school. Each study program had one second-year and one third-year class to represent itself. The difference between the two study programs was that

¹⁴ Download available from http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antwordprofiler_index.html (Jan. 23, 2012).

the SF students had chosen English as part of their self-chosen *programområde* (program area), whereas English is a mandatory subject in the IB study program.

3.2.2: Texts from *Studieforberedende Utdanningsprogram (SF)*

In SF there are three program areas (*programområder*) which are to be chosen after the first year of upper secondary (Vg1)¹⁵. The English subject for the two following years forms part of the program area of *Languages, Social Sciences and Economics Studies*. The students were to choose one program subject from the following three: *International English*, *Social Studies English* and *English Literature and Culture* (Udir, 2006, p. 1). According to the curriculum for these subjects, “Social English and English literature and culture [...] both build on International English” (Udir, 2006, p. 1). Thus, it was expected that any differences between the two SF classes in terms of essay topic and length would not be substantial, even though their program subjects were distinct.

The Vg2 class had *International English*, while the Vg3 class had *Social Studies English*. The Vg2 class (School 1) had 13 students in total and I received one essay from each of the students. This text had been completed as a test earlier that semester and the students were to write an essay on the spread of English around the world and its advantages and disadvantages. One student was absent during the day of the test and was thus requested to write a literary analysis of a poem instead in order to submit a text to my project. The Vg3 class (School 2) had 25 students in total. 12 students had consented to participate in the project. Their essays were given as assignments where the students could choose between a literary analysis of a short story, a comparative commentary of two poems and describing British society at one point in history (between the Elizabethan era and present time). Thus the time restrictions between Schools 1 and 2 would have to be taken into account in the analysis and discussion of the results. The length of the texts from both schools ranged from 1.5 to 3 pages in length when typed up (using Times New Roman with font size 12 and 1.5 line spacing).

3.2.3: Texts from International Baccalaureate (IB)

As opposed to SF, the IB students did not have the option to choose between program areas and were required to have English as a subject during their second and third years of upper secondary. These students were to choose at least one subject from each of the six so-called “academic areas” and English would either be chosen as a subject for “Studies in Language and Literature”

¹⁵ So-called *Programmes for Specialization in General Studies*. For more details, see <http://www.udir.no/Stottemeny/English/Curriculum-in-English/english/Programmes-for-general-studies/> (Accessed Nov. 13, 2011)

or “Language Acquisition” (Groups 1 and 2, respectively; IBO.org, 2011b). Moreover, the two schools represented English A1 and English A2 and contained a majority of non-native students, thus making the IB results comparable with each other even though their intended levels differed to some extent theoretically speaking.

The IB classes used for this project represented both years of the IB program. School 3 was represented by a class in the first year of IB (corresponding to Vg2). A total of 21 out of 23 students signed the consent forms. As explained in Section 3.1, only twelve essays could be used. The topic for these was a literary analysis, where the students were to discuss the significance of symbols and motifs and how they emphasize the underlying themes of the literary works they had studied. These were three short stories written by Ernest Hemingway: *Hills Like White Elephants*, *Soldier’s Home* and *Indian Camp*. The essay question was in the style of past exams, but was given as an assignment for the sake of practice and becoming accustomed to writing essays.

The fourth class (from School 4) was from the second year of IB (Vg3). The class consisted of twelve students wherein ten had consented to participate in the project. Because the students were required to write longer texts this year for internal and external assessments according to IB regulations, essays written for mock exams from the previous year (2010) were given to me, including an excerpt of an Extended Essay¹⁶. In other words, the essays were from the Vg2 level. The length of the Extended Essay was somewhat longer than the rest of the essays represented in the data. However, it was nonetheless used, though only with the first 800 words straight after the introduction (up until the first paragraph at around this point). This was done in order to make the length and content as consistent as possible with the rest of the essays from this class. There were also two texts that were incomplete, where the introduction and the conclusion were more or less the only parts of the texts included. Thus, the first 800 words of the Extended Essay would compensate in terms of text length, though not necessarily in terms of content, as one of the incomplete essays dealt with a social topic. All in all, there were seven literary analyses and comparative commentaries (including the Extended Essay excerpt) and three essays dealing with social topics; i.e. ten texts in total.

¹⁶ For more information on extended essays, see <http://ibo.org/diploma/curriculum/core/> (accessed April 30, 2012).

Chapter 4: Results and analysis

4.1: Introduction

The following sections will present the findings for the modality markers investigated, starting with an overview of the distribution of texts and word counts across the four schools. Then a general outline of the various modality marker frequencies will be presented, followed by an overview of the values per thousand words for the modality markers. The total results of the downgraders follow this, before the results for each downgrader is presented. A presentation of the total results for upgraders and each upgrader investigated is then given. Some of the results given here will be discussed further in Chapter 5 and related to other relevant studies.

4.2: General results

4.1.1: Text length

In order to fully grasp the extent of the results, the texts themselves had to be analyzed for the total number of words and the average number of words per text. It should be noted that the average number of words per text has been rounded to the nearest integer. Furthermore, the average value for School 4 was calculated by dividing the sum of words by 9 instead of 10. This was done in order to compensate for the two incomplete essays and the Extended Essay excerpt. The results in Table 1 would only be valid as far as text length is concerned, not necessarily topic-wise (see Chapter 3 for more details on the method used for this project).

	School 1 (SF)	School 2 (SF)	School 3 (IB)	School 4 (IB)
Total number of words per class (incl. quotes)	6511	9929	13,931	6251
Total number of texts	13	12	12	10
Longest text (Word count + ID)	74 words (1E.SO.TE)	1027 words (2H.HA.HW)	1623 words (3I.LA.HW)	866 words (4H.CC.TE)
Shortest text (Word count + ID)	353 words (1M.SO.TE)	600 words (2B.HA.HW)	609 words (3L.LA.HW)	540 words (4J.LA.TE)
Average number of words per text (incl. quotes)	501	827	1161	695

Table 1: Distribution of texts and word count across the four schools

As can be observed, Schools 2 and 3 provide the largest number of words per school. It may be safe to say that this is due to the essay questions being given as homework instead of writing the texts as part of a test. The time allocations and resources available for writing these essays would therefore be much less restricted than if they were completed in a test setting (see Section 5.2.5.2 for a brief discussion on the impact of time restrictions).

Furthermore, the IB students are more exposed to the English language and receive more opportunities to practice both written and spoken English through their syllabus. Because of this, the students may in many cases be able to retrieve vocabulary more rapidly than their fellow students at SF and consequently write longer texts in a shorter amount of time. This may explain the general trend when comparing essays for homework and essays for tests between the two study programs. With these results, one would think it possible to draw the conclusion that the IB texts would contain more modality markers than the SF texts. However, as the following results will show, this is not necessarily the case.

4.1.2: Modality marker frequency – a general outline

An overview of the results obtained can be found in Table 2 overleaf. As may be observed, downgraders predominate in all the texts. The upgraders, on the other hand, are much scarcer. School 1 appears to have the highest relative frequency of downgraders out of the four schools, reaching 33 instances; approximately twice as many as School 2. Schools 3 and 4, on the other hand, appear to be more or less in the same range, both being at almost eleven hits.

The highest number of both downgraders and upgraders can be found in the SF schools (Schools 1 and 2), whereas the lowest values for the same groups of modality markers are found in the IB schools (School 4 with the lowest for downgraders and upgraders). This tendency applies for the raw figures as well as the relative frequencies. Furthermore, considering that the texts from Schools 2 and 3 are assignments, the distinction between the use of upgraders in both schools might perhaps be influenced by other factors, such as the topic of the text. A more complete account of the impact of genre itself and other factors influencing the results will be taken up in Chapter 5 (see Sections 5.2.1–5.2.2 and 5.2.5 in particular).

MODALITY MARKERS		School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts) ¹⁷
DOWNGRADERS	Hedge	7	9	7	0
	Understater	4	5	2	4
	Downtoner	31	21	16	6
	Minus committer	32	7	1	9
	Forewarn	4	0	2	0
	Scope stater	2	1	0	0
	Agent avoider (total)	135	113	123	49
	<i>Agent avoider (passives)</i>	18	74	93	23
	<i>Agent avoider (others)</i>	117	39	30	26
	Total downgraders	215	156	151	68
	Average number of downgraders per text (rounded to nearest integer)	16	13	13	7
	Downgraders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	33.0	15.8	10.8	10.9
UPGRADERS	Overstater	0	2	2	1
	Intensifier	25	38	29	24
	Plus committer	0	7	3	1
	Rhetorical appeal	0	0	0	1
	Rhetorical questions	9	2	0	2
	Total upgraders	34	49	34	29
	Average number of upgraders per text	3	4	3	3
	Upgraders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	5.22	4.94	2.44	4.64
Total modality markers		249	205	185	97
Total difference between upgraders and downgraders		181	107	117	39
Average number of modality markers per text (rounded to nearest integer)		19	17	15	10
Modality markers per 1000 words (3 s.f.)		38.2	20.6	13.3	15.5

Table 2: The use of modality markers in each school (excluding quotes from other sources)¹⁸

¹⁷ To reiterate the explanation in Chapter 3 (Method), ten texts in total had been obtained, including two incomplete texts and one Extended Essay excerpt. In order to compensate for the two incomplete texts, the first 800 words of the middle section of the Extended Essay were included in the text sample. This would then compensate to some extent for the number of words in the two incomplete essays, though not necessarily account for any results with respect to genre differences.

¹⁸ Dark gray squares mark the highest values in each category, while light gray squares mark the lowest. This same distinction applies for the tables in the following sections as well.

4.1.3: Relative frequencies per thousand words

In order to obtain a better view of the proportions of the use of the modality markers, relative frequencies per thousand words was calculated for each of the modality marker categories. The numbers were then rounded to three significant figures in order to make the values easier to compare. Only the words in the particular phrases given by House and Kasper (1981) as well as a few recurring ones outside their example list were taken into account. This will be elaborated on in the following sections dealing with the individual findings for each modality marker investigated.

As can be seen from Table 3 on the following page, School 1 has the highest total relative frequency for modality markers in general. This also goes for downgraders and upgraders separately. Schools 3 and 4 have the lowest values for downgraders, while School 3 alone has the lowest value for upgraders. School 2 is also found to have results tending more towards School 1. Thus we see a certain tendency in SF schools and IB schools here as well, namely that downgraders and upgraders are more used by SF than IB.

Regarding the various categories in downgraders and upgraders we see the same tendency as well. In most cases the SF schools – with School 1 in particular – seem to use downgraders much more frequently than the IB schools. It should be noted that the IB schools have more distributed frequencies than the SF schools when considering which school is at the lowest end of the scale. However, there are results that demonstrate slightly skewed results, i.e. that the IB schools returned the highest *and* the lowest values for understaters, like the SF schools have for the passive agent avoiders. For an overview of factors that may influence the results, see Chapter 5 for more details (especially Sections 5.2.1–5.2.2 and 5.2.5).

Comparing the individual downgrader categories with the upgrader ones, we see a somewhat different distribution of the highest and lowest values. While we still see that the SF schools return generally higher values than the IB schools, we also see that these schools also contain the largest number of zero occurrences as well. Although these results may perhaps indicate a certain tendency in upgrader use, especially for the higher frequencies, the numbers for these modality markers are too low for any firm conclusions to be drawn.

		School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Total number of words per class		6511	9929	13,931	6251
Population per 1000 (quotient)		6.511	9.929	13.931	6.251
Total modality markers per 1000 words		38.2	20.7	13.4	15.7
Downgraders per 1000 words		33.0	15.8	10.8	10.9
Upgraders per 1000 words		5.22	4.94	2.44	4.64
DOWNGRADERS PER 1000 WORDS	Hedges	1.08	0.906	0.502	0
	Understaters	0.614	0.504	0.144	0.640
	Downtoners	4.76	2.12	1.15	0.960
	Minus committers	4.91	0.705	0.0718	1.44
	Forewarns	0.614	0	0.144	0
	Scope staters	0.307	0.101	0	0
	Total agent avoiders	20.8	11.4	8.83	7.84
	<i>Agent avoiders (passives)</i>	2.76	7.45	6.68	3.68
	<i>Agent avoiders (others)</i>	18.0	3.93	2.15	4.16
Difference between upgraders and downgraders per thousand words (3 s.f.) ¹⁹		27.8	10.8	8.40	6.24
UPGRADERS PER 1000 WORDS	Overstaters	0	0.201	0.144	0.160
	Intensifiers	3.84	3.83	2.08	3.84
	Plus committers	0	0.705	0.215	0.160
	Rhetorical appeals	0	0	0	0.160
	Rhetorical questions	1.38	0.201	0	0.320

Table 3: Relative frequencies per thousand words for each modality marker

¹⁹ The unrounded values for downgraders and upgraders were used and the difference was rounded to three significant figures.

4.2: Downgraders

4.2.1: General observations

The general findings for downgraders are as shown in Table 4 below. As we see, the highest number of downgraders is found in the texts from School 1, with a total number reaching 214. School 2 has the second largest amount, reaching 162 cases in total. School 3 has the third largest amount with 152 downgraders over all, and finally School 4 with 68 downgraders provided the lowest amount out of the four schools.

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Hedge	7	9	7	0
Understater	4	5	2	4
Downtoner	31	21	16	6
Minus committer	32	7	1	9
Forewarn	4	0	2	0
Scope stater	2	1	0	0
Agent avoiders (total)	135	113	123	49
<i>Agent avoider (passives)</i>	18	74	93	23
<i>Agent avoider (others)</i>	117	39	30	26
Total downgraders	215	156	151	68
Average number of downgraders per text (rounded to nearest integer)	17	13	13	7
Number of downgraders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	33.0	15.8	10.8	10.9

Table 4: The use of downgraders in each school

As far as the various categories of modality markers are concerned, we find that the most frequently used downgrader in all schools is the agent avoider; realized by a passive construction or otherwise (the search strings for the other options were the generic *people, they, a person, one* and impersonal *you*). School 1 deviates slightly from the overall tendency by having the non-passive agent avoider, the minus committer and the downtoner as its three main categories. The difference between the agent avoider and the other two categories is quite large for this school, being at 103 in relation to minus committers and 104 with respect to downtoners.

Over all the four schools are found to use the forewarn and scope stater the least of all downgraders. As can be seen in Table 2, only Schools 1 and 3 had used the forewarn, and this was done only five times in total. The scope stater, on the other hand, was only realized three times in total and in the SF schools only: once in School 1 and twice in School 2.

4.2.2: Results for each downgrader

4.2.2.1: Hedges

The results for the hedges generally appear to be at a similarly low frequency level for all four schools apart from School 4, which had no hits at all for the words and phrases investigated (see Table 5 below).

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Kind of	1	1		
Sort of	1	2	1	
Somehow		1		
Somewhat		1	4	
And so on	2	1		
And what have you				
More or less	1	1	1	
Rather	2	2	1	
Total number of hedges per school	7	9	7	0
Number of hedges per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	1.08	0.906	0.646	0

Table 5: The use of hedges in each school

As Table 5 shows, though the raw frequencies and hedges per thousand words are low, they are evenly distributed. This indicates that students barely use this particular modality marker and when they do, there is no particular word or phrase they prefer using. Regarding individual variation in the use of hedges across the four schools, the results are found to be distributed between the students who used this modality marker. Thirteen students included only a single instance of one of the hedges represented, whereas six were found to include two. However, these six were found to vary the use of hedges in the sense that they did not use the same hedge twice, as in the following case where the student used *kind of* and *rather*:

1. You expect that something is going to happen long before it actually dies. When the car suddenly shows up it all seems *kind of* daily. (2A.LA.HW)
2. The point of view is also *rather* important to the story, a random man who has no clear side in the conflict suddenly, without no warning gets threatened by two terrorists, this really makes an impression. (2A.LA.HW)

Most texts that included hedges were also found to be concerning literary analyses and homework texts, which was also interesting. All in all, there were found to be 14 cases in literary analyses, one of which was in a comparative commentary. Social topics had seven instances, while the historical accounts reached four cases. Homework-related hits reached a total of 18 cases, whereas test-related hits reached merely seven. It is quite possible that writing about literature might provide a better ground to use such modality markers, as literature may allow for subjective points of view that may not necessarily be shared by all readers (or the teacher). This may be compared with e.g. historical accounts, where more certainty could be favored, and so less of these terms would be used. Nevertheless, this idea would depend on the topic investigated as well as the exercise requirements. Further investigations would be necessary to determine more firmly the impact of setting when writing such texts, as most of the literary analyses were completed as homework (see Section 5.2.5 for a brief discussion on the impact of essay topic and time restrictions).

It is also interesting to note that none of the schools had any hits for *and what have you*, even though this was taken from House and Kasper's article (1981, p. 167). A reason for this lack of hits may be that this phrase and its equivalents are used in spoken colloquial English more often than in formal written contexts, although this would naturally be dependent on factors such as the student's individual vocabulary, genre, essay topic, setting and the stakes for failing to write a text of a satisfactory quality. This result indicates that the students have at least some awareness of which phrases that are considered to be more colloquial rather than formal English.

Somewhat was one of the hedges with the highest frequency of hits in total. This was one of the phrases that were not included in the examples by House and Kasper (1981, p. 167), but were included in the sample for this investigation because of the similarity to *somehow* in semantics and use. Two examples from School 3 are the following:

3. "Because the story would still be there, it just wouldn't be much to it other than, a story with not much meaning. It would be a very confusing story about a couple that is drinking, and *somewhat* arguing." (3G.LA.HW)
4. Hemingway's iceberg technique of writing leaves the reader with a bland and *somewhat* meaningless story. (3I.LA.HW)

A quick check in the British National Corpus (BNCweb, 2007) shows that *somewhat* does not collocate with *arguing* (as suggested in Example 3), but with other *-ing* participles, such as *lacking* and *resembling* (the two most frequently used collocations of the *-ing* participle in the BNC). Based on this, it is possible that this collocation is caused by means of transfer from the

student's L1 (Norwegian) and/or perhaps by treating *somewhat* as synonymous with *kind of*, thus creating a slight “collocational dissonance” (Hasselgren, 1994, p. 243). It is also possible that Example 4 also reflects what Hasselgren coins a “perceived equivalent”, as it may demonstrate a semantic resemblance to Norwegian *litt* and *noe* (see Hasselgren, 1994, pp. 241–242).

