COMMUNICATION AND STUDY SKILLS FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENTS

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About the Author

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He then accomplished the B.A. Honours (University of London) specialising in English Literature by distance education. He then went on to study the post-graduate B. Ed Honours degree with the University of South Africa, after which he studied for the Diploma in Business Management with INTEC College (Cape Town). Both qualifications were through distance education. This was followed by the M.A. English Second Language (a full-time study programme) with the University of Zimbabwe. Lately, he completed the Doctor of Literature and Philosophy (Applied Linguistics) with the University of South Africa.

He has taught English in Zimbabwe (high schools, colleges of education, and university), in Botswana, and in South Africa. He served in various capacities as Academic Administrator at the International School of South Africa, National Chief Examiner (English) for the Zimbabwe General Certificate of Education and Colleges of Education in the erstwhile Bophuthatswana. He was founder member of the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) and the Midlands State University (MSU, Gweru) where he was Chair of the Department of English and Communication Studies. He served as representative of the Bishops' Council on the council for the Catholic University of Zimbabwe. He has designed curricula for DE and conventional university, written study materials, authored academic textbooks (*Interactive communication; Before the Next Song and other Poems; and Language and the School Curriculum*, Introducing Distance Education, and *Successful Project Management,* He has also published articles in refereed journals and conducted consultancies in distance education in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mauritius for Rotary Club International, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) for the Virtual University of the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Currently he is lecturing (part-time) on the Master of Education in DE degree for IGNOU, co-researching on qualifications frameworks for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the SADC Region, and coordinating the Practitioner Research and Evaluation Skills course for the VUSSC.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all Distance Education learners and professionals in Southern Africa.

Acknowledgements

Foreword

Universities and colleges tend to devote negligible resources to formalize teaching of communication and study skills compared with those they expend on conveying to students the substantive ideas of the degree or diploma they teach. This situation is even more prevalent in distance education set-ups. Fifteen years of discontent with this situation as lecturer in both conventional and distance education institutions, underlie the author's decision to write this Handbook.

In taking up this privilege to write the Foreword, I find the handbook most invaluable specifically because it fills a gap, which hitherto has not been filled in distance education. The approach taken is distinctive in three ways, as I see it. First, the book offers suggestions suitable for students pursuing studies by distance mode. Second, the book is not puritanical in its tone, and consciously avoids the tendency to fuss over trivial details, while neglecting the more fundamental intellectual problems. Third, there is awareness by the author that reading a single book of this kind does not in itself totally change anyone's study methods, as it were. The author's primary objectives, it seems to me, is simply to offer suggestions, which the student who already wants to improve approaches to studying may find useful as models worth trying out.

I wish to observe that many students, both in conventional and distance education institutions, have intellectual debts they wish to pay. Communication and study skills are a living example of such debts, which the enterprising student will find easier to pay by engaging purposefully with the handbook.

Above everything else, though, the book is a must for tutors and lecturers. In the majority of cases, these professionals are specialists in their respective subjects, but may not have the skills to assist learners in communication issues. They too will be well advised to study the book.

To those in distance education, this book is a great contribution towards intellectual democratization.

John Lesperance
Commonwealth of Learning

Preface

The Background

The Handbook is a direct result of researched evidence gathered over a period of twenty-six years (1983-2009). During that period the author had the privilege of working with students and lecturers at different levels of the education systems in eight SADC countries. The experience leading to this harvest of insights involved lecturing in the field of Communication, and academic interaction with lecturers offering a variety of courses.

Research Orientation

The experience of conducting lectures and tutorials often presented some challenges. In particular, I was bothered by the way learners presented written assignments. Midway through the study, I was compelled to formulate the question:

> What knowledge about communication and study skills prevails in universities and colleges?

Responding to the question was meant to:

a. establish current communication practices; and
b. identify alternative and more effective communication and study skills that can be used to improve the prevailing situation.

The Handbook was, therefore, prepared under the assumption that approaching studies in a systematic manner will improve student performance. Towards that end, data were collected using these instruments: observation of lectures and tutorials; written assignments; oral interviews; and participating in seminars. Procedures were based on theoretical views expressed by different scholars on the subject.

Using the Handbook

There are 11 units based on research findings. You are expected to take into account the following:

- Pay attention to the learning outcomes at the beginning of each unit.
- Relate the ideas to your area of study.
- Do each activity faithfully before turning to the comments.
- Share your responses with your tutor or colleagues.
- Internalize the new ideas and make a conscious effort to apply them in context

Good luck in your studies.

Stanslaus Tichapondwa Modesto
19 November 2009
Gaborone, Botswana

Overview

Welcome to the Communication and Study skills course whose primary objective is to discuss the skills that will help you succeed in your studies. We congratulate you for the wise decision you have made to study your chosen area.

Research has shown that learners, at any level, who are guided in matters such as how to listen more effectively, how to contribute during oral discussion of a given topic, how to read around a particular topic, how to write more communicatively when responding to assignment questions, and how to choose the most appropriate language when dealing with a topic, perform better in their chosen courses. Those who simply plunge into their academic studies without some exposure to the requisite skills do not perform as well as those exposed.

You will find the ideas discussed in this guide extremely helpful for whatever course you are doing. It is, however, not possible to give examples from every reader's specific subject, instead you are expected to examine the examples given and substitute them with examples from your subject. Also, do the activities as faithfully as you can for best results.

Furthermore, this is meant to be a practical course, which you can easily follow on your own, or which you can share with tutors and colleagues pursuing similar studies. Feel free to use the space provided for each activity by writing your own responses. Feedback will be given for the individual activities, and it is best to work out your own answers before looking at the feedback.

The module covers the following:
- Ideas on how to organize your studies

- The skills needed to benefit from listening to somebody making an academic presentation
- Best ways of interacting with tutors and peers during academic dialogue
- Reading more efficiently to improve and understand knowledge
- Writing accurately on topics we listen to, talk about, and read around
- Presenting assignments in a more communicative manner
- Preparing for examinations
- Carrying out basic research
- Citing references correctly

It is hoped that you will find the study skills guide helpful in the pursuit of your studies.

Unit 1

Survival Communication and Study Skills Hints

Learning outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- identify the different communication and study skills at the disposal of the student;
- describe what each skill entails;
- explain how each skill can be applied for effective study;
- develop a clear perception of the skills that will be discussed in detail; and
- apply the skills and techniques consciously as you work on your studies.

Introduction

Studying for the diploma or degree qualification makes unique demands on you, and should be approached with that awareness. For one thing, the way you studied for your previous qualification may have worked then. This is probably because you were doing your studies full time and had the opportunity to benefit from teachers and fellow students with whom you were in constant touch. Even if you will be studying full-time, there is need to review how you study if you are to survive the studies. Clarity about how to communicate successfully and what study skills to apply is a necessity. Embarking on the programme is an opportunity you cannot afford to take lightly.

In this introductory unit, a survey of what you will come across in subsequent units, as well as some other academic counseling that will not be repeated, is offered. By now you will have been advised about the career path for the programme you are doing. You will also have received information about procedures, regulations, orientation to studying at a distance or through

conventional mode. Additionally, you will also have been given advice about payment of fees, how you should interact with tutors, and the special support services offered by the College. We refer to this as non-academic counselling.

This module is mainly about academic counseling and aims at actually conselling you on academic issues to do with communication and study skills. These are broad areas, which are addressed by examining specific issues that include:

- how to tackle assignments and examinations;
- how to interact with the study materials;
- preparing timetables for regular study;
- gaining clarification of what speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills involve;
- how to prepare for exams;
- how to conduct basic research;
- how to participate in seminars, etc.

Research has shown that students who go through a skills course tend to do better in their studies. It is probably useful before you get into detail, to share with you some of the findings obtained from research with students and lecturers in SADC institutions of higher learning.

Findings

What follows is a summary of some of the findings. Examine them carefully, and evaluate how these reflect some of your own challenges. Students:

- had difficulties coming up with strategies to improve study skills;
- lack a broader understanding of the importance of a personal study timetable;
- expressed inability to distinguish between academic and non-academic language;
- showed a limited understanding of how attitude and motivation account for successful study;
- were not clear about the different purposes of listening;
- did not have enough information about how active oral participation can facilitate learning;

- were not clear about the different types of reading and their purposes;
- experienced challenges with sentence construction, choice of appropriate vocabulary, and spelling words correctly;
- experienced difficulties with the citing of references;
- had challenges with interpretation of assignment topics;
- were not aware of the importance of editing their own work before submitting it for marking;
- did not know what the different reading skills are, and how they are linked with types of questions asked;
- were unaware of the importance of seminars in their studies;
- expressed concern about ways to prepare for examinations; and
- had difficulties coming up with research topics, and how best to conduct research.

The ideas about communication and study skills, which you are going to interact with, are based on the foregoing research findings. The primary objective is to enable you to handle studies competently.