Rather was the other hedge which had the same total frequency as *somewhat*, though the results were more evenly distributed across the schools. As shown by Table 5, the main tendency was for the SF schools to use *rather* more often than the IB schools. There is no clear reason why this was the case, but one possibility might be that the SF teachers – both non-native English speakers – could have used this adverb more frequently in their classes than would the native speakers, or that there was a general tendency of overuse in several stages of the students' education. Alternatively, it could simply be that the SF students themselves regarded this word to be more appropriate for a formal argumentative text than the IB students did. Naturally, as in the case of the results from School 4, it could be caused by all of these; by entirely different factors; or by a combination.

In regards to the relative frequency per thousand words, it appears that hedges are rather infrequently used in all schools. School 1 had the highest value, reaching barely over one instance per thousand, whereas Schools 2 and 3 were just below one instance (approximately 0.906 and 0.502, respectively). The rates for each school thus appear to be similar across the schools.

4.2.2.2: Understaters

As shown by Table 6 overleaf, the understater is more widely distributed across the four schools compared to the hedge, although there are a few differences between the schools themselves. The relative frequencies for each school continue to remain low, however, not at all able to reach even one understater per one thousand words.

An interesting observation for these results is that *a second* and *just a trifle*, two examples given by House and Kasper, were not used at all by the students (1981, p. 167). A possible reason for this is that *a second* deals with time restrictions, which would not be directly relevant for the essay questions themselves. *Just a trifle* is probably a phrase that is not often used by their age group; perhaps due to its slightly archaic nature and it not being frequently used in the students' general surroundings.

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
A little	1	1		1
A little bit		1		
A bit	3	3	1	1
A second				
Not very much				1
Not much			1	1
Just a trifle				
Total number of understaters per school	4	5	2	4
Number of understaters per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	0.614	0.504	0.144	0.640

Table 6: The use of understaters in each school

Although the numbers appear to be quite low, what appears to be a tendency in all schools is that students may use *a bit* or *a little* if they were to use understaters in the first place. This also includes School 2, which has the most frequent usage of the understater:

1. [The English spoken in Australia has a nice language melody and is quite charming.] But the English spoken in India is *a bit* weird. (1E.SO.TE)
2. But if one gets to know *a bit* about Hemingway's life, one can draw parallels between his life and the ones of his characters giving sense to this "boring", "day in the life" feel the reader gets after a first glance at Hemingway's texts. (3A.LA.HW)
3. Most people know *a little* about the situation in Ireland back then, and we do need this common knowledge in order to understand the short story properly. (2F.LA.HW)

As we may see, the register of the sentences around these two phrases tends to be semi-formal or even informal at times, as particularly illustrated by Example 1. This may indicate that the students could be aware of certain consequences for the register if these phrases were to be used, and may in turn account for the low values in all cases of understaters (see Section 5.2.2 for a discussion of register awareness among the students).

It is interesting to note that School 4 was the only school that used the example phrase *not very much* given by House and Kasper (1981, p. 167):

5. In "Death of a salesman" you can say that the secret Willy is keeping is *not very much* in the limelight, but on the contrary it is quite serious and really should not be kept a secret. (4F.CC.TE)

Both IB schools were found to use *not much* also, whereas the SF schools did not use these at all. Nonetheless, the numbers are too low for any general trends to be deduced from the results.

4.2.2.3: Downtoners

The results for downtoners are as presented in Table 7 below. This particular downgrader presented its challenges during the investigation. This applied to *rather* in particular, as the sense of it being a downtoner seemed somewhat vague compared to its use as a hedge, at least when it came to its use in argumentative essays. As a hedge it would modify adjectives and adverbs, so the remaining uses of *rather* would be as a means to “indicate one’s preference in a particular matter” or “to suggest that the opposite of a previous statement is the case; on the contrary” (“Definition for rather”, 2012, Oxford Dictionaries Online). The puzzling factor was that if *rather* would be indicative of politeness as claimed by House and Kasper, then it would be presumed that there would be an impolite equivalent as well (1981, p. 167). This implication was not so clearly elaborated and because of that an omission of *rather* as a downtoner was considered. Ultimately its results were included, however, because when considering the contexts in which *rather* would be used as described in the article (i.e. requests and complaints), it could be used as an obligatory adverbial (e.g. *rather than*) as well as an optional one (e.g. *His plots, or rather anti-plots*; 3A.LA.HW; my emphasis). Only the optional ones were taken into account in order to correspond with the the other downtoner examples in House and Kasper’s article (1981, p 167).

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Just	18	11	7	4
Simply	1		2	
Possibly	1	1	1	1
Perhaps	1	3		
Probably	9	6	2	
Rather	1		4	1
Total number of downtoners per school	31	21	16	6
Number of downtoners per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	4.76	2.12	1.15	0.960

Table 7: The use of downtoners in each school

Downtoners appear to be used much more often by the schools compared to the previous two downgrader categories. Schools 1 and 2 have the highest raw frequencies and relative frequencies, whereas School 3 returned 16 hits and School 4 six, with relative frequencies at around one per one thousand. The SF classes had 52 downtoners put together, whereas the IB classes had 22 in total; meaning that the SF classes had just over twice as many downtoners as the IB schools. A possible reason for this could be that the SF students wrote in a slightly more informal register than the IB students. Upon reading the texts, the general impression of the study

programs was that the IB students were found to use several more infrequently used words and phrases which may be associated with formal registers, e.g. *presumptively* (3K.LA.HW) and *meticulously* (3B.LA.HW), and also create a greater distance to the reader than what the SF students did. The IB students appeared to use other means than downtoners and other types of downgraders to express politeness and distance.

Another possible reason for School 4 to have fewer downtoners might be because of the two incomplete texts. However, it is unlikely that even complete texts would create a major difference in the results and ranking between schools, when considering the text length and the frequency for each of the words investigated for each school.

As far as specific results are concerned, what is worth pointing out is the difference between SF and IB when it comes to the use of *probably*. In total the SF schools returned 15 hits, whereas IB only returned two in total, and only in School 3. These were found in two distinct texts (i.e. 3G.LA.HW and 3K.LA.HW; see Appendix 5). The essay topics may be of influence here as well, as literary analyses and comparative commentaries predominate the IB texts overall (19 out of 22 texts in total, the remaining three dealing with social topics) while the SF texts are a mixture of literary analyses, comparative commentaries, historical accounts and social topics. The predominating topic of the SF texts, however, was concerning social issues, accounting for nine of the overall 17 hits. Six of the other hits were literary analyses and the final three hits were historical accounts. Thus, 12 out of 17 texts dealt with other topics than literary analysis. It is therefore reasonable to think that the essays concerning social and other topics would more easily trigger the use of *probably*, as many of these essay topics would require the student to elaborate on his or her personal opinion of the issue in question (see Section 5.2.5.1 for a discussion on essay topic influence). This is not to say that a similar tendency would not be found in literary analyses or comparative commentaries, but the way the essay questions are formulated may encourage the student to state his or her own opinion more readily for social or historical topics as opposed to literary topics, where the student would be more likely to reproduce points that have already been discussed in class and have been taken for granted to be an established fact rather than a personal opinion. However, this would naturally depend on factors such as the intended goal of writing the essay and any expectations for exams.

The most frequently used downtoner in all schools was *just*, which suggests that it could be a lexical teddy bear regardless of study program, though comparable data from native speaker

argumentative essays would be required in order to establish this for certain (see Section 5.2.4 for a discussion on this topic). As can be observed from Table 7, this was especially predominant in the SF schools, where School 1 had 18 hits and School 2 had 11 hits. It should be noted that several students used *just* more than once, particularly in School 1, where there were two students who used it five times and one who used it four times (1K.SO.TE, 1A.SO.TE and 1F.SO.TE, respectively). School 2 on the other hand had more evenly distributed numbers, although there were slightly fewer students who used this downtoner here than in School 1 (six students in School 2 and seven students in School 1). As for School 3, the number of students using *just* was even lower, with five students in total, where two of these used this downtoner twice (3G.LA.HW and 3C.LA.HW). School 4 had the most limited number of students, with only two students using it; one of them using it three times (4A.LA.TE):

1. And as Rosaleen says to Lily that she *just* has to look inside herself can mean that you have to love yourself. (4A.LA.TE)
2. They, especially August, introduce her to the sisters of Mary's lives and values and shows her that she is lovable, she *just* has to look for the Mary inside of herself. (4A.LA.TE)
3. These are *just* two of many examples where the belief of a few persons changes the plot. (4A.LA.TE)

Most of the cases where *just* was used were in literary analyses (including comparative commentaries) and in discussing social topics (20 and 16 instances, respectively). Only four cases were used in historical accounts. Thus, again it seems that the topic of the text is highly influential in the use of *just* in an argumentative essay (see Section 5.2.5.1 for a discussion on the impact of essay topics).

4.2.2.4: Minus committers

Most phrases used in this part of the analysis were the ones exemplified by House and Kasper, with a maximum of three other elements between the subject and the verb in order to allow for any adverbials or additional verbs that might be combined (1981, p.167).

As Table 8 indicates on the following page, the only added search strings were *I feel* and combinations with a first-person singular subject and the noun or *-ing* form *feeling*, since it was noticed upon reading the texts that some of the students also used these words synonymously with *I think/believe*. The noun and *-ing* form was only counted when it was related to a first-person singular subject. Only one hit was returned in relation to this:

1. So from this I can see that the father is a widower, and he workes hard to support him and his son (*I get the feeling* that it is a father son relationship). (1I.LA.HW)

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
I think	20	4		7
I guess	1			
I believe	3			
I suppose				
In my opinion	2	1		
I would(n't/not) say	3	2	1	2
I feel/1 st person sing. + <i>feeling</i>	3			
Total number of minus committers per school	32	7	1	9
Number of minus committers per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	4.91	0.705	0.0718	1.44

Table 8: The use of minus committers in all schools; with a maximum of three elements between subject and verb and always relating to the subject (in first person singular only)

What first strikes the eye upon viewing the results for minus committers is the immense difference between Schools 1 and 3; the schools with the highest and lowest frequencies, respectively. The relative frequencies also demonstrate the same tendency, with School 1 reaching almost five occurrences per one thousand and School 3 not even able to reach the 0.1 mark. Moreover, comparing between study programs we also find that the SF schools have a total of 39 hits, whereas the IB schools only have ten. Overall the SF students used minus committers almost four times more often than the IB students, raw figures considered.

According to the teacher from School 1, some of the textbooks that SF students use in their classes include various text-writing exercises which encourage students to give their opinions on a topic (pers.comm). Although such expectations may not necessarily be stated in all questions, it might be taken for granted by the student that this is part of what is expected by the examiner. Hence, the student may write according to this idea.

A slight contradiction to this theory can be found when comparing schools within the study programs. We find that School 2 has a rather low total frequency compared to School 1 and that School 4 has a relatively high frequency compared to School 3. Thus, based on the four schools in question, it is not possible to find a general trend by observing within the study program. This corresponds to the common idea that although there may be an overall tendency between study programs, there will still be variation between individual schools as well as between individual learners. How far this variation is shown between schools remains to be investigated by adding more IB and SF schools to the sample.

Interestingly enough, Table 8 shows that no students opted for *I suppose*, but that the majority of the frequencies were for *I think*. *I think* not only being more colloquial and highly frequent in use in many circumstances, it is reasonable to believe that this is a lexical teddy bear for the learners who use it a lot (see Section 5.2.4). This phrase may appear in various parts of the text, but particularly in the conclusion:

2. So, what do I, personally think of the spread of English? *I think* it is great. [...] (1A.SO.TE)
3. [Then to conclude on this essay, what is my personal response.] *I think* we should not censor the mass media. [Even though there is a lot of information out there the government does not approve it.] *I think* that we should know quite a bit. (4G.SO.TE)

As for *I feel/feeling*, there were only three cases in all where these were used, all in School 1.

Including Example 1 in this subsection, these are:

4. *I feel* like the two main varieties of English, British and American, are the ones language learners all over the world should be focusing on. (1E.SO.TE)
5. I realise that it is nice to be unique and stand out, but *I don't feel* like that should affect the English language. (1E.SO.TE)
6. So from this I can see that the father is a widower, and he works hard to support him and his son (*I get the feeling* that it is a father son relationship). (11.LA.HW)

The low count for these terms may indicate that most of the students are aware of *I feel* and *I-feeling* having a colloquial register. However, there are still cases where the students opt for it for the sake of language variation or other reasons.

In addition to searching for the phrases given in Table 8, a separate search for *I*, *me* and *my* was also conducted for each school in order to more clearly determine the extent to which the first person pronoun is used in each school. Omitting the search results that involved quotes and other irrelevant uses, the findings were as follows:

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
<i>I</i>	77	26		25
<i>Me</i>	8	2		1
<i>My</i>	10	3		6
Total	95	31	0	32

Table 9: The use of first-person pronouns in each school

As can be seen from Table 9, the use of first-person pronouns predominates in the SF schools, whereas only School 4 provides results for the IB schools. As IB students are often considered to be more in tune with native-speaker English, the results could perhaps indicate that native

speakers generally use first-person pronouns less frequently, particularly when considering the absence of any relevant results from School 3 (see Section 5.2.3 for a discussion on writer visibility). Naturally the truth of this claim could only be verified by looking more closely at differences across individual schools through e.g. using larger samples of native and non-native texts.

The use of first-person pronouns could also be related to the impact of essay topics (see Section 5.2.5.1 for a brief discussion on this). A study conducted by Ken Hyland (2001) had as its aim to investigate how writers in different fields of study “(a) address readers directly using inclusive or second person pronouns and interjections and (b) position them with questions, directives, and references to shared knowledge” (p. 549). Comparing research articles and interviews with academics from various fields such as mechanical engineering, sociology and applied linguistics, he found that “[s]cience and engineering articles tend to suppress human agency but writers in the humanities and social sciences often make extensive use of first-person pronouns, suggesting that writers have clear promotional and interactional purposes” (in Hyland, 2006, pp. 51–52). His results also showed that sociology articles tended to use so-called “inclusive pronouns”²⁰ somewhat more than the articles in applied linguistics (19.9 cases per 10,000 words and 13.3 cases per 10,000 words, respectively; see Table 2 in Hyland, 2001, p. 556).

According to Hyland’s results, there should be a difference with respect to social topics versus literary analyses and historical accounts. A general search with the help of AntConc returned the following results for the first- and second person pronouns investigated in this study (see table 10 on the following page). The relative frequencies for each of the topics indicate that there is a vast difference between the topics, with social topics having the highest relative frequency per 1000 words, followed by literary analyses and historical accounts. The findings here thus appear to confirm Hyland’s claims. It is possible that other trends could also have been found with respect to other modality markers as well, but this would have to be saved for a future investigation.

²⁰ The term ‘inclusive pronouns’ was used to refer to “inclusive first person, indefinite, and second person pronouns and items referring to readers” (Hyland, 2001, p. 553).

	Social topics – 15 texts	Literary analyses (incl. comparative commentaries) – 25 texts	Historical accounts – 7 texts
<i>I</i>	82	32 (excl. 50 quotes)	12 (excl. 21 quotes + irrelevant uses)
<i>Me</i>	8 (excl. one quote)	3 (excl. 3 quotes)	0
<i>My</i>	9	2 (excl. 9 quotes)	2
<i>You</i>	89	31 (excl. 19 quotes)	1 (excl. 3 quotes)
Total	188	68	15
Total number of words per topic	7989	23 436	5873
Population per 1000	7.989	23.436	5.873
Number of first-person pronouns per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	23.5	2.90	2.55

Table 10: Total occurrences of first- and second-person pronouns per 1000 words according to topic

4.2.2.5: Forewarns and scope staters

These two categories proved somewhat challenging to find, as it was almost impossible to use the AntConc program to locate these. Thus, a manual search for these downgraders was conducted, the results of which can be found in Table 11 below:

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Forewarn	4		2	
Number of forewarns per 1000 words	0.614	0	0.144	0
Scope stater	2	1		
Number of scope staters per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	0.307	0.101	0	0

Table 11: The use of forewarns and scope staters in each school

Compared to the other downgraders, we see that the raw and relative frequencies of the forewarns and scope staters were extremely low, one reason most likely being that they are more frequently used in spoken rather than written language (see Section 5.2.2.1 for more details). In the case of forewarns, this might also be due to a lack of uncertainty and little need for the student to “forestall [any] possible negative reactions” from the reader’s part (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 167). This is because the reader would be the teacher in each class, with whom the students would be acquainted. Furthermore, the students and the teacher might have discussed the topics beforehand and so the teacher would be likely to know about most of the statements that the students would make in the essays. Hence, there would be little need for any preparation for any potentially provocative claims.

All in all there were a total of six forewarns in the schools, four from School 1 and the remaining two from School 3 (see following page):

1. You can be lead to believe that the stort [story] is about an abusing father, the line “fearing the chronic angers of that house” can sound like the child is afraid of the father. I I believe that the poem is about fatherly love. (1I.LA.HW)
2. [This is of course not only a problem in our country, but in the rest of the world as well. There is actually one language dying every day.] It sounds quite unreasonable, but it is true. (1D.SO.TE)
3. These words can probably sound a bit strange, but if you think about it, it might be the way to protect our language and culture? (1D.SO.TE)
4. [However, it is an untranslatable word, what they did was to just put two words together, which means basically the same.] This can be very confusing at times and one can be mislead. The upside to this is that the English language is not just spreading but also evolving at the same time. (1A.SO.TE)
5. This same combination might appear boring or tedious on the surface, but rewards the readers who dare dig deeper. (3B.LA.HW)
6. The part of his writing style born from his use of language might appeal to some while alienating others, but his unsophisticated and simplistic style excludes no one from attempting to understand and enjoy his texts. (3B.LA.HW)

What is interesting about Example 1 is that the student not only presents a forewarning to the following statement by providing a literal interpretation of the story, but that the potentially provocative statement contains a minus committer to “play down” the impact of the statement even further (House and Kasper 1981, p. 166). A reason for this could be that the student presented a statement that had not been discussed in class prior to writing the assignment and that he was unsure of how the teacher would react. By complementing the forewarn with the minus committer *I believe*, the student emphasizes that this is his own opinion and that this may not necessarily be accepted by others, including the teacher.

Examples 5 and 6, from School 3, also demonstrate a noticeable difference between SF texts and IB texts. In these examples, there is no explicit reference to either the reader (e.g. through the use of the second person singular pronouns) or the student (e.g. first person singular pronouns). Instead, the student uses the indefinite pronouns *some*, *others* and *no one* and the noun phrase *the reader*. This more impersonal and distanced approach was a tendency found in the IB texts as a whole, though it was demonstrated in varying degrees.

With respect to scope staters, there were only three instances found; two in School 1 (Examples 7 and 8) and the third in School 2 (Example 9):

7. I think it is great that more and more people learn English, but *I am afraid that* “non-native English” will take over for “original English” and make it harder to use English as a lingua franca. (1G.SO.TE)

8. In situations where it is used as a lingua franca, I think it is acceptable not to speak perfect English, but when the entire language is changed on purpose, *that is when I react*. (1E.SO.TE)
9. *Personally, I found the story is very touching, and I really am glad* that those times are over – it probably has left some scars, though. (2F.LA.HW)

The only example from House and Kasper’s article that was found in the schools was *I am afraid that*. The remaining examples of *I’m [or I am] a bit disappointed that* and *I’m [or I am] not happy about* were not found at all. However, with the idea of scope staters “explicitly express[ing the writer’s] subjective opinion vis-à-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition”, the two last examples were found as well (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 168). Despite the presence of these three examples, the numbers are too low for any trends to be pinpointed. This also applies to the forewarns. More texts would therefore be required for a valid conclusion to be drawn.

4.2.2.6: Agent avoiders

As demonstrated by Table 12 on the following page, the results for the agent avoider are divided into two parts: the use of passive constructions and the agent avoiders exemplified by House and Kasper, i.e. *people, they, one* and *you* (1981, p. 168). When searching for passive constructions, I used the search strings as indicated in Table 12, allowing a maximum of three elements between *BE* and the past participle²¹.

As a comment on the numbers for House and Kasper’s agent avoiders, the analysis posed a few challenges. A clear definition had to be made beforehand, especially as far as *people, they* and *you* were concerned. These were the three cases where the probability of having a specific reference was the highest. Hence, instances where these words had *unclear* (i.e. generic) references were the only ones included. More specifically, these included cases where the words had no restricting determiners, premodifiers, postmodifiers, antecedents or any other contextual factors that may have limited their reference. These instances were sifted out manually from the AntConc results. One example can be found below:

1. [I think that they have been incredibly careless.] It is one thing to write things down like impressions *you* are given. [Another to report it to the government.] (4G.SO.TE)

Most of these agent avoiders were taken from House and Kasper’s examples (1981, p.168), with the exception of *a person*, which was added to the search strings.

²¹ These are represented by “(* * *)” for each search string.

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Be (* * *) *ed	4	7	17	8
Is (* * *) *ed	12	17	55	6
Are (* * *) *ed		6	17	5
Am (* * *) *ed				
Was (* * *) *ed		22	3	2
Were (* * *) *ed		17		
Been (* * *) *ed	2	5	1	2
Total number of passive constructions per school	18	74	93	23
Average number of passive constructions per text (rounded to nearest integer)	1	6	8	2
Number of passive constructions per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	2.76	7.45	6.68	3.68
People	12	6		8
They	29		2	3
A person	1	2	3	2
One	1	15	18	8
You	74	16	7	5
Total number of other agent avoiders per school	117	39	30	26
Average number of other agent avoiders per text (rounded to nearest integer)	9	3	3	3
Number of other agent avoiders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	18.0	3.93	2.15	4.16
Total number of agent avoiders (passive constructions and others) per school	135	113	123	49
Average number of agent avoiders in total per text (rounded to nearest integer)	10	9	10	5
Number of agent avoiders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	20.7	11.4	8.83	7.84

Table 12²²: The use of agent avoiders in each school (averages rounded to nearest integer)

As Table 12 indicates, the lowest number of agent avoiders over all was found in School 4, where the texts only had 49 cases (7.84 occurrences per one thousand words). The highest number was found in School 1, with 135 instances in total (20.7 occurrences per one thousand words). In total, the SF schools had 248 instances, whereas the IB schools had 172 in total. Similar to the case of the minus committers and downtoners, there seems to be a trend of IB schools having a

²² These results only take into account the regular past participle forms, not the irregular.

lower total count of these than the SF schools, although there is room for variations between schools, as also seen in Table 8 (minus committers). This is demonstrated by the agent avoiders at School 2 having 113 hits and School 3 having 123 hits. Naturally, one should take into account the fact that the texts from School 4 contained three incomplete texts; one Extended Essay and two essays which contained more or less only an introduction and a conclusion. These might affect the results somewhat, especially when considering that one of the incomplete essays dealt with a social topic, whereas the Extended Essay revolved around a literary analysis. Hence, there would be a discord in topic in this case, and the results would not necessarily be representative for these essays. A probable estimate for the presence of agent avoiders in this sample might be slightly higher, though perhaps not impact the numbers too much.

Looking at the numbers for the individual categories themselves, we see that none of the schools had hits for *am* (* * *) *ed at all and that only School 2 had hits for *were* (* * *) *ed; and a considerable amount at that. The reason why *am* (* * *) *ed did not produce any hits is likely to be because of the essay topics themselves. Although the students were found to use the first person singular pronoun several times, they seemed to believe it unnecessary to place themselves (the speaker) as a patient in a passive clause as far as these topics were concerned. Regarding the topics in general, the probability for this particular passive construction to be used would perhaps not be high for the essays dealing with literary analyses and historical accounts, because of the students having to deal with historical characters and characters in a literary work. They would thus be more likely to use the third person pronouns instead. This is also reflected in the results. However, it would be expected to be slightly higher in the case of the social essays, as the students would have a better opportunity to state their personal opinions; although this would obviously depend on the essay question itself (see Section 5.2.5.1 for a brief discussion of essay topic impact).

We also find that even though School 1 has the highest total number of agent avoiders, it has also the lowest number of passive constructions. The results showed that only *be* (* * *) *ed, *is* (* * *) *ed and *been* (* * *) *ed were the search strings that provided any hits at all. This is opposed to the other schools that had hits for almost all search strings, however few. Furthermore, disregarding the *am*+participle search string, School 2 was the only school to have hits in all search strings except *am* (* * *) *ed along with the most evenly distributed results.

As far as the other agent avoiders are concerned, School 1 has the highest frequency here as well, with 117 hits in total. Schools 3 and 4 returned the smallest amount with 30 and 26 hits, respectively. The table also shows that Schools 1 and 2 tend to use generic *you* most frequently, although School 2 also has a high result for *one*. *One* is also the most frequently used agent avoider in the case of School 3. School 4 deviates slightly from the results, as *people* and *one* are the agent avoiders that were most prominent in these student texts. Given the small difference in frequency between *people*, *one* and *you*, having complete texts would perhaps alter the raw frequencies for these agent avoiders somewhat (as well as the others), although to what extent this would take place and to what extent it would affect the relative frequencies per thousand words is up for speculation.

4.3: Upgraders

4.3.1: General observations

Comparing the results for upgraders with those for downgraders (see Table 13 on the following page and/or Table 2, Section 4.1.2) we see that upgraders are less frequently used in all schools than downgraders. This is also seen when looking at the difference between downgrader and upgrader frequencies. As we see in Table 13, School 1 has the greatest difference, with 181 hits in total and a relative frequency of 27.8 occurrences per thousand words. Schools 3 and 4 were the only schools with a relative frequency difference below ten.

Another interesting finding is that Schools 2 and 3 have relative difference values that are somewhat closer to one another than the remaining two schools. Although the students in these schools wrote essays in different topics (historical accounts and literary analyses), the texts were written as homework. The impact of topic, circumstances and other factors will be further addressed in Section 5.2.

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Total downgraders	215	156	151	68
Number of downgraders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	33.1	15.8	10.8	10.9
Total upgraders	34	49	34	29
Number of upgraders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	5.22	4.94	2.44	4.64
Total difference between upgraders and downgraders	181	107	117	38
Total difference between relative frequencies (3 s.f.)	27.8	10.8	8.40	6.24

Table 13: The difference between upgraders and downgraders in each school

The results for the upgraders are as described in Table 14 below, including the results of a search for rhetorical questions as well. The reason why this was added to the investigation was because rhetorical questions may enable the reader to see the writer's point of view, or even function to convince the reader to have the same view as the writer (see Section 4.3.2.5).

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Overstater	0	2	2	1
Intensifier	25	38	29	24
Plus committer	0	7	3	1
Rhetorical appeal	0	0	0	1
Rhetorical questions	9	2	0	2
Total upgraders	34	49	34	29
Average number of upgraders per text (rounded to nearest integer)	3	4	3	3
Number of upgraders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	5.22	4.94	2.44	4.64

Table 14: The use of upgraders in each school

Over all, the most frequent use of upgraders is found in Schools 1 and 2, reaching 83 hits in total. The distance between Schools 1, 3 and 4 is not vast either, as can be seen in Table 14 above. Thus, it appears that the general tendency of use in student texts lies at around 30–35 cases per class, at least with respect to topics and the schools investigated. Nonetheless, the frequency in School 2 also demonstrates that the frequency may vary from school to school.

There are several general trends as far as upgrader use is concerned. All schools share the lowest upgrader usage with the overstates and rhetorical appeal. There is also a generally low frequency for rhetorical questions in Schools 2–4. School 1 deviates from this trend by having 4.5 times as many hits as Schools 2 and 4. The lowest frequency in School 1 was for rhetorical appeals, overstates and plus committers instead.

The most frequently used upgrader, on the other hand, is found with the intensifier. This is a common trend for all of the schools, although the frequencies vary. What should be noted in relation to these findings is that texts from the two schools with the highest frequencies (Schools 2 and 3) were completed as homework, whereas the texts from the two with the lowest frequencies (Schools 1 and 4) were completed as tests. It is possible that this could be a general tendency for all Norwegian student essays (see Section 5.2.5.2 for a brief discussion of the impact of time restrictions to essay writing). However, more essays in these topics would be required in order to draw a firmer conclusion in this matter.

4.3.2: Results for each upgrader

4.3.2.1: Overstates

The words taken from House and Kasper’s examples are *absolutely*, *purely*, *terribly* and *frightfully* (1981, p. 169). Upon reading the texts there were also instances of *extremely*. These were also included in the results. As Table 15 demonstrates, hits were rather scarce:

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Absolutely		1		
Purely				
Terribly				
Frightfully				
Extremely		1	2	1
Total number of overstates per school	0	2	2	1
Number of overstates per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	0	0.201	0.144	0.160

Table 15: The use of overstates in each school

As may be observed, the scores for the overstates were generally very low, with only one hit for one of the overstates exemplified by House and Kasper (1981), found in School 2:

1. In so many years humans have lived with their own kind, thinking only about themselves, but we see now that it is *absolutely* possible to co-exist. (2I.HA.HW)

This one use of *absolutely* appears to be a potential L1 transfer from Norwegian. A quick search in the BNC did not return any hits, and a search in COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) only returned ten hits; all of them found in direct quotations and mostly in spoken material. Thus, the collocation *absolutely possible* is not used very frequently.

Translating this coordinated clause into Norwegian, however, we see its meaning from a slightly different angle:

2. I flere år har mennesker levd med andre av samme slag der de kun tenker på seg selv, men nå ser vi at det *absolutt* er mulig å leve sammen. (Own translation from 2I.HA.HW)

Unless the student consciously intended to structure the English clause the way it is presented, we find that the meanings conveyed by the English and Norwegian clauses are slightly different. In the Norwegian translation the meaning of the clause is not only conveyed with great force (albeit to a lesser extent than in the English version), but the student also appears to *open up* for the possibility to coexist to a greater extent than in the English version. Nevertheless, whether or not this is the meaning that the student wishes to convey in English is an open question.

The results for *extremely* were the following:

3. She was always *extremely* jealous of his affections, despite the fact that they never got married. (2H.HA.HW)
4. Then, Nick encounters “The Killers” in an *extremely* normal, or common, scene of life. (3L.LA.HW)
5. Throughout this even Nick experienced the whole process of evil power inflicting potential death, which happened *extremely* close to himself. (3L.LA.HW)
6. Communication between the family members is essential and therefore this boundary is *extremely* strong. (4D.SO.TE)

One possible reason for these low frequencies is the expectations of the genre, register and to some extent topic. An essay is usually associated with a rigid structure and use of critical language with argumentation supported by evidence (see for instance The Social Studies Essay, 2008). Moreover, the fact that the essay is a written genre would also imply a lower frequency of adverbs that over-represent “the reality denoted in the proposition in the interests of increasing the force of [one’s] utterance” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 169). In most cases, the issues discussed in an essay should be written as objectively as possible, which would then intuitively call for more neutral adverbs to be used, unless the student knew for certain that using these adverbs could be justified and supported by evidence, however empirical these may be. These explanations would most likely also justify the low scores for these particular overstaters, albeit

only partially. Naturally there could also be other reasons behind this low score, such as the student seeing less of a need to use overstaters as opposed to premodifying adjectives, as in the following case:

7. Even today, when one might think people are used to other cultures and other races it is still very possible to find prejudice and stereotypes, even in London which is considered the most multicultural city there is. There is such a *tremendous* variety of people there. (2I.HA.HW)

4.3.2.2: Intensifiers

The intensifier was one of the most prominent modality markers over all:

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Very	12	24	13	13
So	8	3	13	4
Such	1	1		
Quite	4	9	1	6
Really		1		1
Just			1	
Indeed			1	
Total number of intensifiers per school	25	38	29	24
Number of intensifiers per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	3.84	3.83	2.08	3.84

Table 16: The use of intensifiers in each school

As we may notice, the raw frequencies are rather high in Table 16 compared to other categories such as hedges, understaters and overstaters, though the results here were lower than those for downtoners and to some extent minus committers. This is also one of the few cases where there is a relatively substantial number of hits for each school and where the total results appear to be in a similar range (from 25 hits to 38 hits). The relative frequencies, however, tell another story, with Schools 1, 2 and 4 being more or less identical and School 3 having the lowest frequency of them all.

The results here can be compared to those of the overstater where there was a certain similarity in the definition, the difference being that intensifiers do not overrepresent “the reality denoted in the proposition in the interests of increasing the force of [the speaker’s] utterance” (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 169). Instead, intensifiers are “used by [the speaker] to intensify certain elements of the proposition of his utterance” without having an intention of misrepresenting the proposition or the elements with which it is associated (House and Kasper, 1981, p. 169). Consequently, the results indicate that the students deemed it more natural to use

these modality markers instead of the overstaters, as they would be more neutral in their semantic meaning. Alternatively, it may also demonstrate a common lack of variety in the use of intensifiers. This may be exemplified by the values for *very*, although further investigations through the use of more intensifiers would be required in order to draw a firm conclusion on this matter.

As in several other instances during this study, this particular modality marker did not come without its set of challenges. A check in various dictionaries was required for *really* and *just* in particular, since these two words were also included in the plus committer and downtoner categories, respectively. Based on the description given by House and Kasper (1981, p. 169), the contexts that were ultimately chosen for this category were where *really* was used as a modifier in adjective phrases, adverb phrases or noun phrases, and where *just* was used as a modifier in adjective phrases. As we can see in Table 16, the results for these cases were rather scarce; *really* only returning two hits and *just* returning only one:

1. The setting *really* quickly goes from calm to threatening for John, and just as fast the other way around. (2L.LA.HW)
2. *Really* popular clubs, are also facing the decline in membership. (4D.SO.TE)
3. While saying this, the father “is not looking at him”; This signal indicates that, for Nick, that everything is *just* doomed, and he himself cannot get rid of it. (3L.LA.HW)

The reason why there is such a scarcity of results for these two adverbs is uncertain, although it could be due to the fact that they are more frequently used as adverbials in their own right by native speakers and that the students reflect this in their writing.

A quick random search on the BNC and COCA was conducted, in order to compare the results with authentic British and American academic texts. Using a maximum number of total hits at 100, the results here indicate that the general frequency would be at around 20%; 19% in COCA and 22% in the BNC. These results were only obtained from the most recently added texts. In COCA only texts from 2000 onwards were used, whereas texts from 1985–1993 were used in the BNC. As we may see from the percentages, the frequency of using *really* as a modifier for adjective, adverb and noun phrases are rather limited. The rest of the findings showed the use of *really* as an adverbial instead, i.e. a plus committer (see Section 4.3.2.3 for results for this study). Thus, it is likely that the students would be more acquainted with this use and consequently use it in those contexts instead.

As for *just*, it was not possible to find any results in COCA, as the general frequency was too vast. Using a random restricted search on the BNC, identical to the one used for *really*, did not return any relevant results either. Thus, no comparison could be made with authentic texts, although it is possible that the student texts might also reflect the trend of native-speaker language in this case as well.