Practice makes perfect

To learn how to swim, you must swim! So, to learn how to communicate and how to study, you must actually communicate and study. To communicate proficiently, you must develop a sound command of the language. Unless you use language more consciously, it will be difficult to improve the communication and study skills required in the subject you are specializing in. In your programme, practice consists of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in response to the organized activities, self assessment exercises, assignments and tutorials. All these will be based on course objectives as spelt out in each unit of study.

Assignments and examinations

You will either receive a tutorial letter specifying due dates for assignments, or at the induction tutorial, that information will be communicated to you. The other information you should be familiar with at the outset includes:
- the structure of the course as spelt out in the Regulations;
- the number of modules per course;

- the time taken to complete a module;
- the number of hours for face-to-face tutorials;
- the number of assignments per course;
- the examination;
- the weighting of the assignments and examinations towards the final grade; and
- the duration of the course.

Grading

You should familiarize yourself with how your institution grades written assignments and examinations. In this respect, institutions differ in the way they grade. Specifically, there are three ways of grading, which will be referred to as 1,2, and 3 below.

1	2	3
Distinction - 80%	1 (First class)	A (A+, A, A-)
Merit - 70%-79%	2.1 (Upper second)	B (B+, B, B-)
Credit - 60%-69 %	2.2 (lower second)	C (C+, C, C-)
Pass - 50%-59%	3 (Third class)	D
Supplement - 40%-49%	Pass	E
Fail - 0%-39%	Fail	F

The study module

The following is useful information you should be familiar with.

- The module contains the content to be studied, the activities, and self-assessment exercises.
- Although it is said to be self-contained, the module cannot be exhaustive, so it is prudent to supplement it with recommended reference books. These are usually given at the end of a unit, or at the end of the whole module.
- The module should be treated as a workbook in which you are expected to write notes and responses.
- You will be advised of the number of assignments per module.

Approaching the module

- During your study, it is useful to contact other learners who will be doing the same course.
- It is advisable to organize group sessions, where you interact with colleagues doing the same course.
- At some appointed venue, you will meet a tutor. He/she is a specialist in the subject, and will facilitate your learning within a specified number of hours.
- He/she will guide you to ensure that by the end of the course you can perform the key skills independently.
- The tutor's role is to facilitate learning, not to lecture or transmit information while you sit and listen. It is you who is at the centre of learning, so you are expected to do the following:
  - ✓ Read the topics for the next tutorial in advance.
  - ✓ Note down the questions you are going to raise for discussion at the tutorial.
  - ✓ Be prepared to give your own views about issues arising from the tutorial.
  - ✓ Listen to other students' views and make notes as appropriate.
  - ✓ Seek clarification whenever you do not understand somebody's viewpoint.
- Set aside specific times for individual study during the week. Research shows that learners who study systematically score higher in assignments and examinations. Such learners also contribute actively during tutorials.
- Make it a point to attend the timetabled tutorials. This is the only opportunity to meet peers doing the same course, as well as the tutor who will give guidance where you experience difficulties.

Reading the study material

It is mainly through reading that you access the wide range of information types forming the basis of your area of study. The modules, the textbooks, journals, the internet, to name but a few are some of the sources you need to

read in order to carry out informed discussion and write assignments and examinations. It is when you read silently and individually that you:

- form a clear picture of a given theme of study;
- are able to meaningfully reflect on new ideas;
- learn new concepts;
- research on specific aspects of an assignment, etc.

The practice of making notes while reading, will help you to remember the important points from the text.

Talking about the topics studied

Printed modules, and textbooks are silent until we activate them. Such activation occurs when you read them, and talk about what you will have read. During face-to-face tutorials, we encourage you to express yourself freely about the ideas that you come across. Make your voice heard by colleagues, for it is when you talk that ideas you only read about become even clearer. Talking during discussions or tutorials has a number of advantages. The following are some of them.

- You begin to appreciate how you think.
- You clarify your understanding and get help from colleagues.
- You practise the use of new words and expressions, especially the specialized and technical ones from your subject.
- You influence the way others think and use them as sounding board for your ideas.

Listening

Success usually visits a good listener. In academic discussions, we listen for a number of reasons such as to:

- get the facts correct from a presenter;
- compare whether what is being said agrees with our own point of view;
- make a critical evaluation of ideas presented;
- enjoy the presentation, etc.

Study-related listening enables you appreciate how others handle language by choosing the most effective words and expressions to communicate their

intentions. In turn, purposeful listening leads on to the development of your own capacity to communicate.

Writing

Writing can be a demanding communication skill. Unlike in talking where you communicate face-to-face with the audience, and you can use signs and gestures to make a point when words fail, writing has to be exact if communication is to be effective. The following points should be taken into account when developing writing skills.

- The most appropriate vocabulary must be chosen to avoid any ambiguities.
- Lecturers will award high marks for what you have written, not for the excellent ideas in your mind that remain unexpressed.
- Writing is strongly supported by the quality of what you read, and talked about prior to writing.
- After writing an assignment, you should revise what you have written and edit it to ensure communicativeness.

?? Activity

a. How are the four skills, briefly described above, linked to each other?

b. Which skill do you think you are best at?

c. Which skill do you think you need to improve and develop further?

In response to the first question you could note that in order to write good essays, for example, it is essential to read widely before, then talk about relevant ideas with colleagues. In the process of talking, you should listen carefully for the most relevant ideas. As for the second and third questions, the response is quite personal.

Topic activities

In every topic within a given module, you will find activities that are aimed at encouraging active participation. The purpose is to encourage interactivity in a situation where the distance education student does not have the privilege of having in front of him/her a teacher on a regular basis. The following points should be borne in mind when you work on the activities.

- Activities are not tests.
- Activities are meant to encourage a deeper understanding of ideas.
- Answers should be written in the provided space.
- The activity should be done before turning to the feedback
- Answer the questions on your own unless instructed otherwise.
- Discuss answers with colleagues and tutors.
- Responses given in the feedback section are not prescriptive, that is, they are not the only answers. There could be alternative responses from you and from members of the group.

References

There are times when you will use information and ideas that are not your own. This is called 'referencing'. The sources from which we get information (textbooks, the internet, journals, etc.) are termed 'references'. At the end of the assignment, you should write a reference list of all the sources consulted. Failure to acknowledge ideas that are not your own is referred to as plagiarism, which is synonymous with stealing. In academic practice, this attracts punishment in various ways.

Supporting what you write with reference to authorities on the subject is important because it enriches the quality of your assignment by lending weight to the argument.

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of the unit, the whole idea was to give a brief survey of the main issues that the communication and study skills module is going to explore in detail. Suffice it to say the highlights presented in the foregoing

discussion lay the foundation and should prepare you for what to expect ahead.

Unit 2

Organising Your Studies

Learning Outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- spell out goals for your studies;
- overcome the obstacles you face when studying;
- manage time more efficiently;
- establish your strengths and weaknesses as a learner;
- come up with a study timetable;
- develop self motivation strategies; and
- Internalize hints on approaching studies by distance education.

Introduction

As a learner in higher education you are expected to master some fairly complex material. Most of us find it hard to learn complex, abstract and unfamiliar content, but find it easier to understand information when it relates directly to needs and personal experiences. Further, the knowledge we learn at degree or diploma level is often specialized. Consequently, a central problem in higher education is how to internalize academic knowledge – that is connect up the new material with things that we already know, and understand how to use such material for our own purposes.

For you to be able to cope with the situation described above, you need some guidance to ensure that the way you study your chosen courses is not a hit or miss affair. There are numerous approaches and techniques associated with more effective study, and these will be discussed later. To begin with let us examine self-awareness, that is, the extent to which you know your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to studying. This is closely linked with the sort of goals you set yourself when you undertake studies.

Setting goals and priorities

What goals did you set for yourself when you embarked on the diploma or degree studies? It is extremely important to have clear goals at three levels, namely:

- short-term,
- medium-term, and
- long-term goals.

It is on the basis of clear goals that studying becomes more realistic and more purposeful. Now, work on the following activities.

?? Activity

Step 1

Examine the courses you have to study, and under the headings below, list your goals.

Short term goals (by the end of the studies)	Medium term goals (in 5 years' time)	Long term goals (in ten years' time)

Step 2

Now, under each heading, write down what you think you have to do to achieve the goals.

Your short term goals	Your medium term goals	Your long term goals

Step 3

Under each heading, write one major obstacle you see as preventing you from achieving the goals.

Your short term goals	Your medium term goals	Your long tem goals

Step 4

Now, write as many solutions as possible for overcoming each obstacle you raised above.

Your short term goal	Your medium term goal	Your long term goal

After completing the activity, you should have a better understanding of:
- yourself as a student;
- your hopes and dreams;
- possible obstacles that prevent realization of goals; and
- ways in which to overcome the obstacles.

When you have established the sense of self-awareness, the next important thing is time management. To what extent are you able to manage time?