4.3.2.3: Plus committers

Compared to the results for intensifiers, the results for plus committers were rather limited (see Table 17 below). This may be due to genre criteria or the kind of language that the student (and/or the teacher) associate(s) with this genre. In this case use of such words would indicate that the student takes for granted that all readers would share in his or her opinion on the propositional content in itself, which is not necessarily the case. Therefore it is likely that the students would use downgraders in general to a greater extent than the plus committers (or for that matter upgraders in general).

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
I'm sure				
Certainly		1		1
Obviously		1	1	
Really				
Clearly		5	2	
Total number of plus committers per school	0	7	3	1
Number of plus committers per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	0	0.705	0.215	0.160

Table 17: The use of plus committers in each school (only declarative clauses were investigated)

Face considerations would also need to be taken into account when writing argumentative essays, as the student would pose a potential face-threatening act (FTA) by using these sentence modifiers (i.e. adverbials). This would be because the student would make an assertion that might not necessarily correspond to the views of the reader. Consequently, the student would threaten the reader's negative face in that such assertions would put at risk the reader's "personal preserves [and] rights to non-distraction" (Brown and Levinson, 1999, p. 321).

As can be gathered from Table 17 above, there were no hits for *really* or *I'm sure*; not even for the non-contracted *I am sure*. When searching for *sure* in isolation, there were only two hits

relating to certainty that were returned. These were not used as plus committers per se, but rather state the student's *uncertainty* in relation to the propositional content of the previous clause(s):

1. Several linguists are afraid that the Norwegian language will be destroyed, but some also think that our language sometime in the future will die. This is not *sure*, and there are many who also thinks that our language will survive. (1D.SO.TE)
2. I can not be *sure* of this, but what I do know is that they are beautifully written and very fascinating poems. (2C.CC.HW)

These two findings may perhaps indicate the students' awareness that that particular phrase would state his or her opinion more overtly than necessary for the genre, and so justify choosing the other plus committers exemplified. Yet again, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions on this matter without a more extensive collection of texts.

School 2 has the highest number of plus committers out of the four schools, with the majority of results being for *clearly*. This was added to the list of examples given by House and Kasper and also turned out to be the one phrase that had hits in most schools, though represented in varying degrees. The findings that were recorded for this category includes when *clearly* had the same sense as *obviously*. Cases where it had the sense as *in a clear way* (i.e. be translated into the Norwegian phrase *på en klar måte*) were not included in the findings. The uses of *clearly* that are included indicate a more subtle implication of the student's opinion and his or her conviction that all readers would share the same opinion of the propositional content:

3. Even so this is *clearly* a traditional poem as well. (2C.CC.HW)
4. Loosing your leg or your sight *clearly* matters, but it is played down in the poem much like "(...) people at the time of the poem's writing" were too naïve to see how much the soldiers actually suffered during, and of course after, the war. (2C.CC.HW)
5. This *clearly* has a strong impact on him because the girl he is fond of is with another guy which gives his is his first heartbreak. (3K.LA.HW)

The same applies to the findings in *obviously* as a sentence modifier:

6. [This time it was Germanic tribes that came to Britain, the Angles and the Saxons. They came during the 4th and 5th centuries.] This *obviously* introduced other people and another group to Britain. (2I.HA.HW)
7. In Hemingway's short story "Hills Like White Elephants", which is probably his most famous story when it comes to symbolism, he clearly uses much symbolism in both *obviously* the title, and the actual development of the story. (3G.LA.HW)

Upon reading the texts, another type of plus committer was discovered where the student uses the adverbial *presumptively* (see following page):

8. *Presumptively* this is the first relationship Nick has with a girl, owing to the fact that he “felt hollow and happy inside himself to be teased about Prudence Mitchell”, because that makes him sound juvenile. (3K.LA.HW)

It is possible that there might have been other cases besides this adverbial. However, *presumptively* was the only one which overtly followed the pattern of the other plus committers given by House and Kasper (1981, p. 170).

4.3.2.4: Rhetorical appeals

Rhetorical appeals are defined by House and Kasper as cases where “X attempts – by claiming or implying the non-possibility of not accepting that P – to debar Y from not accepting that P” (1981, p. 170; see Section 2.5). In the text samples there is no *attempt* to claim the universal recognition of the propositional content, except in one case, which was particularly close to House and Kasper’s phrase:

1. *As it is known well* the journey can be a source of getting knowledge about something new. (4K.LA.TE)

It should be mentioned that this particular result was corrected by the teacher into “It is well known that” and was therefore included in the results. The use of this particular phrase might have been as a result of the student wanting to use *as we know* but with a passive construction so as to correspond to the expected register of the text. The effect would be the creation of a “local error” in the L2, as described by Rod Ellis (1997, p. 20), but with a semantic meaning of the proposition which was rather intuitive. Because of the inclusion of this one phrase, the relative frequency for School 4 was thus 0.160, just barely higher than the remaining schools.

Rather than attempt to debar the reader from accepting something, the students generally seem to opt for overt debarments. This may be because there is less of a need to consider face requirements when writing essays. It would most likely be a different case entirely if the student were to stand face to face with the reader defending his or her views on the essay topic, as the student would use more verbal strategies to convince the listener to adhere to his or her opinion. The rhetorical appeal would thus be more frequently used in these circumstances and would then account for the absence of hits for the examples mentioned in the article, i.e. *you must understand that, anyone can see that, and it’s common knowledge that*; even for non-contracted varieties.

Because of the lack of results, a search for other similar variants of rhetorical appeals was conducted using the indefinite pronouns *anyone, anybody, everyone, everybody, no one* and *nobody* as search strings. The results of this search were not included in the analysis as they did not correspond to the description of the category, but should be mentioned here in order to shed

light on the choices made by the students in relation to overt debarment. As in the case of several of the modality markers, the results were limited, but nonetheless present in the texts as seen from the selection of examples below:

2. The way they acted would have been looked upon as totally unacceptable by *anybody else* except themselves. (2D.LA.HW)
3. Here Nick decides to leave town because he cannot live there anymore knowing that Ole is going to die and *nobody* is going to do anything about it. (3J.LA.HW)
4. [The situation described above seems to be present in a Sue Monk Kidd’s bestseller called “The Secret life of Bees”. A novel tells us about the adventures of a fourteen-year-old girl called Lily, who did kill her mother by an accident. The girl seems to be lost in her own life, and she tries to change something.] Unfortunately, *nobody* knows what exactly is she going to change, even her (4K.LA.TE)

4.3.2.5: Rhetorical questions

Upon close reading, some of the texts were found to use rhetorical questions. Although not a category in the original study, these were investigated further as they act as an attempt to make the reader see the point which the speaker wants to make, or even persuade the reader to adhere to the speaker’s own view. These questions may be viewed as either appropriate or inappropriate for the genre and/or register of these texts (see Section 5.2.2.3 for the teacher’s views on appropriateness). The results are as illustrated in Table 18 below, including an overview of the distribution with respect to topics.

	School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
Comparative commentaries				
Literary analyses		1		
Historical accounts		1		
Social topics	9			2
Total of rhetorical questions	9	2	0	2
Number of rhetorical questions per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	1.38	0.201	0	0.320

Table 18: The use of rhetorical questions in each school

As we may see from the table, the SF schools use rhetorical questions the most, with 11 hits in total compared to two hits in the IB schools, though the distributions differ from school to school. Furthermore, School 1 has the highest raw and relative frequencies out of the four schools. Some of these instances had a tendency to be placed as the very last sentence in the conclusion, for instance (see following page):

1. [I think this makes you think twice about how important the spread of English is for the world today.] Am I right? (1M.SO.TE)
2. [We won't be unique any more.] Is that the price we are willing to pay? (1H.SO.TE)

Most questions, however, were placed in the body of the essay, examples being:

1. I wonder, if the teachers can't pronounce words correctly, how are the students supposed to learn from their mistakes and be good at English? (1G.SO.TE)
2. Could you really trust your neighbours not to turn you in for being on the "wrong" side? (2A.LA.HW)

The overall tendency with respect to essay topic is that eleven of the cases concern social topics. This is justifiable; as such topics would more readily allow the student to present his or her opinions and attempt to make the reader see the point stated. The use of rhetorical questions for social topics would therefore be slightly different from e.g. historical accounts or topics, where the student would present ideas of an ultimately objective nature and so would not require rhetorical questions in order to let the reader see the point made.

4.4: Summary

The downgraders are the type of modality marker used most by all four schools; School 1 returning the highest frequency over all. The IB schools provide the lowest frequencies with respect to study programs. In general, the most frequent downgrader used is the agent avoider, although there are variations across the four schools. The least used downgraders are the forewarns and scope staters, which may be justified in the students having an awareness of some of the language requirements of the genre.

Upgraders, on the other hand, are found to be much less used in all four schools. As in the case for downgraders, an SF school returned the highest frequency in total (School 2), although Schools 1, 3 and 4 were in the same range. This indicates that variations between schools are to be found. The most frequently used upgrader for all four schools is the intensifier, whereas the least used upgraders are the overstaters, rhetorical appeals and rhetorical questions. A comparison of some of these findings with those of other studies and theories, as well as further discussions on their implications, will be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1: Introduction

As an introduction to this chapter it might be convenient to mention again two of the research questions posed in chapter 1 (Section 1.4):

1. Are students in IB and/or SF able to argue for their points of view in a polite and formal manner, and if so how (or how do they not)? Which politeness markers do they use to get their message across to the reader? To what extent is writer visibility prominent in the texts?
2. Are there any differences between IB students and SF students? If so, or if not, what could be possible reasons for this?

As the results in Chapter 4 show, students in both study programs are able to argue for their points of view politely and formally, although the use of modality markers differs across schools and between study programs. Section 5.2 will address the first two questions in relation to the findings in this study and other relevant theories and studies by others. Subsection 5.2.1 takes into account genre and various aspects within the genre of argumentative essays that may account for the results. These are register awareness (5.2.1.1), writer visibility (5.2.1.2), lexical teddy bears (5.2.1.3) and essay topics and time allocation (5.2.1.4).

In several sections, responses from the student surveys and teacher interviews will be given. These are the sections dealing with genre awareness (5.2.1.1, 5.2.1.2), rhetorical questions (5.2.2.3) and student views on the use of first- and second-person singular pronouns (5.2.2.5). Not all topics could have student and teacher responses included, as they are too general. If given the opportunity, it would be advantageous to follow up their responses and the findings in this study in order to present a more complete discussion of the results.

5.2: Arguing in a formal and polite manner: Similarities and differences between IB and SF and influential factors

In order to obtain a better overview of the differences between SF and IB, it may be beneficial to present once again the general results from Chapter 4 (Table 19, see following page). As the table indicates, the students seem to have an awareness that argumentative essays demand more of the “markers which play down [the] utterance” instead of increasing the force of it (House and Kasper, 1981, pp. 166, 169). By including these, they decrease to a certain extent their direct involvement in their claims and thus increase the distance between the student and the reader.

MODALITY MARKERS		School 1 (SF) (13 texts)	School 2 (SF) (12 texts)	School 3 (IB) (12 texts)	School 4 (IB) (10 texts)
DOWNGRADERS	Hedge	7	9	7	0
	Understater	4	5	2	4
	Downtoner	31	21	16	6
	Minus committer	32	7	1	9
	Forewarn	4	0	2	0
	Scope stater	2	1	0	0
	Agent avoider (total)	135	113	123	49
	<i>Agent avoider (passives)</i>	18	74	93	23
	<i>Agent avoider (others)</i>	117	39	30	26
	Total downgraders	215	156	151	68
	Average number of downgraders per text (rounded to nearest integer)	16	13	13	7
	Downgraders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	33.0	15.8	10.8	10.9
UPGRADERS	Overstater	0	2	2	1
	Intensifier	25	38	29	24
	Plus committer	0	7	3	1
	Rhetorical appeal	0	0	0	1
	Rhetorical questions	9	2	0	2
	Total upgraders	34	49	34	29
	Average number of upgraders per text	3	4	3	3
	Upgraders per 1000 words (3 s.f.)	5.22	4.94	2.44	4.64
Total modality markers		249	205	185	97
Total difference between upgraders and downgraders		181	107	117	39
Average number of modality markers per text (rounded to nearest integer)		19	17	15	10
Modality markers per 1000 words (3 s.f.)		38.2	20.6	13.3	15.5

Table 19: The use of modality markers in each school (excluding quotes from other sources)

The difference in modality marker use between SF and IB is seen most clearly in the downgraders, as both SF schools use them more often than the IB schools. The use of upgraders, however, tell a different story, as most of the schools appear to be in the same range, with the exception of School 3 which had the lowest relative frequency out of all four schools. The reasons for the low frequency for School 3 may be various, perhaps because of the essay topics themselves and the specific wording used to elicit a certain type of language from the student, as

opposed to the other schools. It should be noted that School 2 contained the only occurrences of literary analyses, which may also reflect the expected vocabulary and register used. However, more research into this is needed in order to draw any valid conclusions.

Table 19 also indicates that the most frequently used modality markers in all four schools over all are the downtoners, agent avoiders and intensifiers. We also see that the least frequently used modality markers as a whole are the understater, forewarn, scope stater, overstater, plus committer, rhetorical appeal and rhetorical questions. The distribution of modality markers in these texts seem to reflect that when students use downgraders and upgraders in argumentative essays, they mainly concentrate their use to only a few types and those that have the greatest array of words, phrases and constructions with a formal and/or neutral register. This in turn indicates a certain awareness in the students of the expected register of the genre.

5.2.1: Genre awareness

According to John M. Swales, the “rationale behind a genre establishes constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their content, positioning and form” (1990, p. 52). The students in all four schools seem to show an awareness of what is expected when writing formal genres and see “the rationale behind a genre”, i.e. the purpose of the genre in itself in the speech community where it is used (Swales, 1990, p. 52). If an argumentative essay has as its purpose to present information on a certain topic and persuade the reader to adhere to the writer’s opinions in a (semi)formal way, then it is obvious that the student would be required to avoid as many informal and spoken features of the language as possible to ensure that he or she would achieve the desired effect. However, the purpose of an argumentative essay would not be the only factor that would impact the use of formal and informal features, as will be shown in the sections ahead.

5.2.1.1: Survey responses from the students

Looking at the student responses of the survey, there seems to be a general consensus across all four schools that appropriate language is essential when writing formal texts. How much they emphasize structure and content varies, however. The students in School 1 had language and structure as their main categories when responding to the survey. In terms of language, several of the students called on an avoidance of contractions, but the need for an appropriate structure was focused on in particular. The teacher explained this focus as due to her own emphasis on this in class (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). It is also possible that the examples given in the survey

question may have influenced their responses more than intended²³. However, it can also be argued that if the example factors of language, structure and content were not mentioned at all, the students would have to spend more time finding out by themselves what the most important aspects are when writing formal texts. In the cases of Schools 1, 2 and 4 such a strategy would not necessarily be beneficial for them, as they were spending valuable class time on this. Thus, in order to restrict the time spent on completing the survey, I chose to include the examples as given in the question.

Although most of the students in School 1 emphasized language and structure, one student presented a list of priorities, with language being the most essential aspect to be considered, then content and finally structure (1H.SO.TE). This student wrote that she had attended an American school from grades 1–8, which may perhaps account for this slight deviation in class responses. The rest of the students had only studied in Norway.

The students from School 2 seemed to place their main emphasis on language and content. One student wrote that the texts “shouldn’t be too personal. Polite but powerful. Relevant” (2B.HA.HW). Content was also highlighted, though not to the same extent; one student writing that “you will not do any good by writing a well written heap of gobbledygook” (2G.HA.HW). Structure was the component that was most infrequently mentioned by this school. The students did not stray much from the example factors mentioned, although some mentioned other aspects that they considered essential, for instance critical use of sources (2L.LA.HW).

It is possible that at least some of the students would have a certain amount of firsthand knowledge of formal registers, though not necessarily to a large extent. This can be accounted for by the fact that two of the students had a British background (2G.HA.HW, 2J.HA.HW), another had been born there (2L.LA.HW), and four students had attended international schools (2D.LA.HW, 2H.HA.HW, 2K.HA.HW and 2L.LA.HW). Most had only attended the Norwegian school system, though some, the students that had attended international schools, had spent one year or more abroad.

The students at School 3 emphasized coherence, language, grammar, avoidance of colloquial language and precision; in other words, more language aspects than content and structural aspects. According to one student, a formal text should include “writing that surpasses

²³ My question was as follows: “What do you think is important to consider when writing a formal text, e.g. in terms of language, structure, content and any other aspects? Why do you think these things are important? (Use examples if needed)”

conventional writing” (3C.LA.HW). It may be assumed that this student referred to using a more formal register than an informal one. Another student also highlighted the necessity of “focus[ing] on key ideas objectively [and] limit[ing] the use of stylistic features” (3L.LA.HW), while a third was more unclear on this issue, stating that one should “speak highly of anyone mentioned in the text” (3Q; who had not handed in an essay). It is possible that their background, educational or otherwise, could have contributed to their common focus on linguistic aspects, as most of them had either lived abroad and/or attended international schools or national school systems in the countries they had lived in. Only three students (3D.LA.HW, 3N and 3Q) had declined to answer the question or had not visited an English-speaking country at all.

As in School 1, the students from School 4 have as their emphasis language and structure, though with a more even distribution than School 1. One student summed this up by writing that it is “important to keep the language formal [...] and to have a nice and organized piece of work. If the work is written with informal English and the structure is messy, then the work will not seem serious enough” (4H.CC.TE). Other students mentioned that one should “keep [the language] professional” (4B.LA.TE) and “not use unnecessary exaggerations, lyrical or figurative language” (4E.LA.EE). As in School 1, the students here also emphasized the avoidance of contractions, but they also highlighted the use of “well-integrated examples relevant to the subject” (4L.SO.TE) and avoiding plagiarism (4N). As for the students’ educational backgrounds, two students have never been to an English-speaking country (4L.SO.TE and 4N). The remaining students have been to English-speaking countries at least once, two of whom having relatives living there (4F.CC.TE, 4J.LA.TE).

The student responses reflect exactly what Swales describes in his book, namely that “the principal criteria feature that turns a collection of communicative events into a genre is some shared set of communicative purposes” (1990, p. 46). The set of communicative purposes is shown in the responses, which then indicates that the students are well aware of various requirements for writing a good argumentative essay; at least with respect to language, structure and content. A quick look at a textbook and the website for another textbook that were used in SF classes showed a clear preference for dealing with structure and to some extent content. The textbook investigated was *Worldwide* (used by School 1) alongside the website for *Access to English: Social Studies* (its corresponding textbook used by School 2). Looking at *Worldwide*, there is only one section in the book which deals with how to write an essay (2007, p. 33). This

section appears to mainly revolve around how to structure an essay and how to present the content appropriately, as exemplified by the description for the body of the essay:

“Your main idea must be explained point by point. You should present different supporting or explanatory arguments that help to develop the main idea. Each of these should be developed in a separate paragraph. The main idea of a paragraph is usually stated in the first sentence, which is called the topic sentence.” (Worldwide, 2007, p. 33)

There seems to be virtually no indication of what register requirements the genre had and the only focus appears to be on what was expected in terms of general content and structure. Thus, the students’ focus on language and structure in their responses must have been influenced by the teacher’s point of view and to some extent my own explanation of the project during my visit to their class.

The *Access to English* website, however, appears to take both structure *and* language into consideration, as the site has subheadings entitled “Planning”, “Formality” and “Argumentation” (The Social Studies Essay, 2008). Here the student is advised to follow certain linguistic criteria in order to make the text seem as credible and true to the genre as possible:

[Regarding formality] The expository essay is a formal genre. [...] It simply means that you should try to be serious and correct in your choice of language. That means you must write in proper sentences and abide by the rules of grammar, punctuation and spelling. It also means that you should avoid typically oral language. [...] “Formality” also means it must have a clear form; that is to say, the essay should be well organised and give an impression of cohesion (i.e. hanging together). [...]

[Regarding argumentation] Strong feelings can be an advantage when it comes to motivation for working on an essay, but it is important to remember that an essay should be based on argumentation, i.e. on reasoned discussion. Therefore your essay should not primarily be about how you *feel* about an issue, but about what facts and interpretations you are basing your understanding on.

(The Social Studies Essay, 2008)

Based on the use of textbooks only, it may thus seem that the students at School 2 would be given more specific details on essay requirements should they feel the need to turn to their textbooks for help. It would also give the teacher an idea of what to focus on in class if the students were to need a session on genre features. However, this does not mean that the students in School 1 are left entirely to their own devices. The teacher in School 1 had supplied the students with photocopies that dealt with appropriate language so the students would be able to check the language requirements of argumentative essays as well whenever needed.

5.2.1.2: Interview responses by the teachers

The time teachers spent on teaching their students how to write formal texts and the focus of those sessions varied from school to school. As mentioned in Chapter 3, only three teachers had

the time to participate in the interviews; the two SF teachers and one IB teacher. The teacher in School 1 provided the most complete answer to the question of time spent on teaching how to write formal texts, stating that she focused on “the holy trinity of essay writing”, i.e. content, structure and language (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). At the time of my visit to her class, the focus was on structure in particular, which was reflected in the student responses to the survey as indicated above (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). There would be certain features of language use that would also have been taken up, albeit rather to a limited extent at that time. This might perhaps be indicative of the proficiency level that the students were at, as this was their first year of taking International English as a program subject, or perhaps that they had not been extensively taught the various features of English language academic writing at earlier levels. Just as the teacher at School 2 indicated, the teacher at School 1 expected that the student would have been taught about the various genre features and genre differences in the Norwegian classes (pers. comm., 6 and 13 March, 2012). Thus both SF teachers appeared to agree that there would be little need to add any further details on this in the English classes, although the School 2 teacher informed her students of a few general differences between the Norwegian article and the English essay (which she treated as more or less identical; pers. comm., 13 March, 2012). As suggested in the case of School 1, this choice could also be influenced by the students’ level of English proficiency. Moreover, it should also be noted that the students at School 2 were at the Vg3 level, so the chances that they would have been more exposed to writing essays and other formal genres would be greater. The teacher would then have the opportunity to focus on other and equally important topics rather than how to write an argumentative essay in English.

The teacher in School 3 had a similar attitude to the teacher in School 2, as she did “not specifically” devote class time to this, but rather brought it up “as it pops up” (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Most of the class time spent on teaching about formal texts would be dedicated to language and collocation sessions, as these topics were regarded as more important. A session on writing formal texts would not be started “without [it] being instigated” (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Similar to the teacher in School 2, she also mentioned that the students should have some idea how to write formal texts by the time they start IB (Vg2 level; pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Thus we see differing views between teachers depending on which grade the students are at. It would be beneficial to have all four schools represented in order to establish more firmly if the

teachers' dedication of class time differed from Vg2/IB1 to Vg3/IB2, but for the time being these responses will have to remain indications of possible tendencies.

5.2.2: Register awareness

5.2.2.1: Forewarns and scope staters

As may be deduced from the previous section, the students in all schools displayed some awareness of the appropriate register for formal texts, showing that they knew that some modality markers were acceptable for certain registers but not in others. This is for instance reflected in the scarcity of forewarns and scope staters in the texts. As stated in Section 4.2.2.5 there were only six forewarns and three scope staters found. The forewarns were only found in Schools 1 and 3 (most of them were from School 1), while the scope staters were found in the two SF schools only. The low numbers may show that the students are aware that these modality markers are more appropriate for spoken rather than written language; that they appeal more readily to the reader and thus decrease the distance between the reader and writer; and/or that these modality markers are also less appropriate for more formal written genres such as argumentative essays than more informal ones.

The fact that the majority of the forewarns and scope staters were found in SF essays may also indicate a certain degree of transfer from L1 (Norwegian) register norms to L2 (English) use. Other researchers have also found tendencies relating to this phenomenon. John M. Swales describes one investigation of expository prose that found that “different languages have different preferences for certain kinds of discourse patterns” (1990, p. 64)²⁴. Although Swales only illustrates by mentioning an example of the general essay structure in English compared to “Arabic prose”, the findings can also be applicable to language (1990, p. 65). A general tendency in the results for this investigation was that the SF students appeared to use language that suggested less of a distance between reader and writer, as evidenced e.g. by their use of rhetorical questions (see Section 4.3.2.5). This was opposed to the IB students who generally wrote with more distance towards the reader. Thus we see different preferences for discourse patterns among students in different study programs as well. A discussion on pros and cons of allowing transfer of L1 norms to the L2 classroom will be presented later in Chapter 6, (Section 6.3.2).

²⁴ The study referred to was Connor, U. and Kaplan, R. B. (eds.), 1987, *Writing across languages: analysis of L2 text*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Massachusetts.

5.2.2.2: Intensifiers

One of the types of modality markers that were most frequently used by the students in all four schools was the intensifier (see Section 4.3.2.2). The total values for each study program showed that SF outnumbered IB with eleven occurrences (see Table 16; Section 4.3.2.2). As intensifiers would be more neutral in meaning compared to overstaters (compare intensifiers such as *very*, *so*, *such*, *quite*, *really* to overstaters such as *absolutely*, *purely*, *terribly*, *frightfully*; House and Kasper, 1981, p. 169), it would be expected that intensifiers would be more appropriate for the register and thus be used more frequently; that is, if the rationale of the argumentative essay was as described earlier in Section 5.2.1.

This tendency to prefer intensifiers appears to be a confirmation of Hasselgren's assumption that "Norwegian learners are much more likely than native speakers to use the core items *very (much)*, *a lot (of)* and *extreme(ly)* as intensifiers" (1994, p. 255). If IB students are at an interlanguage stage which is closer to the native speaker than the SF students, then this assumption would be justifiable, at least as far as *very* is concerned. However, Hasselgren's sample was rather unclear, as her basis was "all the wrong words found in eight translation texts – five exam and three homework texts" which covered "a wide variety of themes and styles, of the kinds typically represented in students' written work" as seventeen-year-olds, i.e. "sixth form" students (1994, p. 239). The validity of the results might be questioned by the topics of the texts, types of genre, and the students being at different levels of interlanguage (for a discussion of findings in the present study, see Sections 5.2.5.1 for topic influence and 5.2.1 for genre awareness). The extent to which the findings correspond to Hasselgren's study would therefore require more information on the texts themselves.

Swales describes a "contract [of semantic effort] binding writer and reader together in reaction and counter-reaction" (1990, p. 63). He describes this contract as the writers "trying to second-guess both their readers' general state of background knowledge and their potential immediate processing problems" while the readers try to "predict where the authors' lines of thought or description will lead" (Swales, 1990, p. 62). To avoid misleading the readers and come in conflict with the purpose of the text itself, the student would then have to take his or her language and personal involvement in the essay into account and adjust this accordingly. Using more neutral words and a higher frequency of intensifiers would then aid in achieving this, so as to avoid writing about "how you *feel* about an issue, but [rather] about what facts and

interpretations you are basing your understanding on” (The Social Studies Essay, 2008). This would then also account for the lower use of overstaters.

5.2.2.3: Rhetorical questions

Aside from the forewarns, scope staters and overstaters, another modality marker which returned rather low values was the rhetorical questions. As shown in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3.2.5), the figures were rather low overall. School 1 returned a total of nine rhetorical questions and had the highest relative frequency of the four schools investigated. School 4 had the highest relative frequency out of the IB schools; returning two rhetorical questions (see Table 18).

The overall absence of rhetorical questions could be due to register awareness among the students. They might consider the use of this modality marker to demonstrate too much personal involvement and would avoid this more as a consequence. Unfortunately this suggested explanation could not be confirmed by the students, as this was not asked about in the survey and there was no chance to follow up these findings due to limited time.

Looking through the *Worldwide* textbook and the website for the textbook for *Access to English: Social Studies*, there is no indication of whether the use of these modality markers are acceptable or not, which suggests the students would rely to a certain extent on their teachers’ opinions. The teacher from School 1, for instance, did not wish to reject the use of rhetorical questions entirely, but stated that the use “depends a bit on the context. Sometimes it can be appropriate. [...] In a literary text, if the student interprets and discusses in depth, it is alright”, but according to her rhetorical questions should not be used without argumentation (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). This is echoed by the fact that School 1 had the widest use of rhetorical questions out of the four schools investigated, although it could naturally have been influenced by other factors as well, as for instance the essay topic (see Section 5.2.5.1 for more details on topic impact).

The teacher from School 2 seemed to be in agreement with the teacher from School 1, stating that rhetorical questions are acceptable even in argumentative essays and that “there isn’t always a clear answer [to this]” (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012). Sometimes it could be appropriate to include it at the very end of the essay, so as to “open up [more explicitly] for further discussion” on the topic (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012). She also accepted the use of rhetorical questions in what she called “argumentative contexts”; i.e. in cases where the student wished to persuade the reader to see the writer’s point of view and/or persuade the reader to

adhere to the writer's perceptions (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012). Even though this was the case, there were only two cases of rhetorical questions in this school (see Table 18), which further strengthens the hypothesis that the use of rhetorical questions is influenced by the essay topic.

The IB teacher from School 4, however, appeared to disagree slightly with the use of rhetorical questions, stating that its discourse function was “a bit like *you*” (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Because of that, she “wouldn't recommend” the use of this modality marker (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). However, she acknowledged the fact that it would depend slightly on the topic and genre for formal texts and also on the context with respect to argumentative essays (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012).

5.2.2.4: Downtoners

There was also a difference across the schools when it came to the use of downtoners (see Section 4.2.2.3 for details). In addition to the intensifiers, this was one of the categories that had the highest frequencies out of all modality markers. However, as can be seen in Table 7, the SF students used these modality markers more frequently than the IB students did. This may be indicative of the different stages in the interlanguage that the students are at between the two study programs. Naturally, another influence could be that there would be more native speakers of English in IB than SF, e.g. 3C.LA.HW, 3K.LA.HW and 4F.CC.TE (bilingual), as they could perhaps have been more exposed to native-speaker register norms for the genre.

The results of the present study could be compared to those of another study; one conducted by Hilde Hasselgård (2009, pp. 121–139). Her aim was to explore “the extent to which Norwegian students apply Norwegian patterns in their choice of thematic structure, and to what extent they have acquired the grammatical and stylistic norms in relevant genres of English” (Hasselgård, 2009, p. 121). The method she used was to “couple the study of learner language with contrastive studies”, by comparing her own findings from the Norwegian component of the International Corpus of Learner English (NICLE) with findings from other studies dealing with the same topic in other corpora (Hasselgård, 2009, p. 123). These other corpora were the Swedish component of the ICLE corpus (SWICLE) and LOCNESS (The Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays).

The results of the present investigation for *perhaps* and *probably* showed the same tendency as in Hasselgård's study, as the SF students tended to use these downgraders more than did the IB students. Hasselgård's own findings were that there was a learner overuse of *perhaps*

and *probably* as compared to native speakers. However, as she points out, this overuse does not necessarily mean that the students are “copy[ing] the patterns of conversation, but rather [that they] overuse them, presumably unaware that they are not appropriate to the genre of writing” (Hasselgård, 2009, p. 135). Alternatively, they may at least be unaware that they are more infrequently used in native speaker language use. Hence, the findings could be related to the various stages of interlanguage which the students are at and indicate that the IB students are at an interlanguage stage which is closer to the native speaker than where the SF students are.

5.2.3: Writer visibility

The two primary categories investigated that are directly relevant to writer visibility are the minus committers and agent avoiders. Additionally, a general search for the use of *I*, *me* and *my* was also conducted in order to provide a more complete picture of writer visibility in the texts (see Section 4.2.2.4). The results of this general search and views from students and teachers as well as other scholars on the use of first- and second-person pronouns are presented first, before proceeding to brief discussions of the findings for the minus committers and agent avoiders (Sections 5.2.3.2 and 5.2.3.3, respectively).

5.2.3.1: The use of first- and second-person singular pronouns in student texts

As stated in Section 4.2.2.4, a small investigation was conducted in order to investigate the distribution of the first- and second-person singular pronouns in the four schools. Over all, the SF schools were found to use the first-person pronouns more often than the IB schools (see Table 9; Section 4.2.2.4). The same trend was also found with respect to the second-person singular pronoun *you*, at least regarding its generic use (see Table 10; Section 4.2.2.6). This can be roughly deduced on the basis that the SF schools had the highest number of essays in social topics and all essays dealing with historical accounts.

Table 20 on the following page shows the views of the students vary according to their actual use of these pronouns (see Table 10 in Section 4.2.2.4 for further information on how the students used first- and second-person pronouns according to topic). Several of the responses given by the students were found to be located in the gray area between accepting the pronoun in question and not. However, a considerable amount of them stated that although they generally leaned towards accepting or rejecting the use of either or both pronouns, this would depend on factors such as topic and genre. The results presented in Table 20 are based on the part of their responses that showed most clearly if they accepted the pronoun in question or not. The answers

that were too unclear were not included in the table, but contributed nonetheless to the general picture of where the students were located in terms of the pronouns.

		School 1 (SF; 14 respondents)	School 2 (SF; 12 respondents)	School 3 (IB; 17 respondents)	School 4 (IB; 13 respondents)
First-person singular pronoun use	Acceptable	9	4	4	3
	Not acceptable	5	8	12	10
Second-person singular pronoun use	Acceptable	5	5	5	5
	Not acceptable	7	7	10	4

Table 20: Student views on the acceptance of first- and second-person pronouns in formal argumentative texts

As seen in Table 20, there is a striking trend among the IB students compared to the SF students with respect to first-person pronouns. The majority of IB students do not accept the use of the first-person pronoun at all, whereas the SF schools vary. In this case, School 2 appears to be the closest to the IB schools, as the majority rejected the use of this pronoun. If these results contribute to indicate the stages of interlanguage between the classes, we see that School 1 has the lowest amount of students with views closest to the English-speaking standard of first-person pronoun use in formal argumentative texts. One of the students in this school seemed to reflect this idea rather clearly, as it is common in the teaching of the Norwegian article to include personal opinions in the conclusion (see for instance Fornes, 2007):

1. "I think it's acceptable as long as it's well considered and in the right place in the text. Maybe it's better to include your own opinion on the end of the article or essay." (2J.HA.HW)

The use of second-person pronouns, however, shows slightly less definite results, although one can observe a trend. The majority of the students rejected the use of this type of pronouns, but they seem to accept this to a greater extent than the first-person pronouns, most likely due to the generic sense that this pronoun can have as well. This was also pointed out by one of the students in School 1:

2. "An argumentative text should be directed at "the people". I guess you can use "you" as in "all of you", but not singeling out someone. If not the argumentativ text is directed at someone, maybe to show them what they should/shouldn't do, pros and cons." (1I.LA.HW)

The responses from the teachers in the three schools represented in the interviews indicated that the SF teachers were more open for the inclusion of first- and second-person pronouns than the

IB teacher, as the SF teachers stated that this would depend on the task description and the context (pers. comm., 6 and 13 March, 2012). This is also in accordance with what Lotte Rienecker and Peter Stray Jørgensen write in their book on how to write good theses and assignments at higher education:

There are no good academic arguments to reject the use of “I” in general, and sometimes it is actually more just to use “I” instead of “one” or a passive construction. It is particularly self-evident to use it in introductions and in conclusions where the choosing and assessing subject of the text (the writer) shows himself/herself: “Here I choose Bourdieu’s... as a starting point”. When we write that we for instance investigate, choose, analyze, sum up, quote, discuss, conclude, “I” am the true subject in the sentence. The alternative to use “I” is passive constructions which conceals the subject [...] This is superfluous; you can safely write “I” where you are the subject with respect to choices related to the text.” (Rienecker and Jørgensen, 2006, p. 325; my translation).