Time Management

Time issues are important, and the attitude you have towards time is influenced by a number of factors from the environment in which you grew up. These factors include our parents, peer group, and the community where we spend most of our time. When I grew up in the rural village, people were very laid back, and there were no deadlines to worry about. There was no problem

procrastinating, and there was no hurry. On the other hand, when I enrolled for my studies with the University of South Africa, there was so much pressure that although I was staying in a rural environment, I could not afford to miss assignment deadlines otherwise that meant having an entire course cancelled and I could not sit the final examination. With this in mind, you need to look at your attitude towards time. What influences and continues to influence your attitude towards time? Also, you need to evaluate your habits and make adjustments in order to be successful in your studies. It is possible to spend a lot of time on a task and still fail. The explanation is very simple. One learner can spend five hours studying while at the same time watching TV, while another learner spends two hours in a quiet place concentrating on the same studies. Who of these two is likely to perform better?

This is a common problem I have observed among distance education learners over the years. What you have to learn to do is to distinguish between quantity and quality time you give to any task. You also need to develop the sense of allocating time appropriately. This will depend on:

- the marks allocated to the task;
- your daily schedule;
- the complexity of the task;
- How skilled you are at accessing information accurately and speedily; and
- whether you know your way around the library and the internet

The better your time management strategies, the more able you are to deal with unforeseen circumstances. Proper time management reduces stress quite considerably. It is a fact that it is only you and no one else who can control the amount of stress you allow in your life, as well as the extent to which you allow stress to affect you negatively. To reflect on the way you manage time, work on the next activity, responding as frankly as you can.

?? Activity

Answer Yes / No

1. Do you waste a lot of time, moaning about how much work you have?		
2. Do you get going on the task immediately in order to get it out of the way?		
3. Do you have the tendency of rushing through tasks in the last minute?		
4. Do you leave home at the last minute to catch the train/bus/taxi?		
5. Do you make lists and work through them methodically, finishing off each task?		
6. Do you daydream when you should be studying?		
7. Do you get easily distracted when studying?		
8. Can you easily and accurately assess how much time a task is going to take?		
9. Do you read or go through your notes while watching TV or doing another activity not related to studies?		
10. When you draw up a timetable, do you stick to it?		
11. Do you have many extra activities e.g. job, socializing, or family duties, which make you spend less time on your studies?		
12. Do you believe that learners should be allowed to hand in assignments at their own time?		
13. Do you work very hard but get poor marks, and feel that there is no need to bother?		
14. Are there people who think you are wasting time studying and you do not know how to deal with the situation?		

Check all the responses and establish where you think your management of time is deficient. How best can you improve? Try and find ways to do that, and this will enable you to draw maximum benefit from your studies. When you have done that, draw up a timetable of all the things you normally do and

those you should do (e.g. studying), and ensure that you follow the timetable sincerely. Fill in the times of the day starting with the time you get up until the time you retire to bed.

6:00hrs   Get up and go to the bathroom

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hrs   Retire to bed

You should draw up your timetable bearing in mind the number of courses or modules you have to complete within a given semester or calendar year. To make good use of the timetable, bear the following in mind:

- clarify your priorities for the day;
- group together those activities that are related;
- divide tasks into workable steps;
- stick to the timetable;
- focus on one thing at a time;
- finish a given task fully; and
- be motivated.

Let's spend some time on the last mentioned point, namely, being motivated. What does being motivated mean?

Are you motivated to study?

Motivation refers to the willingness to do or engage in something. For example, a person is motivated to dance because he/she enjoys the tune being played. Normally there are two types of motivation. The first one comes from outside e.g. a large amount of money for doing difficult work, which we are not interested in. Money, the outside motivating factor in this case, is known as **extrinsic** motivation. The second one comes from within yourself e.g. when you do a difficult or a dirty job simply because you enjoy doing it, and there may be little or no payment. Doing something because you have an interest in it or because you enjoy it, the inside motivating factor in this case, is known as **intrinsic** motivation.

Similarly, when you enrolled for your present studies there must have been certain things that motivated you, some of them intrinsic and others extrinsic. Now share with colleagues some of the things that motivated or continue to motivate you.

?? Activity	
Extrinsic motivators	**Intrinsic motivators**
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Extrinsic motivators might include prospects of getting a job, if you are unemployed; promotion, if you are already employed; or the respect you will earn from the community. On the other hand, intrinsic motivators might include the desire for a higher qualification, no matter how challenging; personal pride and the belief that you are intelligent; the feeling that you are different from so and so and the knowledge that you can do it no mater how long it will take you.

It is important to note that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, complement each other, but intrinsic motivation is the more important of the two. Remember the saying: "you can take a horse to the river, but you cannot force it to drink". This means if you do not have intrinsic motivation to do your studies, no amount of extrinsic persuasion or the promise of a huge salary can on its own work out miracles. The following are some of the strategies to help you improve motivation for your studies, especially whenever you feel that the work is too difficult or too much.

- Imagine yourself succeeding, passing your examination, and getting congratulated by family and friends.
- Think of the pride you will feel when you can add letters of the qualification you have obtained after your name e.g. Kago Bome (B.A.).
- Find a space at home or at work where you can study without disturbances.
- Draw up a timetable, and follow it strictly.

Make any other suggestions on how best to motivate yourself. When you have familiarized yourself with what it takes to be motivated, the next step is to study. Fortunately, the print material prepared for distance education learners is written with the idea of motivation in mind. The material is in itself motivating.

How the material is presented

To motivate the learner, distance-learning materials are organized in the manner described below:

- Each module has an overview, which indicates content areas covered, and assessment procedures.
- There is a selection of measurable objectives at the beginning of each topic.
- A summary or conclusion is provided at the end of each topic.
- Regular headings and sub-headings are provided to serve as signposts of chunks of knowledge.

- Activities and in-text questions are provided at intervals so as to encourage you to reflect on what you read previously, or to prepare you for what follows.
- Feedback is provided after an activity to help you formulate your own responses.
- Whenever possible, examples from life situations are provided to enable you to link new knowledge with practical examples.
- Bullet points are used to back up the headings and to make the text readable.
- Keywords are highlighted or defined to encourage easy access to knowledge.
- The content is written in personalized style aimed at making learning more enjoyable.

As you engage more deeply with your studies, keep these points in mind:
- Make knowledge your own by relating it directly to your needs and experiences.
- Remember that knowledge taught in higher education is often specialized and abstract.
- Regular assignment writing is vital because it forces you to select what you find plausible or interesting in books, journals, and the internet. It makes you express your understanding in a coherent form.
- Participation in face-to-face tutorials helps you to internalize academic knowledge in context when you talk about areas of mutual concern with other learners.
- Acquire a dictionary for regular consultation of the spelling, meaning, and pronunciation of words.
- Understand the requirements for your diploma or degree programme by referring to the Regulations and the syllabus.
- Read the history of a given subject, which describes the controversies that have shaped its evolution.
- Keep your study methods under review. Remember that those study methods you used at an earlier stage in your education career may achieve very little when studying for a degree or diploma.

- Talk through study problems by discussing with fellow students and tutors.
- Avoid plagiarism, that is, acknowledge authors of those ideas you borrow to strengthen what you write.

Conclusion

When you embark on studies, it is essential that you get yourself organized for the task. Typically, organization involves careful planning of a number of issues. Among these is the spelling out of goals. More often than not, many learners fail to realize their goals because they lack the necessary strategies to overcome obstacles. Chief of these is failure to evaluate personal weaknesses and strengths. It is also noteworthy that where there is no motivation (intrinsic or extrinsic) very minimal progress, if any, will be made with one's studies. It is equally important to develop familiarity with the way print study materials for distance education are presented as a way of motivating learners.

Unit 3
Reading to Learn

Learning Outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- apply different reading skills to study your major subject;
- deduce covert meaning and interpret what you read correctly;
- summarise and reorganize information;
- evaluate and draw conclusions from what you read;
- interpret unfamiliar words in context; and
- explain the link between reading skills, on the one hand, and listening, speaking, and writing skills, on the other.

Introduction

When we first went to school, teachers taught us how to read. For example, we learned that when letters are combined, they form a word. When words are combined, they form sentences, and when sentences are combined, they form paragraphs, and so on. In other words, during our early school days, we were taught to learn how to read. However, as we progressed up the education ladder, we were no longer bothered about word combinations as referred to above. As we studied school subjects, preparing for the school leaving certificates, for example, concern was with the meaning of mathematical formulae, geographical concepts, or hidden meanings from literature books. Focus was, as it still is now, on reading to learn rather than learning to read. Imagine what you are doing when you are reading or studying the course in economics, principles of management, organizational behaviour, principles of accounting, to name a few.

Reading to Learn

Let us illustrate the above by reading this statement:

Two technical innovations were brought into Southern Africa in the early centuries AD.

What is the meaning of this text? It makes you ask some questions e.g. What is meant by 'technical innovations'? Who brought the innovations? What is meant by 'early centuries'? In responding to these questions, you would not be bothered about the way letters are combined. It is the meaning that is crucial, and this is an example of what studying your major subject should involve when you read to learn. Now work on this activity.

<div style="border:1px solid black;padding:10px;">

?? Activity

    a. Select a statement from a section of a subject of your choice, and write it in the space provided.

    b. List any two questions you would ask after reading the statement.

    c. Ask colleagues to say what they think about the reading demands made by the statement.