As this is originally a Danish book translated into Norwegian, it appears that this is a way of writing that might be common to other Scandinavian countries as well and thus shows an overt difference between academic writing in these countries versus that found in English-speaking countries. The majority of the texts and student views reflected the same as what the teachers taught them, although there was one student who expressed an opinion that this should be changed:

[Regarding the use of the first-person pronoun] “Not normally, but when expressing one’s own viewpoint for sake of refrence, I think it should be allowed. Though this is not strongly supported today, maybe in the future. I practice convenience.” (3B.LA.HW)

It should be noted that this particular student was Norwegian and had attended the Norwegian school system until IB, apart from one year which he had spent in Australia. This view may perhaps be more colored by the Norwegian view on how to write good essays (*artikler*) rather than the English-speaking view.

5.2.3.2: Minus committers

The findings for the minus committers showed that School 1 had the most frequent use of these out of the four schools investigated (see Table 8, Section 4.2.2.4), with 32 hits in total and a relative frequency at 4.91 instances per thousand words (see Table 3, Section 4.1.3). Most of the hits were associated with the use of *I think*, which accounted for 20 hits in total. This construction also provided the highest frequency for Schools 2 and 4, although the frequencies were not as high as in School 1 (four and seven hits, respectively; see Table 8, Section 4.2.2.4).

These results can be compared to what was found in a study conducted by Magali Paquot, Hilde Hasselgård and Signe Oksefjell Ebeling (forthcoming), where they investigated the

“Writer/reader visibility in learner writing across genres” by using the French and Norwegian components of the ICLE, LOCNESS and the VESPA²⁵ corpora and comparing the findings to those in the linguistics section of the BAWE corpus (British Academic Written English; Paquot, Hasselgård and Ebeling, *forthc.*, manuscript). Their aim was to “investigate whether learner writers are generally more overtly present within their academic writing or whether the features commonly attributed to EFL learners’ involved style are prompted by the argumentative type of texts that has usually been analysed in learner corpus research” (Paquot, Hasselgård and Ebeling, *forthc.*, manuscript).

One of the features they investigated in the abovementioned corpora was the use of *I think*. Comparing their results to the ones obtained for this investigation, there seems to be a similar tendency between the four schools and the ICLE-NO and the LOCNESS corpora. *I think* was used far more often in ICLE-NO than in LOCNESS (108 instances per 100,000 words compared to only 16 in LOCNESS; Paquot, Hasselgård and Ebeling, *forthc.*, manuscript), which is the same tendency seen when relating SF students to IB students, although the results vary from school to school. Schools 2 and 4, for instance, have the most similar values of minus committers, with relative frequencies at 0.705 and 1.44 instances per thousand words for minus committers, respectively, despite the fact that the students attended different study programs.

Hasselgård also produced similar results in a study of her own where she compared the use of the first-person pronouns in NICLE/ICLE-NO essays with those used in the British component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB; 2009, p. 132). She found that the literal use of the phrase *I would say* would typically occur “towards the end of the essay, often prefacing (part of) the conclusion” (2009, p. 134). This was also found to be the case for most of the essays in the present study as well, although there was also one example where it was found in the introduction (Example 1) and another which was found in the body of the essay (Example 2)²⁶:

1. [During this essay my aim is to discuss if the government should censor our media.] Personally *I would say* I am 50-50. (4G.SO.TE)
2. [Regarding the first section of the short story the student is writing about] ... for those who have not learned about Northern Ireland’s history before, *I would say* this introduction is essential. (2D.LA.HW)

This tendency of placing writer visibility at the very end of the essay supports the openness that the SF teachers had for the use of first-person pronouns in an essay, although, as the teacher in

²⁵ (Varieties of English for Specific Purposes Database)

²⁶ For a complete list of results for *I would(n't/not) say*, see Appendix 6.

School 2 stated, “the governing factor is the task description” (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012). According to her, the exercises for what she called “subjective essays” tended to have prompts such as “comment”, which would call out for the students’ personal opinions on the given topic (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012). As the students in her class would have had received information on how to write Norwegian articles in their Norwegian classes, it seemed to be more or less expected that they transfer their knowledge here to the English classes as well, including the addition of writer stance at the end of the essay, often found in Norwegian articles (see Fornes, 2007).

5.2.3.3: Agent avoiders

This particular category of downgraders followed the trend of SF students using it more often than the IB students (see Section 4.2.2.6). School 1 provided particularly interesting findings in that this school had the highest number of agent avoiders in total, yet the lowest number of passive constructions out of the four schools investigated (see Table 12; Section 4.2.2.6). A reason for this could be that the students favored informal markers and avoided those that were more associated with formality, again pointing towards their level of interlanguage and/or what they would consider an appropriate register for the genre. It is possible that this favoring of such informal markers is due to the focus set at that time by the teacher, as she was intent on concentrating on how to structure the essay as clearly and as straightforward as possible (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). However, this is not to say that that would be the only reason, as this tendency could also be the overall product of previous education and that language – including writer visibility – was less of a focus during these stages of their academic career. As the students at School 1 are at the Vg2 level and the Knowledge Promotion (LK06) was introduced in 2006, this means that since Years 6 or 7, they should have received at least a basic knowledge of the language that is expected for the various genres according to the LK06, as expected by the competence aims for lower secondary school (Years 8–10) and Vg1, where the student is to:

- express himself/herself in writing and orally with some precision, fluency and coherence
- adapt his/her spoken and written English to the genre and situation
(Years 8–10, Udir, 2010)
- express him/herself in writing and orally in a varied, differentiated and precise manner, with good progression and coherence
- select and use appropriate writing and speaking strategies that are adapted to a purpose, situation and genre

- write formal and informal texts with good writing structure and coherence based on themes that interest him/her and which are important for society (Vg1, Udir, 2010)

Although required to some extent in the lower secondary years, appropriate language is expected to a larger extent for the Vg1 level. This is even more prominent when observing two of the competence aims for International English, which is the subject that the students were taking:

- employ a nuanced, well-developed vocabulary – for both general and specialized use
- use language appropriate to the situation in social, professional and intercultural contexts

(Udir, 2006)

The fact that informal markers appear to be more used by the students does not necessarily indicate a fault in the teacher or the students, however. What the findings indicate is simply where the students' interlanguage is located and what they themselves demonstrate in practice with respect to what they believe is appropriate writer visibility with respect to formal argumentative texts.

5.2.4: Lexical teddy bears

As far as lexical teddy bears are concerned, there were rather few that were prominent in the text samples as a whole, which may indicate that the students are able to vary their language at least to some extent. One possible case mentioned in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.2.3) was the use of *just* as a downtoner, as it provided the highest frequency out of all the modality markers in that category. With respect to raw frequencies as well as relative frequencies per thousand words, the SF students had the highest numbers compared to the IB students. This also goes for the minus committer *I think* (see Table 8, Section 4.2.2.4) and the intensifier *very* (see Table 16, Section 4.3.2.2). The use of these words and phrases does not necessarily indicate that they are unacceptable, but comparing the SF results to the IB results the findings suggest three points: That the SF students have a higher level of personal involvement in the texts compared to the IB students; that these lexical teddy bears *can* in fact be avoided; and that the IB students deem these particular modality markers as being less acceptable for the genre and topic compared to the SF students.

In the case of *just*, it is possible that the high SF frequency could have been triggered by the notion of *just* being used more often in conversations. The students could thus have transferred this use into writing. The following two examples may illustrate this idea more clearly:

1. Then the British started the colonization, the result of that were that many people had to learn English and even to *just* speak English. (1K.SO.TE)

2. This essay is kind of pushing everything to the extremes, but I *just* want to make you realize that English is necessary for the world to function the way it should. (1M.SO.TE)

The fact that the SF students displayed higher frequencies for the use of *just* may well indicate the somewhat more semi-formal nature of the argumentative essays as opposed to those produced by the IB students. How each of the topic areas would influence the use of each of these lexical teddy bears remains to be seen, but the findings do shed some light on the matter.

One could compare these findings to some extent to those of Hasselgren (1994; see Section 2.4.3 for details on her study). Her findings for task B (intensifiers) demonstrated a general preference for core items and high usage of *very* among learners. Although the dependence on core items only directly applies to the use of *very* only in the present investigation (see Section 4.3.2.2), another possible factor is the favoring of certain words and phrases because the students have been taught to avoid certain other phrases. More specifically, the extensive use of *I think* may not only indicate a Norwegian take on the English formal argumentative essay, but also that the students had been told not to use phrases such as *I feel* in such texts. According to Rienecker and Jørgensen (2006, p. 26; see table), the use of the verb *feel* would be inappropriate for the scientific genre²⁷. They also state that in academic writing “it is of particular importance to understand the academic speech act, which is to *investigate*” (Rienecker and Jørgensen, 2006, p.25; my translation).

Rienecker and Jørgensen’s view on *feel* is also shared by *Utdanningsdirektoratet* in an online guidance document for teachers on their official webpage. Here the phrase *I feel* is advised to be avoided for objective articles and not at all mentioned in the section on subjective articles, not even as a suggestion of “useful phrases” (Udir, n.d.(a)). Hence, because of this general recommendation to avoid emphatic phrases such as *I feel*, the students may have opted for the less emphatic *I think* instead, although it was not advisable to use in objective articles according to *Utdanningsdirektoratet* (Udir, n.d. (a)). Opting for the use of *I think* instead would arguably make the sentence remain subjective, but would not appeal to personal likes and dislikes as much as *I feel*. It is possible that the students have also been made aware of this in their Norwegian classes, and thus their English teachers’ acceptance of using the first person singular pronoun would allow this transfer from Norwegian to English to happen.

²⁷ This was also found to be the case for *think/believe* (the Norwegian verbs *tro* and *mene*; see table in Rienecker and Jørgensen, 2006, p. 26), but it is possible that the teacher would be somewhat more lenient to the uses of these verbs at the upper secondary level than in higher educational levels, which Rienecker and Jørgensen’s book is targeted at.

5.2.5: Essay topics and time allocation for writing the essays

5.2.5.1: *The impact of essay topics*

The variation of essay topics between the schools could also have influenced the results, as some topics may more readily encourage the use of certain modality markers, while others might not to the same extent. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the students in School 1 were to write about a social topic (one student wrote a literary analysis as homework); historical accounts and literary analyses were the topics at School 2; the students from School 3 were to write literary analyses only; and the students at School 4 wrote literary analyses and about social topics. In combination with the (at least implicit) demand of a formal register made by the genre, the topic could affect the use of downgraders versus upgraders. Instead of using force-increasing and emphatic modality markers, the context would perhaps call for a more subdued and distance-oriented use of words in these cases.

One of the cases where essay topics could impact the results for each school is the use of the downtoner *probably*. This downtoner also presents a slight subjective stance in the surrounding context. The SF students – particularly those from School 1 – were found to use this to a greater extent than the IB students (see Table 7, Section 4.2.2.3). School 1 returned nine hits and had a total of 4.76 occurrences per thousand for downtoners; the highest of the four schools investigated in both raw and relative frequencies.

It is possible that this high frequency could be due to the essay question given by the teacher, which was to “Write an essay in which you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the spread of English internationally” (1K.SO.TE). The teacher herself acknowledged this during the interview in relation to “placing oneself in the text” and exemplified that in other cases the students could be asked questions like “do you think that...” or “do you believe that...” which would call for the students’ opinions on an issue (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Although the present essay question did not explicitly call for the students to take a stand with respect to the topic, they would perhaps need to include *probably* in order to accommodate for e.g. any differences in views between the reader and the writer with respect to any disadvantages or advantages they might present.

The results for *probably* are also reflected in Aijmer’s findings (2002, p. 67). She does not go into detail about the impact of the particular essay questions, nor the areas which the texts concerned, but only mentions that she used the SWICLE corpus and compared the results with LOCNESS (Aijmer, 2002, p. 59). Her study also showed a trend among Swedish non-native

speakers to adopt “a direct and emphatic style of persuasion, which in some essays seemed to be clearly topic-related” (2002, p. 65). Although this statement was related to *must* as a root modal and “other necessity/obligation modals (*should, have to*)”, it can be associated to these findings as well, as the semantic meanings are related to each other (Aijmer, 2002, p. 65).

The results from Ken Hyland’s study (2001) also concern the impact of essay topics (see Section 4.2.2.4 for details of this study). His results show that the use of inclusive pronouns is somewhat more prevalent in sociology articles than in articles from the humanities, thus indicating how topic can have a certain impact on the use of first-person pronouns. Judging by the results from the four schools in the present investigation and the brief topic investigation using AntConc (see Table 10, Section 4.2.2.4) it appears that there might be some truth to Hyland’s claims; at least as far as the first- and second-person pronouns are concerned. Although the categories used in obtaining his results were somewhat different to those used in this investigation, it is interesting to note this parallelism of results. Hyland himself states:

All writing needs to solicit reader collusion, but the social sciences and humanities typically rely far more on an explicitly interpretative framework. Because these fields deal with greater contextual vagaries, less predictable variables, and more diverse research outcomes, readers must be drawn in and involved as participants in a dialogue to a greater extent than in the sciences. (Hyland, 2001, p. 561)

Thus, one could say that in (argumentative) essays pertaining to the humanities (and social sciences) a higher degree of negotiation would need to be conveyed in these texts, as there would typically be several ways in which an issue can be interpreted. The student would need to defend his or her views as much as possible and “appeal more to the reader’s willingness to follow their reasoning”, yet still open up for the possibility that the reader could have alternative views and show a certain willingness to accommodate for these as well (Hyland, 2001, p. 561). This would then account for the higher number of first- and second-person pronouns in the social sciences and the humanities in his study. Whether or not these results could be extended to student argumentative texts as well is an open question.

5.2.5.2: The impact of time restrictions

Time restrictions could also influence the use of downgraders and upgraders. In this respect, it might be of use to compare the results of modality markers with those of Annelie Ädel (2008; see Section 2.4.4). Looking at Ädel’s findings for disjuncts, e.g. for instance *perhaps* and *obviously*, and the use of questions we find certain similarities between her study and the present, although

the values of the SF and IB schools are too low to provide any reliable conclusions (see Tables 21 and 22 below):

	SWICLE Timed	SWICLE Untimed	USE (Untimed)
<i>Obviously</i>	1.14	0.42	1.99
<i>Perhaps</i>	6.62	5.80	3.38
Questions	31.25	30.28	20.86

Table 21: Frequencies of disjuncts *obviously* and *perhaps* and questions, occurrences per 10,000 words (from Ädel, 2008, p. 45; Table 6)

	School 1 (SF) (Test + 1 Homework)	School 2 (SF) (Homework)	School 3 (IB) (Homework)	School 4 (IB) (Tests and 1 Extended Essay)
<i>Obviously</i>		1	1	
<i>Perhaps</i>	1	3		
Rhetorical questions	9	2		2

Table 22: Frequencies of disjuncts *obviously* and *perhaps* and rhetorical questions, raw figures

The trends for *obviously* and *perhaps* in Ädel’s study show a slight decrease from SWICLE Timed to SWICLE Untimed. The raw figures for IB and SF schools however, show a slight *increase* instead, although the samples here are too small for any appropriate conclusions to be drawn. The use of questions in Ädel’s study, on the other hand, seems to have a parallel trend to that between test and homework texts in the present study; both results showing a decrease in the use of questions from timed to untimed essays. Comparing SWICLE Untimed to USE, we see that the decrease is even more dramatic, suggesting that the higher up students reach in their education, the less they may wish to use questions in their essays. A reason for this may be for instance that the university students are at a more advanced interlanguage stage; that they have a greater access to external sources; and that they have more time to sift out important information from these. This would then create less of a need to use rhetorical devices to get their point across to the reader and justify the decrease of rhetorical questions in homework texts as well.

Ädel’s explanation, which is also reasonable, is that “USE writers [could have been] instructed to avoid features like disjuncts, questions and exclamations, such that instruction rather than (or in addition to) access to other texts is responsible for the less frequent use of involvement features” (Ädel, 2008, p. 46). This explanation would be similar to the response given by the IB teacher from School 4 during the interview for this study, as she recommended that they “keep away from *I*” (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). A reason for this could perhaps be the more internationally directed orientation that would be required from students once they reach university level. The students would have to consider which features that need to be included if

their text is to be as credible as possible in more international circles at that stage. This would then account for the more infrequent use of *obviously*, *perhaps* and rhetorical questions in IB compared to SF, with respect to both limited and unlimited time restrictions.

5.3: Summary

The findings show that the students in both study programs had an awareness of genre expectations, though the focus on content, language and structure varied from school to school, as did the focus that the teachers had in their classes. Judging by the responses from the telephone interviews, two out of three teachers were found to not spend much time on teaching genre characteristics, as they expected the students to have been taught this at the Vg1 year. The individual findings discussed in this section indicate a general correspondence with previous research and also a parallel trend between interlanguage levels between SF and IB and English learners and native speakers. The teachers were also found to have some influence on the students' views and use of certain modality markers. More research would, however, be necessary in order to draw firm conclusions on the validity of these results.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1: Summary

The results showed that the students were very much able to argue their points of view in a polite and formal way, though the interlanguage stages they were at differed between study programs and individual schools. As stated in Chapter 4, the most frequently used modality markers used in all four schools were the downtoner, agent avoider and intensifier, whereas the least frequently used modality markers were the understater, forewarn, scope stater, overstater, plus committer, rhetorical appeal and rhetorical questions (see also Section 5.2). As regards writer visibility, School 1 provided the highest number of minus committers and also agent avoiders, although they also had the lowest number of passive constructions, which may suggest a favoring of informal markers or simply indicate their interlanguage stage.