</div>

There is no correct or wrong answer here. The important point is to respond as sincerely as you can. After going through the activity, you realise that the study of different courses makes critical demands on your reading skills In order to succeed, we must develop these skills systematically. As evidence that you have read with understanding, you must be able to answer questions based on the text.

What is reading?

For you the student, the simplest definition is that reading is a **holistic** act involving the **process** of **constructing meaning** from a given text, and that involves the **co-ordination** of interrelated sources of **information**. 'Holistic' simply means everything happens at the same time. In particular this applies to silent reading rather than reading aloud, for it is silent reading that we associate with studying. As a process, reading involves three things, namely,

    a. the text being read;

b. the person who reads the text; and

c. the actual process of reading.

There is no doubt that reading can be a complex activity, little wonder students do not always answer questions correctly even though they will have read the text. In view of this, it is logical to say the student of any subject needs guidance on how to read in order to learn. To do that certain skills ought to be mastered. Before reading on, quickly work on this activity.

?? Activity

1. What do you think is meant by the word a 'process'?

2. What do you think are some of the reading skills that the student should master in order to read with understanding?

In your discussion of the responses you gave, establish the nature of the reading process, that is, is it a simple or complex process? A skill is the ability to do something. In this case it is the ability to read for different reasons, and research shows that students who develop their reading skills are able to apply them to the study of college or university subjects as the figure below explains.

Conscious learning of
reading skills

Texts   from   economics,
business law, geography,

Answering questions   ⇐━━━━   Maths, etc.
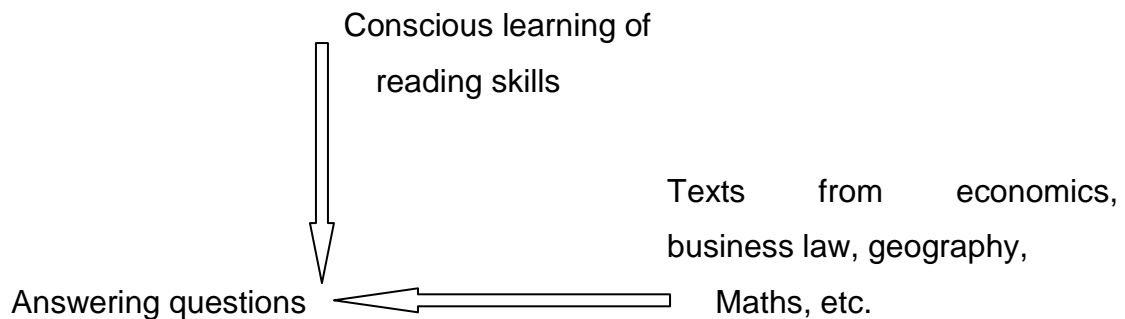
What is skilled reading?

First of all, reading is not just one skill. Secondly, reading can be complex, and can be split into several sub-skills. These differ according to their level of complexity. Three broad categories are identifiable as summarized presently.

Word recognition

Probably the simplest skill, word recognition, involves your ability to pronounce a word or recognize it in a given text e.g. *diagnose* not *diagonise, certainty* not *certainity,* etc.

Comprehension

Comprehension refers to four types of understanding, and these are:

- *Literal comprehension i.*e. the ability to recall information.
- *Reorganization of information* i.e. classifying information into categories.
- *Drawing inferences from what is read* i.e. drawing implications from the text.
- *Reacting to what is read* i.e*.* you evaluate the ideas presented in the text.

Fusion of new and old ideas

Fusion, which is the most complex skills, involves the exercise of critical judgment as the text is read. Hierarchically presented, from the less to the most complex, the diagram below summarises the foregoing.
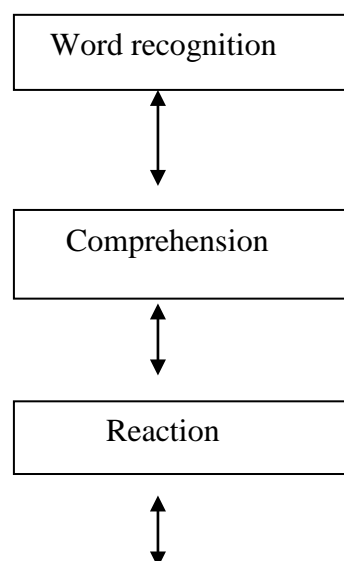
Note the double arrow, which signifies the inseparability of the skills, that is, comprehension cannot be separated from word recognition. Your reaction from what you will have read cannot be separated from comprehension, and so forth. That is why it was noted that reading is a holistic process.

You have to develop these skills more consciously in order to read course modules or subject textbooks in order to answer assignment and examination questions successfully. To develop the skills, let us now look at examples from typical subjects. A text is given, and below it are questions that require you to demonstrate competence in the particular skill. Relate the skills to what you are currently reading in your major subject.

a. Recognition skill

This is a skill that requires you to locate, identify, or recall information that is explicitly stated.

> *Text*
>
> *A market trader with 24 oranges may divide them into 3 equal piles; 3 and 4 are both factors of 24, that is, they divide 24 exactly without leaving a remainder. How many factors of 24 can you find?*
>
> - *How many oranges does the trader have?*
> - *Which two factors of 24 are mentioned in the text?*

b. Reorganisation skills

This skill requires you to classify things, give the main features of the text, or condense the text.

> *Text*
>
> *A thistle funnel and a delivery tube are held in the top of the flask by means of a bung. Manganese oxide powder is in the bottom of the flask. Concentrated hydrochloric acid is poured through the thistle funnel until the end of the thistle funnel is below the surface of the liquid.*

- *Draw a diagram to illustrate this text.*

c. Inferential skill

This skill calls upon you to read the text and interpret the language, or read in between the lines, using personal experience to deduce meaning from the text..

Text

VISA APPLICATION

(Block letters only)

i. *Surname…………………………………………………………*

ii. *First names (in full) ……………………………………………..*

iii. *Passport number ……………………………………………….*

iv. *Issuing authority …………………………………………………*

v. *Date of expiry …………………………………………………*

vi. *Duration of intended stay …………………………………*

vii. *Have you ever been refused entry into this country?....................*

viii. *Have you ever been convicted of any crime?.............................*

- *Why are you being asked to fill in the form in block letters only?*
- *Why do you think first names should be written in full?*
- *Why is it necessary to put the date of expiry?*
- *What has the applicant's criminal record to do with visa application?*

d. Lexical skill

This skill involves the way you use and interpret vocabulary (words and expressions) in the context of the text.

Text

Clearly, you should not consider starting a business without some basic entrepreneurial attributes. A business person must not only be

able to recognize an opportunity, but must also have the knowledge
and skill to exploit it.

- *What is meant by 'basic entrepreneurial attributes'?*
- *What does 'exploit' mean?*
- *What does the word 'it' stand for?*

Words can be very slippery especially when it comes to the distinction between the social meaning of a word and its academic connotation. Take the word 'interest' as an example. Its social meaning is simply, to show a liking for something. The academic meaning for the business studies student will be something else, namely, additional amount payable over the borrowed capital. This lexical ambiguity is known as 'polyseme' in communication. That means the same word carries different semantic functions or meanings in different contexts. For example did you know that the word 'see' has in excess of thirty meanings. What is the meaning of 'see' in each of these examples?

i. I advise you to *see* the doctor.

ii. "I *see*", said the blind man.

iii. I will *see* you to the gate.

iv. I *see* that you did not understand.

v. I will *see* to it that you complete your studies successfully.

To practise how to distinguish between word meanings, work on this activity.

?? Activity
What are the semantic functions (meanings) of the underlined words in the following sentences.

i. He touched the boy's hair softly.

ii. He touched the boy's hair tenderly.

iii. The bruised skin felt soft.

iv. The bruised skin felt tender.

v. The wool was soft.

vi. The wool was tender.

vii. The answer was plain.

viii. The answer was simple.

ix. I like plain food.

x. I like simple food.

These are very common words as you will appreciate, but it is certain that the exercise challenges your assumptions about words. The lexical skill has to do with more than just knowing word meanings, but has to do with learning how meanings overlap with one another in the different varieties of texts. To respond to this activity more accurately, use the Dictionary in order to interpret each word in context.

e. Evaluation skill

The skill involves judgment of information by comparing ideas presented in the text. Personal experience and other criteria facilitate evaluation of a text.

Life expectancy at five years

Country	Male years	Female years
Russia	68	68
UK	65	71
USA	64	71
Burma	49	50
India	49	47

- *Why do you think the life expectancy of women is generally higher than that of men?*
- *Comment on the life expectancy of people in India compared to that of the UK.*

f. Appreciation skill

This skill deals with the psychological and aesthetic impact of a text. You make your own meaning from the text using creative imagination.

Text
When the beautiful one
With whom I share my husband
Returns from cooking her hair
She resembles a chicken
That has fallen into a pond

(From Song of Lawino)

- *What is the tone of this text?*
- *What do the words 'cooking her hair' imply?*
- *What makes you think that the writer has a negative attitude towards the person addressed?*

Now, apply the skills by doing this activity.

?? Activity

Read the following text, then respond to the questions that follow.

The public company

The largest businesses in the private sector are controlled by public companies. The minimum number of shareholders is two and there is no maximum as in private companies, but the most important difference is that they can raise finance from the public by advertising shares. The shares are freely transferable, and in the case of many of the larger companies they can be bought and sold by shareholders through the Stock Exchange. Shareholders in all public companies have the benefit of limited liability, and full accounts have to be sent annually to the Registrar of Companies. The Registrar controls closely the setting up of public companies and will allow them to commence by issuing a trade certificate only when he/she is satisfied that adequate finance has been raised for the sale of shares. Certain minimum qualifications or experience are required for public company secretaries (such as an accountancy qualification or a law degree), and there are strict laws about insider dealings in company shares.

Did you comprehend the passage? What skills did you find yourself applying? Does the reading activity remind you of what we said about reading as a holistic process?

In this space, list any five sub skills you used while reading. Refer to the passage to support each of the skills.
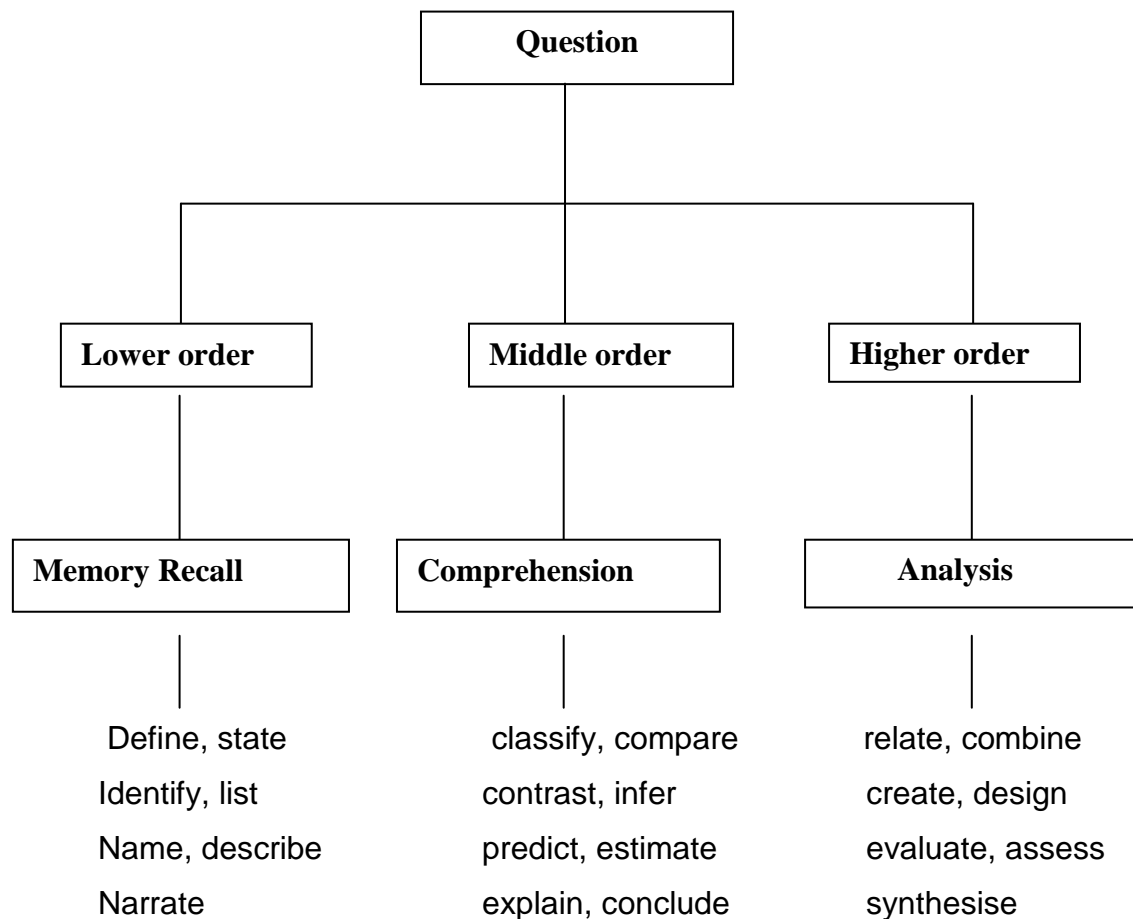
Revisit the skills (recognition, lexical, inferential, evaluation, appreciation, and reorganization skills) in order to discuss what skill each of the following questions requires you to demonstrate. If you think a particular question requires you to demonstrate a reorganization skill, for example, you must support your response and share it with a colleague.

    i.   How do the big businesses raise finance?
    ii.   What is meant by 'the benefit of limited liability'?
    iii.   What is implied by "only when satisfied that adequate finance has been raised"?
    iv.   Which do you think has less legal hassles, a public company or a sole trader?
    v.   Why do you think certain minimum qualifications are required for public company secretaries?

By now, you will have noticed that there is a close link between questions that are asked about a text and the language demands made on you. We shall dwell on this for a while.

Questions and reading skills

The development of reading skills is, essentially, a guided activity that is developed through questions. Questions are categorized according to their levels of difficulty, or according to the complexity of verbal responses expected from you. Research has shown that recall-type questions make the least demand on our reading skills. These are classified as lower order because they mainly require that you regurgitate what you memorized. What are referred to as middle order questions are comparatively higher and require that you demonstrate comprehension. The third level is higher order questions, which draw on your analytical capacity to deal with a text. The important thing to note about this categorization is that when it comes to assignment and examination questions, there are certain words, which are associated with each type of question. A diagrammatic representation of this will be as follows.

```
                          ┌─────────────┐
                          │  Question   │
                          └──────┬──────┘
          ┌──────────────────────┼──────────────────────┐
   ┌─────────────┐        ┌─────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
   │ Lower order │        │Middle order │        │ Higher order │
   └──────┬──────┘        └──────┬──────┘        └──────┬───────┘
   ┌─────────────┐        ┌─────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
   │Memory Recall│        │Comprehension│        │  Analysis    │
   └──────┬──────┘        └──────┬──────┘        └──────┬───────┘
```

Define, state	classify, compare	relate, combine
Identify, list	contrast, infer	create, design
Name, describe	predict, estimate	evaluate, assess
Narrate	explain, conclude	synthesise

The SQ3R Method

One method of developing reading skills, which has received unquestioned acceptance, is known as the SQ3R method. Let us suppose you are going to read the topic: *the different types of business.* The method requires that you survey, question, read, recall, and review (SQ3R) the text you intend to read. The explanation of the method is as follows.

SURVEY the text to get an idea of what it is about regarding the different types of business that you are supposed to master.

QUESTION the text by asking specific guide questions (e.g. What are the different types of business that are identifiable in the business world?)

READ the text actively, paying attention to the guide questions you asked.

RECALL what you have read, possibly making use of notes that you wrote in your own words while you were reading.

REVIEW your notes against the original text in order to be sure that you understand what you have read.

Research has shown that students who apply the method achieve better results when it comes to answering assignment and examination questions, as well as participating in discussions that follow a reading activity. Try this in your next reading assignment.

Conclusion

The study of an academic discipline involves both efficient and effective reading. Reading is comprised of several sub skills, which the enterprising student has to develop more consciously. Reading skills are closely linked with speaking, listening, and writing skills. To derive greatest benefit from the study of modules and to pass assignments and examinations will depend on mastery of reading skills. Apart from mastery, there should be conscious application of skills especially when responding to questions. The SQ3R method can be particularly useful, and is strongly recommended for use.

Unit 4
The Form and Function of Text

Learning Outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- define the different types of connectives;
- identify them in texts ;
- apply them in your own writing; and
- link such devices to the courses you are studying.

Introduction

The word 'Text' refers to words that are organized to communicate messages. Most pieces of formal writing, such as your course modules are organized in more or less the same way – introduction, development of main ideas or arguments, and a conclusion. Each part of writing will consist of language, that is, particular uses and structures of the language organized according to the specific purpose that the writer has in mind in wishing to communicate ideas to the audience. For example, the aim might be to describe, define, exemplify, classify, etc.

Each language function consists of sentences or paragraphs that are joined together or linked by connectives (words or phrases that indicate a logical relationship). These can be identified and their role can be explained to enable you to obtain maximum benefit from the texts you read. We shall explore them in this unit and constantly refer to examples from study materials.

Relations Between Sentences

What connection do you think is there between each pair of these sentences?

A. He served very well in the last school. That gave him the reputation from the institution.

B. **Tutor:** "Tarzan" is showing at the hall tonight.
   Student: I have two essays to hand in first thing tomorrow morning.

Connections between sentences can be made explicitly through grammatical, lexical and phonological (sound) devices. These three types of device interact to produce coherent texts.

In A, use of 'the' (definite article) as in 'the last school', 'the reputation' makes specific the particular school /reputation referred to. The use of 'that' makes reference to his good service. These are examples of grammatical devices. Use of lexical devices is evident in the connection between the related meanings of the words 'the last school' and 'the institution'.