The students also demonstrated a certain awareness of appropriate genre features for argumentative essays and formal texts; although this also depended to some extent on the teachers' views on what consists a formal and argumentative text; the focus the teacher had had in his or her classes; and the focus and training the students had received from previous teachers. Few students appeared to deviate from their teachers' perceptions on the use of first-person pronouns, for instance. Some of the teachers also expected that the students had already received the necessary basic instruction and training in writing argumentative essays by the time the students had reached their current year and that they knew how to write in this genre, or at least were aware of the basic genre requirements. However, it would also seem that the teachers would be open to provide necessary training when needed. This was demonstrated particularly by the teacher from School 1, who accommodated for the students' difficulties in writing argumentative essays and dedicated more class time to teaching this genre to ensure that they understood and were able to fulfill the genre requirements.

The results also showed that the relation between the two study programs was similar to that between learners and native speakers as documented in several of the studies referred to. One example where this parallel tendency was particularly demonstrated was with the minus committer *I think*, which the SF schools used much more frequently in total compared to the IB students (see Section 4.2.2.4). This corresponded to the results from the corpus investigations by Paquot, Hasselgård and Ebeling (forthc., manuscript). Another example was found in the use of the downtoners *perhaps* and *probably*. These use of these modality markers was also found to

correspond to Hasselgård (2009), as their overuse in SF compared to IB was similar to the overuse between learners and native speakers (see Section 5.2.2.4 for details). As these students were mostly non-native speakers, however, the similarities can only go so far. Nevertheless, the parallel tendencies between the present studies and others provided an indication (or perhaps a confirmation) of the interlanguage levels that the students in each study program are at.

6.2: The usefulness of the results

As stated in the introduction, this study had as its aim to investigate an aspect of politeness in student texts in two study programs. Without intending to present a complete picture of this, the results would at least provide a certain overview of how students use politeness markers in formal argumentative essays and their views on writing formal texts as well as the views of their teachers. Hopefully, the results can provide a better idea of how students are able to write in formal registers and how their study program compares with other ones; in this case how a national Norwegian study program compares with an international equivalent.

Through these results, the students may gain a better awareness of their own language level and a better idea of what they do well and what they need to improve. This does not only apply to the students who participated in this study, but also for other students who may relate to some of the findings upon reading this paper. Comparing one's own writing styles to those of other people may prove beneficial and may further motivate students to increase their writing skills, especially when also considering the requirements and guidelines of the LK06.

The results may also provide teachers with an alternative angle on the requirements of each study program and the genre-related topics that should be taught in each particular year. In addition to this, they may prove useful in considering any changes or adjustments to the syllabi/curricula of the study programs, or even those of earlier educational stages. If there is a wish to improve student competence in writing formal argumentative essays, some schools may find it useful to start introducing this genre somewhat earlier than originally intended, or even cooperate with lower secondary schools in order to introduce this skill earlier. However, this would naturally depend on the willingness of the administration(s) and teachers, the capability of the students, permission given by any other authorities, and the development of teaching materials. Alternatively, teachers and students might find it more useful – and less bureaucratic – to adjust classroom activities towards certain competence aims or learning outcomes more as they find out how students and teachers in other study program cope with the argumentative essay.

As the argumentative essay frequently recurs in higher educational institutions, and as both SF and IB both point in the direction of higher education, a thorough training and greater focus at an early stage would be beneficial for the students, as it would allow them to develop their skills and manage the genre sufficiently as they proceed to universities and colleges. The results of this study could contribute to a more tangible idea of which aspects of students' use of English are worth looking into make the students aware of.

6.3: Should any measures be taken to improve the teaching of register awareness in formal argumentative texts in either or both study programs?

6.3.1: Comments from students and teachers

According to the responses for the student survey, there were a few students in each class who still felt unsure about various aspects regarding genre requirements of formal argumentative texts (having argumentative essays particularly in mind), although the overall majority believed they produced results that were average or above average. The same tendency was found regardless of the year they were in. These mixed results would not come as much of a surprise, as these four classes were considered to be heterogeneous by their teachers (pers. comm., 6 and 13 March, 2012).

Some of the students' responses also indicated a slight misapprehension of the term "formal argumentative text", despite the explanation given earlier on in the survey. Additionally, several students were unsure about the appropriate register and stressed the need for more practice in writing argumentative texts, as can be seen in the examples below (see Appendix 7 for more student responses):

1. "I think I need to work more with formal argumentative texts because I don't think my formal language is very good. I feel like I can write a quite good formal text, but it can deffenatly be better." (1D.SO.TE)
2. "It depends on the task and topic, but I think I manage just fine. I must say though, that we should have written more argumentative texts in upper secondary." (2F.HA.HW)
3. "[...] I know I lack a wide vocabulary and that is why most of my argumentative texts becomes somewhat plain. It is also the reason behind the lack of "flow" in my language and therefore I can not at this point say that I am anything but average when it comes to writing argumentative texts." (3D.LA.HW)
4. "Not well. I am not comfortable with writing any sort of text for English (I was before I started the IB, but no more!)" (4H.CC.TE)²⁸

²⁸ This student had attended the Norwegian and the Hong Kong school systems before attending IB.

As these four examples show, the degree to which the students felt they needed more practice in writing in this genre, a more extensive vocabulary and more training in writing in a more formal register varied from student to student, though the need was nonetheless there. In order to accommodate for their needs, the teachers were willing to assist where necessary, although the teachers from Schools 2 and 3 stated that it was expected that the students had been taught the various types of genres by the time they entered the IB1/Vg2 year. Only the teacher from School 1 appeared to thoroughly teach her students how to write argumentative essays to her students, due to the apparent need to refine their skills.

The SF teachers had in common the use of textbooks and they both commented during their interviews that they were lacking in various ways. The teacher in School 2 requested “a greater diversity” of texts in their book (*Access to English: Social Studies*), as they often appeared to be somewhat monotonous and elementary to them. Also, the history part of the book was rather “lengthy” seen from the students’ perspective. She herself would have preferred shorter and more precise texts, “but I guess that’s why teachers write textbooks; because they’re not satisfied with the quality of those that are already available” (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012).

This teacher also mentioned that the students briefly discussed rhetoric in class, as the students were taught to use rhetorical terms to explain parts of language use in various texts, such as for instance speeches delivered by presidential candidates during the US primaries (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012). The students would then be asked questions referring to the rhetorical strategies used; e.g. how the speakers appealed to *pathos*, *ethos* and *logos* in their texts (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012). The desired effect of this would not only be a greater awareness of language and register use in other people’s texts, but also in their own, and would hopefully better their skills. However, she pointed out that this would be saved for the students at “higher levels” (i.e. for more skilled students; pers. comm., 13 March, 2012).

During the interview, the teacher in School 1 stated that “there is not one single place in a textbook where they discuss formal texts” (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Furthermore, according to her the topic of formal registers was only (briefly) addressed at Vg1 and the textbook authors seemed to forget the specialization subjects during the following years (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). This would then place more pressure on Vg1 students to comprehend and be able to write in various registers instead of teaching this across all three upper secondary years. In relation to the lack of focus at Vg2 and Vg3, she further asked: “How can we teach [formal registers]

without having the proper resources?” (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Here she referred to an article written by Hilde Hasselgård in *Bedre skole*, a Norwegian periodical for teachers and school administrators (2012, pp. 64–67). In this article, Hasselgård had pointed out the various cultural differences between genres that the students should be aware of when writing argumentative essays, e.g. regarding writer visibility in the texts (2012, pp. 64–67). Although the article highlighted the importance of increasing student awareness of cultural differences with respect to argumentative essays, the teacher responded by asking to what extent the textbooks for lower and upper secondary school make a problem out of students’ use of writer visibility and modifying expressions in formal texts (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Moreover, if this was indeed a genuine problem in the Norwegian system, she also called out for more resources in order to properly solve this issue (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Whether other teachers share similar views cannot be confirmed by the findings in this investigation, but it is worth further research should this be of interest.

It should be noted that Vg1 is the last year in SF where English is an obligatory subject. Consequently, that year may be the last chance for teachers to focus on formal registers in the classroom. The extent to which this has been done may be partly reflected in the approaches of both SF schools. The teacher in School 2 stated that she used texts when teaching the students about register, indicating that the students already have some knowledge of the basic requirements of the genre and that appropriate language could be focused on more easily. The texts used could either be composed by the students themselves, or by other people (learner texts or authentic ones), but would in any case serve as concrete means to illustrate appropriate language use as far as possible. The teacher in School 1, on the other hand, seemed less able to give examples of her teaching methods in relation to teaching registers, most likely due to the students having to prioritize other aspects of essay writing instead. However, she stated that registers should be taught only “just a little” and that her belief of the correct approach was to take “one thing at a time” (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). According to her, students who have a difficult time expressing themselves [in Vg1] tend to use “I think”, which “is not where one should correct things” at that stage (pers. comm., 6 March, 2012). Whether or not such corrections would be made in her class in the future seemed unclear for the time being, but it appeared to be the intention as the students progressed in their skills.

6.3.2: Native speaker norms and L2 speaker norms in the classroom

The teacher in School 2 pointed out during the telephone interview that there was a difference in genre and register requirements between English and Norwegian essays and that the closest equivalent to the English essay would be the Norwegian article (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012)²⁹. She would usually point this out to her students so as to guide them in the right direction when writing essays for her classes (pers. comm., 13 March, 2012). As IB is an international study program, accommodating for individual cultural differences in that way may become more exhaustive to include in syllabus requirements. However, it could be beneficial for them to at least receive an indication of the most basic differences in terms of register and genre differences between various language traditions.

With this in mind, it might be useful to draw in elements of the debate of whether or not to allow native-speaker language norms in the ESL/EFL classroom and what language standard that should be the template the language learners should follow. The avoidance of the first language could be justified by the claim that if children learn their first “without reference to another language”, the same method should be adopted for second language learning as well (Cook, 2008, p. 181). Furthermore, to learn a second language would mean to “use it independently of the first language and eventually to ‘think’ in it. Anything which keeps the two languages apart is therefore beneficial to L2 learning” (Cook, 2008, p. 181). With respect to training in genre and register, this would then imply not using conventions from other language cultures and simply adhering to one variety only. This could be understandable for study programs such as IB. For programs that are to be used by several nations and cultures, the idea to include genre and/or register conventions from several varieties might prove to be too daunting to include in a syllabus and too time-consuming to be run through in the classroom, even though the information is relevant. Hence, a standard independent of any cultural conventions (but perhaps tending more towards general higher academic use of discourse conventions) would be justifiable.

The idea of prioritizing academic conventions is also similar to views given by L2 graduate students in a study by Yu-Ying Chang and John Swales (1999, in Hyland, 2006, pp. 158–162). In relation to their study of informal features found in academic texts in statistics, linguistics and philosophy, the students were asked whether the features investigated – for instance the inclusion of questions, first-person pronouns and clause-initial *and*, *but*, *so*, *or* and *however* – “made

²⁹ For more details on the Norwegian article and the Norwegian essay, see for instance Røskeland M., Bakke, J. O., Aksnes, L. M. & Akselberg, G. (2009, pp. 233–234, 260–263).

academic writing in English easier or more difficult” (Hyland, 2006, p. 161). According to the findings, there was a “clear majority [who] were concerned about the greater flexibility that greater informality might offer”, possibly because of the increased complication this would entail when learning about register use in various contexts (Hyland, 2006, p. 161). How Norwegian upper secondary students and teachers would react to this would perhaps vary somewhat, although the extent of this variation remains to be seen. Nonetheless, based on the opinions of the graduate students and the findings given in the article, a clear distinction between formal and informal registers would be favored in higher academic circles, meaning that having a clear distinction in lower educational levels could be advantageous as well.

The scholars who highlight the inclusion of L2 speaker norms in the classroom argue against the use of native speaker norms by stating that “students may feel that native speaker[s] have achieved a perfection that is out of their reach”, thus highlighting an element of despair and hopelessness in learning a new language according to how native speakers use it and also emphasizing a decrease in motivation to learn it (Cook, 2008, p. 187). With respect to genre differences between cultures, it might be a challenge to learn for students who continue to struggle with e.g. the argumentative essay. Adding on further modifications on what this type of text should be like in the English subject as compared to other subjects may perhaps be confusing and frustrating for some, although with sufficient practice, this too could arguably be mastered at least to a certain extent.

Vivian Cook also states that “if L2 users are not the same as monolinguals [...] whether in the languages they know or in the rest of their minds, it is inappropriate to base language teaching on the native speaker model, since it may [...] constrain [the students] to the activities of monolinguals rather than the richness of multilingual use” (2008, p. 173). Although the differences between style conventions in various countries could vary, denying the students the knowledge of genre usage in other language cultures may deprive them of invaluable ways of understanding how English-speaker academic genres are expressed compared to Norwegian equivalents, or indeed those of other language cultures and/or countries. It might also create confusion and misunderstandings in the Norwegian and English subjects in the sense that genre and register criteria might easily be confused between the two subjects. Making explicit comparisons between their respective style conventions would thus be beneficial; at least with respect to knowledge of genre and register.

The inclusion of L2 language norms in the classroom should not overshadow the need for more advanced skills in English, however. Glenn Ole Hellekjær wrote in relation to English language competency in companies that:

[...] studies show that many employees, particularly in administration and sales, are continuously faced with complex communicative circumstances and important assignments which require advanced language skills. Employees, from secretaries to business executives, are required to master everything from telephone conversations to the production of texts in English to an increasingly greater extent, everything from letters/e-mails to reports and manuals [...]. It may also seem that the demands for the production of written documents have increased, especially in the companies with English as a working language. (Hellekjær, 2007, p. 12; my translation)

The call for more advanced use of English might imply a refinement of skills to a greater extent than before. Consequently, companies would also require an increased and more advanced knowledge of genres and appropriate registers, as several of the respondents in Hellekjær's study reported that "failing language skills in English and foreign languages has, or may have, resulted in loss of contracts, insulted clients or collaborators, as well as delivery mistakes" (2007, p. 38; my translation). Teaching students about genre distinctions between English and other languages – including appropriate register use – could therefore create a greater understanding for other ways of portraying politeness and genre conventions; a greater awareness of one's own language use; and as a result also a better means to prevent unwanted consequences due to inappropriate use of language.

Based on the elaboration in the preceding paragraphs, the safest choice in general with respect to which language norms to follow appears to be one of those from the English native-speaker community, yet still accommodating for differing cultural conventions where necessary. Such a strategy would be appropriate because "To insist that no use be made of the L1 in carrying out tasks that are both linguistically and cognitively complex is to deny the use of an important cognitive tool" (Swain and Lapkin, 2000, pp. 268–269). A certain notion of the diversity of genre and register conventions would only contribute towards a greater awareness of cultural differences and understanding towards various ways of expressing politeness and formality across cultures and nations.

According to the teachers interviewed, the students were expected to learn about genre conventions during the first year of upper secondary school, but the extent to which registers have been highlighted in their classes has been more related to corrections and comments in student texts instead of explicitly taught in classroom sessions. If the situation in society is as Hellekjær points out and there is a greater need for an improvement of language skills in the

workforce, the appropriate use of registers would be one of the necessary aspects to emphasize in the classroom as well as in the syllabi and/or curricula available. Furthermore, it might also be convenient to practice writing in a formal language and in academic genres as much as possible during the upper secondary years if preparing for higher education. According to the surveys and interviews, this appears to be done in all four schools.

6.4: Suggestions for further research

As stated in Chapter 1, this investigation does not set out to draw definite conclusions regarding the use of modality markers and register awareness in SF and IB students. However, hopefully the findings would at least have scratched the surface in this field of study and opened up for further revisions and more questions to investigate in the future. The method used here has its set of limitations due to various factors that had to be taken into account, for instance the time restrictions that had to be set by each class. Another limitation concerns the lack of control of the essay topics, for instance by distinguishing more between subjective and objective argumentative essays as explained by *Utdanningsdirektoratet* (Udir, n.d.(a)). Controlling the essay topic would imply more valuable class time to be spent with them on the project and less time spent on topics more directly related to the teaching schedule for each class. If the investigation were to be conducted again and revised, it would be beneficial to control these factors in order to increase the validity of the findings. However, this could only be done with the permission of the teacher and the class, so as to ensure as little interference as possible with their teaching schedule. If given more time, it would also be useful to contact the students and teachers after having conducted the surveys and interviews in case of a need to follow up some of the responses.

Larger samples would also be beneficial in order to compensate for the low raw frequencies in each essay and also to ensure a greater representativeness of the relative frequencies. This could be done by for instance increasing the number of texts from each student; letting the students write longer texts; or by increasing the number of classes participating, either from the same school or from other schools in the same or other regions. Regardless of the choice of schools (or schools available), it may be of interest to ensure that the number of classes for each study program is as equal as possible, or even the number of students, although these variables could be more difficult to control.

With larger samples and also larger frequencies, it could also be advantageous to further process the data and calculate standard deviations as well as test for the significance of the

results. As the raw and relative frequencies obtained for this investigation were rather small, it would be difficult to state the extent of their significance, so larger samples could contribute to shed more light and present more definite results as compared to the results here. Furthermore, larger samples would also potentially allow more modality markers to be used, as well as others that were not mentioned either in this investigation or by House and Kasper (1981). This could in turn prove interesting to investigate more closely and also contribute to a better overview of the students' use of modality markers in argumentative essays.

If gathering larger text samples proves too difficult, it may be possible to produce larger numbers of survey responses as well as teacher interviews. This could be equally valuable. If more teachers and/or students participated in this part of the study, the responses could become more representative for each school and it would be more possible to check for general tendencies in perception for students and/or teachers. In doing this, one could also see more easily how closely the teachers collaborate with each other and how the teachers' views correspond with the views of their students.