Connections can also be made implicitly. The writer of a text assumes that the reader shares certain knowledge about the information. On the surface, there appears to be no connection between the words of *the tutor* and *the student* in B, but the text is nonetheless coherent. The reader/listener automatically provides the missing parts, e.g. the reply by the student implies that he/she is unable to go to the show because there is an assignment to be done.

A. **Grammatical devices** are used to signal to the receiver the message that he needs to look elsewhere in the text or in the situation to identify what is being talked about. If they direct you to parts of the text, these are referred to as cohesive ties. Let us refresh our minds by reading these words about the well known scientist, Sir Isaac Newton.

1. In 1867 Isaac Newton presented the world with three simple Laws of Motion on which all modern mechanics is based.

2. The first law is this.

3. Every body persists in a state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line unless compelled by external force to change that state.

4. This means that a brick resting on a board would rest there through all eternity unless it were pushed or pulled and made to move.

5. Let to itself, it would never move.

This passage uses various grammatical devices to make links within and across the sentence boundaries. Devices, which are used to make reference to other parts of the text have special names. I now introduce them to you using the passage as our basis.

- When the reference is made to something, which has been mentioned in the preceding text this is called anaphoric reference e.g. 'that' in sentence 3 refers back to 'a state of rest.'

- Reference to something mentioned in the text following is called *cataphoric reference*.

  e.g. 'this' in sentence 2 refers forward to sentence 3.

- Reference to something to be identified outside the text is called *exophoric reference*.

  e.g. 'the' in sentence 1. The reader is expected to look outside the text for the 'word' referred to.

Words like 'this', 'that', 'it', 'the', 'these', 'those', 'there' and 'then' are examples of reference items which can signal that information is about to be or has already been mentioned. Let these guide your reading. Now read these sentences before working on the activity.

1. In *the* situation, education was perceived as a process of changing the outlook of *those* who received it.

2. *That* was an outcome of the new political order.

3. *This* was the argument.

4. The white minority had viewed education as the preserve of *the* few.

5. They deliberately incorporated *this* thinking into laws of this country.

To tackle this activity more purposefully, revise the definitions given before it, then cross check the accuracy of your responses by comparing with those of a colleague.

B. Substitution

Reference is not the only type of grammatical device which connects sentences. Similar to reference is the device referred to as 'substitution'. Substitution is the replacement of one item by another as illustrated in these sentences.

1. This school is more developed than that *one*.

2. Some high schools are like colleges and offer catering services as universities *do*.

3. Your policy says something about promotion, ours does *not*.

- 'one' in sentence 1 is a substitute for 'school',

- 'do' in sentence 2 is a substitute for 'offer catering services'.

- 'not' in sentence 3 is a substitute for 'say something about promotion'.

The writer avoids unnecessary repetition of the same words, and economises words while achieving coherence. An awareness of the way substitution functions in the reading process should help you write better essays.

C. Ellipsis

A third grammatical device is ellipsis. With ellipsis information already given is omitted. For example:

Every school has got slow learners, but ours has got the worst.

(omission of 'slow learners' in the second part of the sentence).

This device is frequently used in conversation:

Q. Are you ready for the examination?

A. Nearly.

(I am nearly ready for the examination).

Connecting Sentences

Reference, substitution and ellipsis contribute to the cohesion of a text by signaling that some item is to be supplied. A rather different cohesive device for making links between sentences is the 'conjunction'. Conjunction makes explicit the relation between one sentence and another, for example:

Many schools had to be built, therefore the budget was increased.

In this example, 'therefore' makes explicit the relationship between the two sentences.

A. The development of ideas in a text proceeds in fairly predictable manner. Ideas will be added together, one after the other. The basic connective *and* is often used to join sentences. We call this an 'additive conjunction'. Several connectives have a similar or related meaning to 'and' e.g.

- One, two, three, etc.

- Firstly, secondly, etc.

- Above all.

- Last but not least.

- Also, again.

- Further, moreover.

- Then, in addition, besides.

B. Sometimes the comments may be expressed in another way, or an alternative proposal may be made. This is represented by the basic connective or. Other connectives have similar meaning to *or*, e.g.

- Rather/in other words

- To put it simply

- Again

- Better / worse still

- On the other hand

- The alternative is.

C. There are also occasions in arguments when the opposite is considered or referred to. This is represented by the basic connective *but*. There are a number of other connectives serving a similar function. Usually, after the opposite or opposing view has been considered, the main argument is continued. Some of the examples are:

- Instead

- Conversely

- On the contrary

- In comparison

- On the other hand

- However

- Nevertheless

- Yet

- In spite of.

These are used as in the following sentence:

He passed his examination *yet* he continued to study.

D. We also have conjunctions that make explicit the SEQUENCE between the sentence and what has gone before. Examples would include:

- Previously

- Then

- Next

- Afterwards

- Later

- Before

See how some of them function in this sentence.

The tutor was visibly upset.
Later, she left the room, and *then* hurried to the registrar's office.

We call these *temporal* conjunctions because they have to do with time.

E. Conjunctions of *Summation* indicate a generalization or summing up of what has already been said. Examples that we commonly use are:

- In conclusion

- To sum up

- In brief

- To summarise

- Then

- Therefore

Look at this sentence:

To sum up, all colleges need a good administrator.

F. Finally, we look at *RESULT* conjunctions. These express the result or consequence of what was said before. For example:

- So

- Therefore

- As a result

- The result is

- Consequently

- Now

- Because of this

- For that reason

We illustrate one of these in the next sentence.

He had done little work. *Consequently*, he got a low grade.

How does the possession of knowledge of these help me in my studies? This is a question you may ask yourself. The answer is that if you know how these conjunctions function, or where they are normally placed in a text, or when they are used, chances are that you will be able to predict what follows sentences, which you will be reading at the time, and also quickly grasp the logic of the text. Further, you also improve your writing skills when presenting assignments.

Read the passage below, which is given in the form of sentences, and with the help of the foregoing notes, underline all the conjunctives. In the space below each sentence, classify them in terms of the types described above.

1. With independence, education was rationalized.

2. Firstly, there was an increase in the number of primary and secondary schools.

3. For that reason, the demand for tutors rose, then new training colleges were built.

4. In spite of this, new problems also arose.

5. Besides those of a financial nature, those to do with administration were more obvious.

6. Yet there was talk of free education.

7. Realizing this, the government later introduced fees.

8. Consequently, some positive changes became evident, and better still the teachers' attitude towards their work improved.

9. In brief, free educational provision was not possible without the necessary financial support.

Revise the notes carefully, and then share your answers with a colleague before going to the next exercise.

Check your answers by discussing with a colleague. Note that the accuracy of answers is dependent on your understanding of the guidelines given prior to the task.

Shaping the Text

The meaning of a text also depends on the emphasis that the writer gives it, and there are certain grammatical devices employed by writers for emphasis. In speech these devices interact with intonation, whereas in writing they do the work by themselves. Compare the following sentences. Discuss with your colleague where the emphasis is placed and specify how it is achieved.

- The Director visited our study centre yesterday.

- It was the Director who visited our study centre yesterday.

- It was our study centre, which the Director visited yesterday.

- It was yesterday that the Director visited our study centre.

- What the Director did was visit our study centre yesterday.

Do you notice that while the information presented has the same content, textually it is shaped differently? Each sentence focuses on one element in the sentence. The grammatical devices that the speaker or writer uses to regulate the emphasis of a message fall into two main groups and these are:

a) Those that can be used in order to give prominence to parts of a sentence, which would not normally have prominence.

b) Those that can be used in order to avoid giving prominence to parts of a sentence, which would otherwise have prominence.

The basic principle is: to give prominence to an element, bring it forward in the sentence, and to avoid prominence to an element, postpone it. The term we use for this is *transposition*.

What do these two sentences emphasize?

- Eccentric I may be but mad I am not.

- Never have I seen such a blunder.

Now do this exercise using what we discussed above.

?? Activity

Use transposition in these sentences, and shape each sentence, in as many ways as possible. In each case show how the meaning is changed by change of emphasis.

- Heads should make the necessary structural adjustments.

- Less experienced participants learn by being involved.

- Social pressures of conformity inhibit group members.

- Treasury instructions guide us in procuring the goods.

- Communication relates the College to its external environment.

First, follow the examples given, then work on the activity. Note that it is through discussion that you will realize the significance of transposition in your studies.

Conclusion

The various devices we have described above for showing the relations between sentences, the relations within sentences such as reference, substitution, ellipsis conjunctions and transposition are often overlooked when students are introduced to their new courses during their first semester. This should not be so if at all they are to present quality essays and participate in tutorials in a way that shows competence in the application of language skills.

Since we all learn them much later in academic life, there is nothing that beats more practice and more effort than the attempt to master them. Research carried out with students elsewhere shows that though mastering them is not an easy task, they can be mastered. Analyzing the way text-forming devices are employed can help you read, write, speak and listen better in your studies.

Unit 5

Evidence of Effective Communication

Learning Outcomes

After working through this unit, you should be able to:

- perform specific acts in the structuring of a text;

- master the vocabulary associated with each on of the proficiencies;

- link language functions to the competencies required for structuring texts; and

- respond to the language exercises.

Introduction

The writers of the texts we read for our degree or diploma studies do things with language to communicate with us. They use the correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary and appropriate style to do so. As we have also said, they use markers of coherence and cohesive devices to facilitate connections in the text. Almost without exception, academic writers use the above-named rules and devices to:

define,

describe,

exemplify, classify, compare and contrast,

show cause and effect,

generalize,

interpret data,

 present an argument, and

draw conclusions.

 When you become familiar with these, it simplifies the task of reading. In addition, your essay-writing will improve significantly. In this unit we, therefore, want to examine how academic writers use language to do the things listed above as evidence of effective communication.

Describing

Describing something involves the painting of a mental picture that appeals to the reader. The writer's selection of language is crucial.

Describing a process or procedure

Writers often use the present tense (is/are + verb stem + ed) as in:

The education system **is developed** slowly.

Reporting a particular procedure

In this case, the writer is concerned with development in the past; then he/she uses the past passive tense (was/were + verb stem +ed) as in:

The education system *was developed* unsatisfactorily.

Sequence or order is important in describing or reporting a process.

?? Activity

The following text describes the process of establishing a school. Complete the sentences by putting the verb (given in brackets) in the appropriate tense form, and filling in the correct sequence markers.

When a school _____ (establish), a meeting _____ (call), the idea _____ (discuss) by the relevant parties. The convener should make sure that the invitation circular _____ (receive) by all concerned. _____ that, the meeting____ (start) and important matters _____ (table) for discussion. A consensus _____ (arrive) at.

After working on this activity, try and apply the way verbs are used in your everyday communication in your area of study.

Defining

When we describe something in academic writing, we sometimes need to define it as well so that it is perfectly clear what we mean. Writers do the same. Look at these definitions.

i.   A university is an institution where students are educated.

ii. A medical doctor is a person who gives medical treatment to people.

iii. Aluminum is a metal, which is produced from bauxite.

Notice that: 'who' is used for persons,

'where' is used for places

'which' is used for inanimate objects and animals

Further hints on how to come up with the correct definitions include the following mistakes which you should avoid.

- Giving an example rather than a definition e.g. A school is an institution like Madiba High.

- Omitting the general class or characteristics from the definition, thus making it incomplete e.g.

  A doctor gives treatment to people. The omission of 'Medical' leaves us unclear about the type of doctor since there are different types.

Finally, academic subjects often omit the 'wh-word' as in:

Politics is the science of government. Criminology is the study of crime.

In both sentences the word 'which' has been excluded in the process of defining 'politics' and 'criminology'.

To do the first part of the activity satisfactorily, you should revisit the guidelines before it. For the second part, you should do some research in order to come up with accurate definitions.

?? Activity

Study the following definitions. Each one contains one mistake. Rewrite the definition correctly in the space provided.

- An ammeter is used to measure electric current.

- A dictionary is a book like "Collins English Dictionary".

- A lecturer is a person who lectures.

- A degree is given by a university to a student who has passed the appropriate examinations.

Write out definitions of the subjects listed below. Use the spaces provided.

- Economics

- Statistics

- Management

- Communication

- Accounting

- Taxation

Exemplifying

After defining something, writers often give examples. This action is known as exemplification and writers use words, which have the same meaning as 'for example' and they punctuate them in a special way. This sentence is a good illustration.

> Geography may be defined as the science of the earth's surface, for instance, its features, climates and products.

Do you notice how 'for instance' replaces 'for example'? Also pay attention to the way commas are used to prepare you for the example that follows.

?? Activity

Complete these sentences by using each of the words in bold.

Use each only once.

Illustration, for example, a case in point, an example, for instance, such as

1. Language is a signaling system. At the approach of danger many birds utter warning calls; this is _____ of communicating with each other.

2. Cries, _____ those of anger, fear and pleasure, are uttered by apes.

3. There are important differences between human language and animal communication: animal's cries are not articulate.

4. Animal's cries lack, _____, the kind of structure that enables us to divide a human utterance into words.

5. A good _____ of changing an utterance by substituting one word for another is a soldier who can say 'tanks approaching from north' or 'aircraft approaching from north'.

Classifying

When we divide something into groups, classes, categories, etc. we are classifying those items. The classification is normally made according to a criterion or several criteria. These are standards or principles in which judgments are made. Writers use words to indicate that classifying is now being done. So when following a text, ask yourself what the criteria or principles are for classification. In your degree or diploma programme you will be called upon to classify many phenomena. These include:

- businesses in your country,

- Manufacturing companies,

- Colonial and post colonial ideas of business development,

- Management of business in different environments,

- The findings of two different commissions on the same problems.

  The list is endless.

?? Activity

Read this text and underline words used to signify classification.

Educational Institutions

In Botswana, educational institutions fall into as many as four categories. These comprise pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. The classification is according to the type of education that is offered. Age usually distinguishes them. For instance, the main characteristic of primary schools is that they cater for children who are six years and above and have completed pre-school. The children are further sub-divided according to classes.

Now, draw a diagram for the school types in your country. Write a brief description of the classification diagram, making sure you underline the vocabulary of classification as well as being clear what the criteria are.

After completing the activity, compare your responses with those of colleagues.

Comparison and Contrast

In most academic subjects, and in life, we often need to compare and contrast things. We will be called upon to find similarities and differences of ideas, statistics, situations, etc. that we define, describe or classify. You need the language of comparison and contrast to follow a text with understanding or to produce one. Here is a typical example of a topic requiring you to compare and contrast:

> *Compare and contrast the Trait Theory and Fielder's Contingency Theory*

In responding to this, you will be expected to give a brief description of either theory, define and exemplify it as well as use certain criteria to classify it. You, no doubt, notice that the language functions we already explored have a role to play here. The basis for developing the skills of comparing and contrasting is for you to learn the rules that govern the use of adjectives and adverbs. For example:

> *The two theories are different. The Trait Theory, on its own, is much interesting. However, it is more interesting to study the two together. The most interesting approach, however, is to study three or more theories.*

To communicate the intended message, the degrees of comparison for the adjective 'much' have been mobilized. Where the Trait Theory stands on its own we use the positive degree (much interesting). Where two theories (the Trait and the Contingency) are compared we use the comparative degree (more interesting). Where three or more are referred to, use is made of the superlative degree of comparison. In addition, when comparing something we will be looking for SIMILARITIES and the following words are commonly used: *both, like, similar to*, etc. When contrasting, we look for DIFFERENCES and words such as: than, different from, whereas, however, etc. will be frequently used.

?? Activity

Complete these sentences by choosing the answer from the given list of words and phrases. Use each word once only.

Biggest, as much….as, more….than (twice), least, most, not so many….as, as many….as, the same…as, greater…than

1. The students spent _____ time listening to English _____ speaking it.

2. A _____ amount of time was spent in lectures _____ in seminars.

3. Nearly _____ hours were spent listening to the radio _____ watching television. .

4. The _____ popular way of listening to English was by watching T.V.

5. _____ number of hours we spent in everyday small talk _____ in taking part in seminars.

6. The _____ popular way of listening to English was by going to the cinema.

7. _____ hours were spent in serious discussion _____ in watching T.V.

8. Nearly _____ time was spent in watching T.V. _____ in speaking English.

9. _____ time was spent in serious discussion _____ in everyday small talk.

10. The _____ surprise in the survey was the small number of hours spent speaking English to English people.

Compare your responses with those of colleagues.

Cause and Effect

In academic writing events or actions are frequently linked with their cause and effect. In your studies, you find that this is a common feature. For example, educational plans (back in time), at a given time (situation) will have an effect on the provision of education (forward in time). We can represent this diagrammatically.
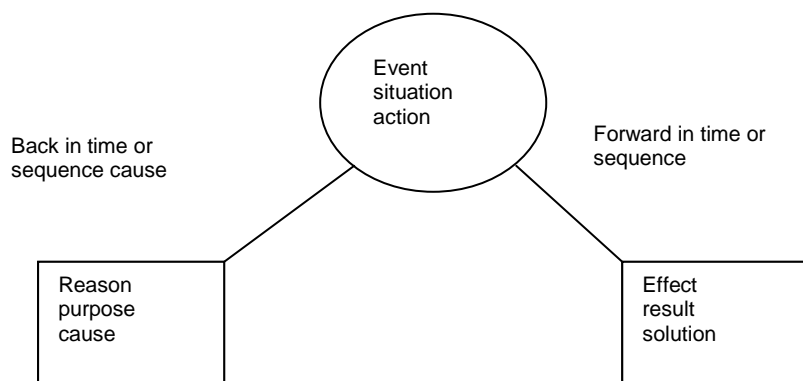
Here are examples of the cause and effect relationship.

- Teaching *causes* pupils to pass.

- Planning took place *as a result* the standards improved.

- Any problems in the school are *due* to poor leadership.