As for the specific modality markers, it could also be of use to alter the selection of these linguistic terms for future investigations, if the aim is still to investigate written texts. Although certain terms from House and Kasper's lists of downgraders and upgraders were omitted due to their more oral nature, in hindsight more terms could have been omitted. One could for instance consider leaving out the minus committer, scope stater, forewarn and all upgraders apart from the intensifier and in return use more search strings within the remaining categories which returned higher frequencies. As a result, one would gain a better overview over the use of these modality markers in written texts.

One may also find it useful to compare these results with those from other genres, e.g. a specific kind of formal letter, or a genre pertaining to fiction. The same could also be done when comparing these findings to authentic texts, for instance essays written by native speaker students from upper secondary schools in one or more English-speaking countries. Comparisons such as these could shed light on the results from a slightly different angle and thus provide even more insight into the results.

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Appendix 1: Distance levels for complaints and requests (House and Kasper 1981)

In order to illustrate the eight distance levels with respect to complaints, they presented the following scenario in their article: “Y – who, as is well-known to X, often borrows X’s things – has stained X’s new blouse.” (House and Kasper, 1981, pp. 160–161; English examples only):

1. By performing the utterance U in the presence of Y, X implies that he knows that P has happened and he implies that Y did P
Odd, my blouse was perfectly clean last night.
2. By explicitly asserting that P, X implies that Y did P
There’s a stain on my blouse.
3. By explicitly asserting that P is bad for him, X implies that Y did P
Terrible, this stain won’t ever come off.
4. By explicitly asking Y about conditions for the execution of P or stating that Y was in some way connected with the conditions for the doing of P, X implies that Y did P
Did you wear my blouse, by any chance?
5. X explicitly asserts that Y did P
You’ve stained my blouse.
6. By explicitly asserting that the action P for which Y is agentively responsible is bad, or explicitly stating a preference for an alternative action not chosen by Y, X implies that Y is bad/or X asserts explicitly that Y did P and that P is bad for X, thus also implying that Y is bad
You shouldn’t have taken my blouse without asking my permission / You have ruined my blouse.
7. X asserts explicitly that Y’s doing of P is bad
I think it’s mean that you just take my things.
8. X asserts explicitly that Y is bad
You are really mean.

They also presented eight directness levels for requests, using the scenario of “X want[ing] Y to close the window” (House and Kasper, 1981, pp. 163–164; English examples only):

1. *Mild Hint*
The proposition expressed in the locution is distinct from the proposition to which the illocutionary point refers, but clearly some implicational relationship must be discoverable for Y
It is very cold in here.
2. *Strong Hint*
The proposition expressed in the locution is not identical to the proposition to which the illocutionary point refers but is related to it in

that both have referential elements in common other than reference to either of the interlocutors
Why is the window open?

3. *Query-Preparatory*
The locution queries a preparatory condition holding for the execution of the action denoted in the proposition
Can you close the window?
4. *State-Preparatory*
The locution asserts a preparatory condition holding for the execution of the action referred to in the proposition
You can close the window
5. *Scope-Stating*
The locution expresses X's intention, desires, or feelings vis-à-vis the proposition he expresses
I would prefer it if you closed the window
6. *Locution-derivable*
The illocutionary point is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution
You should close the window
7. (a) *Hedged-Performative*
X names the illocutionary intent he wishes his locution to be understood by Y as having, but hedges by using a modal auxiliary.
I must ask you to close the window

(b) *Explicit-Performative*
X explicitly names the illocutionary intent he wishes his locution to be understood by Y as having
I ask you to close the window
8. *Mood-derivable*
The grammatical mood of the locution conventionally determines its illocutionary point as a request
Close the window!

Appendix 2: Consent form for students (Norwegian and English versions)

Til eleven,

Jeg er en masterstudent ved Universitetet i Oslo som gjennomfører sitt masterprosjekt i år. Masteroppgaven min skal handle om hvordan elever på to ulike studieprogram skriver formell og uformell engelsk. Jeg kommer da til å sammenligne mellom de to studieprogrammene for å finne ut om det er likheter og/eller forskjeller mellom dem og om det bør gjøres endringer i innholdet i undervisningen i disse studieprogrammene.

For å kunne gjennomføre prosjektet mitt trenger jeg tekster som du og din klasse har skrevet og at du fyller ut en spørreundersøkelse om ditt syn på formell og uformell engelsk. Spørreundersøkelsen fylles ut enten når jeg er på besøk hos dere eller en gang dere har litt ekstra tid til dette. Dette tar mellom 20–30 minutter å fylle ut.

Hvis du ønsker å bidra, vennligst fyll ut feltene nedenfor. Dette er helt frivillig og jeg kommer ikke til å vite hvem du er før du deltar i prosjektet. Du kan trekke deg fra dette prosjektet når som helst og uten å oppgi noen grunn for det. I dette tilfellet blir alle personlige opplysninger, din tekst og ditt spørreskjema slettet.

Tekstene og spørreundersøkelsen blir behandlet konfidensielt gjennom hele prosjektet og i publiseringen av resultatene (våren 2012). Når den publiseres vil alle opplysninger anonymiseres. Informasjonen fra tekstene og undersøkelsen kommer til å kobles sammen ved hjelp av en koblingsnøkkel som bare jeg har tilgang til og som vil bli slettet når resultatene publiseres. Epostadressene vil også bli slettet umiddelbart fra epostloggen min etter jeg har mottatt og lagret tekstene deres. Med andre ord vil ingen andre enn jeg vil komme til å vite hvem som har skrevet hva. Jeg har taushetsplikt under hele prosjektet og ingen kommer til å gjenkjenne deg når avhandlingen min publiseres.

Jeg håper du er interessert i å delta. Hvis du skulle ha noen spørsmål eller kommentarer til prosjektet, kan jeg nås pr. epost: eliseks@student.ilos.uio.no. Min veileder for prosjektet, Hilde Hasselgård, kan også nås via denne epostadressen: hilde.hasselgard@ilos.uio.no.

Denne studien har blitt meldt til Personvernombudet for Forskning, Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste A/S.

Med vennlig hilsen,
Elise K. Stople

Navn: _____

Alder: _____

Jeg gir herved tillatelse til at mitt arbeid brukes i dette masterprosjektet.

Dato: _____

Elevens underskrift: _____

Dear student,

I am a Master's degree student at the University of Oslo. I am currently carrying out my Master's thesis project, where I seek to investigate how students in two different study programs write formal and informal English. In order to do this, I need texts that you and your class have written and that you complete a survey about formal and informal English so that I can compare between the two study programs and find any similarities and/or differences between them and if any changes should be made in terms of teaching focus.

This survey will be completed either during my visit to your class, or whenever you might have some spare time. It should take between 20–30 minutes to complete.

If you wish to participate, please fill out the form below. This project is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from this project whenever you wish and without giving any reason for it. If this happens, all personal information and your text and survey will be deleted.

The texts and the survey will remain strictly confidential throughout the whole project and when the results are published (spring 2012). Upon its publication, all personal details will be made anonymous. The information from the texts and the survey will be linked together by means of a set of codes that only I will have access to and which will be deleted once the results are published. Email addresses will also be deleted immediately from my email log once I have received and stored your texts. Only I will know who has written which text and given which response to the survey. I assure you of my professional secrecy throughout the project and that no one will be able to recognize you when my thesis is published.

I hope you are willing to participate in this project. If you should have any questions or comments, feel free to send me an email: eliseks@student.ilos.uio.no. My supervisor for the project, Hilde Hasselgård, may also be reached at this email address: hilde.hasselgard@ilos.uio.no.

This project has been reported to the Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research (NSD).

Sincerely,
Elise K. Stople

Name: _____

Age: _____

I hereby permit my work to be used for this Master's thesis project.

Date: _____

Student's signature: _____

Appendix 3: Student survey

Dear student,

This is a survey on your views on writing formal English and your background and experience in using English. Please fill out the form with as many details as possible. Your response in this survey will remain confidential throughout the whole project and all information that might point to your identity will be deleted when the results are published.

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Elise K. Stople

General information:

1. Name: _____

2. Nationality (on passport/s): _____

3. Main language at home:

4. Your experience with English-speaking countries (check the appropriate answer):

Vacation

Exchange student

Family lived abroad

Other (please specify below):

5. In which country/countries did you stay and for how long? (If you have been on vacations, it is enough to specify the number of times you have traveled to that country/those countries and the average days/weeks you spent there during each travel):

6. Under which school system have you studied English?

Norwegian school system only (the official Norwegian system, e.g. *barneskole*, *ungdomsskole*, *videregående skole* – **NOT including the IB study program**)

Other/s (from other countries; **including IB**, please specify):

Both Norwegian and other system/s (please specify):

Your experience in writing long, formal and argumentative texts:

7. What kinds of longer texts (longer than 2 pages with 1.5 line spacing/*linjeavstand*) have you written in Upper Secondary/High School? Please give examples of genres below:

- Only fiction
- Mostly fiction, some non-fiction
- Both/Balance between fiction and non-fiction
- Mostly non-fiction, some fiction
- Only non-fiction

Examples: _____

8. What do you think is important to consider when writing a formal text, e.g. in terms of language, structure, content and any other aspects? Why do you think these things are important? (Use examples if needed):

An argumentative text is a text where you discuss a topic and write about different viewpoints on a subject and where you may defend one viewpoint instead of another. Examples of *formal* argumentative texts are articles and essays.

9. When writing a formal argumentative text, do you think it is acceptable to use “I”, “me”, “my” and/or “mine” in it? Why/why not? (Use examples if needed):

10. Do you think it is acceptable to write *directly* to the reader in a formal argumentative text (where you use “you”, “your” and/or “yours” about the reader instead of people in general)?

Why/why not? (Use examples if needed):

11. How well do you feel you can write formal argumentative texts? Why do you think so?

Appendix 4: Interview guide for telephone interview with the teachers

Personal background:

- 1) Where did you study to become a teacher? (No need for extensive details; simply countries and/or cities will suffice)
- 2) How long have you been working as a teacher?
- 3) Where have you had your work experience as a teacher?

Teaching formal genres/registers to students:

4) *Studiespesialiserende* teachers only: Which textbook(s) do you use in class?

5) Have you been teaching your students about how to write formal *texts* (essays in particular); i.e. have you devoted class time specifically for this purpose?

Yes (answer question 5a only) No (answer question 5b only)

5a) What was your main focus during that/those session(s)? If possible, please provide a general outline of what you discussed.

5b) Why not?

6) Have you been teaching your students how to write in formal *genres/registers*?

Yes (answer question 6a only) No (answer question 6b only)

6a) How extensive has this teaching been? What has this teaching included? E.g. have you taught them about certain phrases to avoid or certain phrases that are "guaranteed" to be seen as formal? Are there any lists of words and phrases that the students may use that you have provided them with?

6b) Why not?

7) What is your view on the time to be used to teach about register?

Writer stance, (rhetorical) questions and commonalities in student texts:

8) What is your view on using 1st- and 2nd-person pronouns in an argumentative essay, particularly 1st person singular? Are these pronouns acceptable in argumentative essays? Why (not)? Are there any factors that should be taken into consideration for this view, and if so, which?

9) What is your view on the use of (rhetorical) questions in an argumentative essay? Is this acceptable, or is this inappropriate for the genre? Give reasons for your view.

10) Are there any words or phrases that you can think of that recur in student texts on a regular basis? E.g. in relation to distance to the reader, politeness, presence of writer stance? Are there any other words or phrases that have been noted?

Additional information:

11) Is there any further information about you (or your class) that might be relevant in relation to this project?

Appendix 5: Complete results for the downtoner *probably*

And then they will *probably* understand you, because they also know that language. (1C.SO.TE)

The language will *probably* change, but it is important to stick to Norwegian words. (1D.SO.TE)

Young people are *probably* those who imports most foreign words. (1D.SO.TE)

These words can *probably* sound a bit strange, but if you think about it, it might be the way to protect our language and culture? (1D.SO.TE)

In Island they have to say ‘netid’ and ‘tølvuposstur’. These words can *probably* sound a bit strange, but if you think about it, it might be the way to protect our language and culture? (1D.SO.TE)

“Do you speak English?”, is *probably* one of the most used sentence when it comes to English. (1F.SO.TE)

The USA, Australia and the UK, are *probably* the countries we would first put to mind, if we would think of an English speaking country. (1F.SO.TE)

If you take a country like the US, the film industry, is *probably* the biggest “Language spreader”. (1F.SO.TE)

The movie industry is *probably* the biggest cause and effect on the growing power of the English language. (1F.SO.TE)

The point of view *probably* also has something to do with the style of which the short story is written. (2L.LA.HW)

As we can see, Bernard MacLaverty has put a lot of thought in to this short story. He himself grew up in Northern Ireland during “The Troubles”, and therefore he *probably* has strong feelings regarding the subject. (2L.LA.HW)

Why Britain showed so much interest in Belgium is not told in my sources, but it had *probably* to do with corporation, trade and future collaboration. (2E.HA.HW)

“Another one of our persuasion”, says the gunman, and it appears that the men *probably* are from the RUC. (2F.LA.HW)

Personally, I found the story is very touching, and I really am glad that those times are over – it *probably* has left some scars, though. (2F.LA.HW)

Elizabeth took the opportunity and owned the whole nation’s trust and did what was *probably* not expected by a queen when she made her way to Essex, where her troops who were awaiting the coming battle, and made an inspirational speech (the one we saw in the TV-series). (2J.HA.HW)

On the other hand, if John was to tell the story, one would *probably* see a lot of irrational reactions. (2D.HA.HW)

In Hemingway’s short story “Hills Like White Elephants”, which is *probably* his most famous story when it comes to symbolism, he clearly uses much symbolism in both obviously the title, and the actual development of the story. (3G.LA.HW)

Therefore he is *probably* a teenager – a teenager who has gotten his heart broken for the first time. (3K.LA.HW)

Appendix 6: Complete results for the minus committer *I would(n't/not) say*

So as a conclusion *I would say* that English is a language that will be more and more spoken, but it will have its disadvantages, when it for instance comes to «New englishes». (1L.SO.TE)

International English in general *I would say* is a good advancement. (1J.SO.TE)

To sum up, *I would say* that I approve of some of the new “Englishes”. (1E.SO.TE)

[If you know your history, reading this part is not necessary because soon enough you will understand the IRA is involved, and at this point you will understand what is going on.] But for those who have not learned about Northern Ireland’s history before, *I would say* this introduction is essential. (2D.LA.HW)

I would say that the setting, a dark and cold evening in a desolated area in Northern Ireland, gives us a feeling of how raw and unfair the situation actually is. (2D.LA.HW)

I wouldn't say that without taking these into consideration, there would be no story. (3G.LA.HW)

[During this essay my aim is to discuss if the government should censor our media.] Personally *I would say* I am 50-50. (4G.SO.TE)

So to conclude, “should there be government censorship of mass media?”, *I would say* that it should be, but only to a certain extent. (4L.SO.TE – incomplete text)

Appendix 7: Student responses on language/register challenges in formal argumentative texts

2F.HA.HW: "It depends on the task and topic, but I think I manage just fine. I must say though, that we should have written more argumentative texts in upper secondary."

2K.LA.HW: "I'm not sure, but in general I don't feel I'm very good at writing texts where you have to include different points of view and maybe even reflect around them. I guess it's just because that is who I am. I am generally better with straight-forward facts."

2L.LA.HW: "I feel I can write quite good formal argumentative text. I have never been given a thorough lesson on how to write this type of text. Usually when I do write it, I just write. I don't think much about "do's" and "don'ts"; because I'm not really sure of what they are to be honest. But I feel comfortable writing in they style nevertheless."

1D.SO.TE: "I think I need to work more with formal argumentative texts because I don't think my formal language is very good. I feel like I can write a quite good formal text, but it can deffenatly be better."

1J.SO.TE: "We have not been writeing any formal argumentative texts that i can remember. But from having to argument towards something in a discussion forum online, i know my way around the formal argumentative text."

1K.SO.TE: "I think I need more training. Becouse I am not quite sure of all the diffrent genres. And also I write a lot of mistakes."

3A.LA.HW: "I feel that I have a lot of space for improvement. I have difficulties organizing and staying consistent even though I believe I usually come up with very good arguments. So for me the writting is more problematic than the content itself."

3D.LA.HW: "I think I am average when it comes to writing formal argumentative texts. The reason could be that I do not enjoy writing argumentative texts and also the fact that I need more practice. In addition, I know I lack a wide vocabulary and that is why most of my argumentative texts becomes somewhat plain. It is also the reason behind the lack of "flow" in my language and therefore I can not at this point say that I am anything but average when it comes to writing argumentative texts."

3P: "I still feel I haven't mastered it because I tent to use too little time on structure and points, and rather just write like I would say it orally."

4E.LA.EE: "I believe I am a bit unsure of the exact difference between formal an informal persuasive writing, but I can sort of sense what kind of language is required of the situation, so my lack of knowledge on this has not been a problem."

4G.SO.TE: "Not that well, probably better than essays if it is an interesting topic. However that has something to do with I prefer argueing by a debatte not buy writing. I would say that it would be the most difficult thing to write, but it would be easier to write a short story."

4H.CC.TE: "Not well. I am not comfortable with writing any sort of text for English (I was before I started the IB, but no more!)" (Norwegian system + Hong Kong system before IB)

4K.LA.TE: "I don't feel very confident about writing formal arguments. Even though the theory is pretty simple and obvious, using certain devices requires special abilities which unfortunately, I do not posses. In the scale 0–10 I would give myself max. 3–4, 0 being the lowest."

4N: "I don't think that I can write my argumentative texts perfectly, because English language is not my native language and I've started to study it just in 2010. However, during the years, I've learned how it is suppose to be."