The connectives have been italicized so as to illustrate how cause and effect are normally linked in a text. Some of the connectives are:

as a result,
because,
therefore,
thus,
since,
owing to,
due to, etc.

Handling Data

In this section we look at ways of handling different types of data. Data can be in the form of a diagram, or statistics, or written information. For example, the section in your module that talks about the origins of Educational Planning is presenting data of some kind. Certain questions may be asked, requiring you to interpret, or draw conclusions from, or build up an argument on the data. By the way the word 'data' is plural and must be followed by a plural verb e.g.

Data are….

Data have ….

Data were …

We shall build our subsequent discussion on the data from a school. Because data tell us a lot about something, let us figure out what our assessment will be of the performance of this pupil. Part of the report reads thus:

Subject	Actual Score	Possible Score	Class Average
English	40	50	35
Mathematics	23	50	28
Tswana	46	50	44
Env. Science	35	50	25
Social Studies	30	50	30
Art and Craft	28	50	32
Aggregate	202	300	184

Interpreting data

Interpreting involves commenting on significant features of the given information. Comparisons and contrasts will frequently be made. There are certain words we use that are associated with interpretation of data. Use data from the report to do the activity below.

Note that the function of these words is to comment on the data. In the above exercise, no conclusions are made. Let us see what happens when we do that.

Drawing Conclusions

Drawing a conclusion often involves making a summary of the main points already made. Now look again at the data in the school report and do the next activity. As you work on it, see how drawing conclusions goes beyond interpretation of data.

Use the groups of italicized words to fill in the gaps in these sentences. Use each once only.

Suggests that, we can conclude that, in conclusion, anyone can see that, therefore, we can assume that, in short, to sum up, on the whole, on this basis, actually.

_____ this pupil is most interested in Environmental Science where she has ten points above average. _____, however she seems to be an above average learner, and _____ we do not get worried much when we see that she is below average in only one subject. Although Mathematics appears to be her weakest subject, it is _____ of her other good ones judging by the class average of 18. _____ the Tswana test was rather easy since the class average is 44. Looking at all the subjects' _____ it was probably less demanding. _____ that the below average performance in Art and Craft is due to a lack of interest in the subject. We should study pupils' reports more carefully before we come to conclusions. _____, a report must give more information than normally the case in our schools. Heads must have a close look at the way reports are structured.

What answers did you come up with? Compare them with those of colleagues. You should realize that this is a more demanding language skill than merely defining or describing.

Presenting an Argument

So far we have practised parts of the language that are useful for particular purposes. The ability to present an argument represents the synthesis of all the language functions we have discussed thus far. When the writer of a text develops an argument, personal opinion is expressed. When we discuss or argue in academic writing, we normally need to present a balanced view. We examine other people's views, and probably look at the advantages and disadvantages of a particular idea or proposal. We look at the arguments for and against, and then try to evaluate the different opinions, comparing and

contrasting them. Eventually we give our own views. Diagrammatically, these are the general characteristics of a balanced argument. See if you can improve it.

The topic under discussion

↓

The different views on it

↓

Advantages and disadvantages of proposals

↓

Arguments for and against

↓

Evaluation, (Comparing and contrasting)

↓

Your own personal views
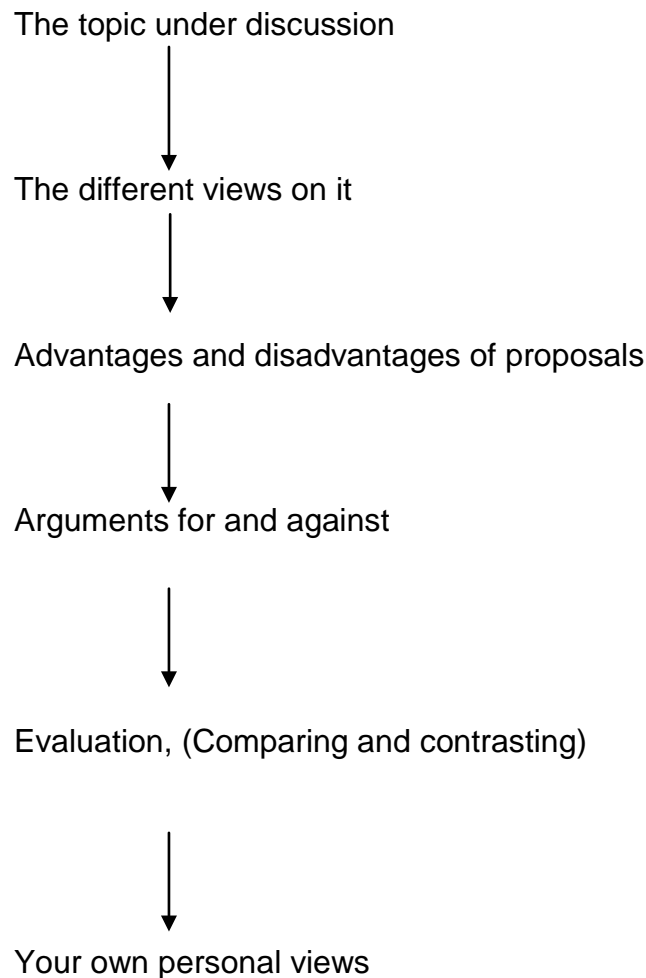
You only need to look at typical essay topics from your subject to see how applicable the above model can be. The topics below serve as good examples.

1. Sending children to nursery schools run by unqualified personnel is a waste of money. Discuss

2. "Small schools are better organized than big ones". Do you agree?

3. Evaluate the plans followed by your country to prepare school leavers to cope with life from the time they leave school.

4. Why should there be educational policies?

5. To what extent are the masses in your country involved in the formulating of educational policies?

6. Is it true that the expansion of education to cover all pupils of school going age (in all parts of your country) would result in the lowering of standards?

7. As a method of teaching, the lecture method is not very effective. Discuss

---

?? Activity

Prepare to write an essay on topic 7 by following these steps:

2. Draw two columns one "For" and the other "Against".

3. Write as many points as possible in each column (A few points 'for' have been listed)

4. Now write an essay, using those points, remembering to use as many language functions as possible from those you learnt in this module.

For	Against
1. An economical way of giving information to large groups	1.
2. It is more interesting to hear and see a person than to read a book	2.
3. A good lecture can stimulate thought and discussion	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Conclusion

In academic studies, it is through the written word that our ability to communicate is often measured. As students, we display this by the manner in which we use language to carry out certain functions such as defining, exemplifying, etc. as discussed above. These must be ultimately

synchronized in the building up of an argument. A well-presented argument is the ultimate test of proficiency required in academic discourse.

No language bridging course is better than its students. A course is only useful to the extent that students appreciate its benefits to their academic pursuits. Such benefits may neither be immediate nor easy to derive. It takes both studentship and a bit of interest in the way language works in order to service our specialist disciplines. I am hopeful that the ideas I have shared with you on the applicability of ideas about language will find a comfortable home in your subject. In turn, you will achieve success in your studies. Good luck to you!

Self-Assessment Activity

Covering Units 1,2,3,4 and 5

Instructions

1. Read all the units (1 – 5) carefully.
2. Answer all questions in the space provided by ticking either True/False.
3. Reflect on all the courses you are studying as you work on the assignment.

Answer **True/False**

Item	True	False
1. There is no need to review your communication and study skills if you passed the studies you did in the past.		
2. Drawing up a personal timetable is a necessary aspect of study skills.		
3. The role of your tutor/lecturer is to transmit all information while you sit, listen, and take notes.		
4. There is a close connection between what you read and tutorial discussions.		
5. Responses to activities are not meant to be shared with peers.		
6. It is doubtful whether personal experience has anything to do with the knowledge acquired in a given study module.		
7. Before embarking on a programme of study only the short-term goals must be decided upon.		
8. One has to anticipate obstacles during the study of a course, and plan how to overcome them.		
9. No adult student can claim he/she has all the time to study. Lack of time should not be used as an excuse, instead time has to be consciously managed.		
10. External motivation is more important than internal motivation.		
11. There is a difference between learning to read and reading to learn.		

12. The recognition skill is more demanding than the inferential skill when studying.		
13. It is evaluation skills, and not lexical skills, which are concerned with vocabulary.		
14. Questions that require you to synthesise information are less demanding than those requiring you to narrate information.		
15. There is an advantage in rushing through task in the last minute.		
16. Your job, social responsibilities, family duties, and entertainment have no significant impact on your studies.		
17. It is possible to work very hard but still score low marks.		
18. Doing something because we enjoy it, and not for financial benefit, is an example of intrinsic motivation.		
19. The desire to be promoted or to get the respect of your friends when you successfully complete the course is an example of intrinsic motivation.		
20. Some of the motivating features of distance education modules include bullet points, regular sub-headings, highlighting of keywords, activities with feedback.		
21. The term 'plagiarism' refers to the use of the dictionary, and reading the history of the programme you are doing.		
22. An evaluation of personal weaknesses and strengths before undertaking your studies is necessary.		
23. Students who do not read widely usually have little to write in their assignments, or have little to say during tutorials.		
24. The question: "Categorise businesses according to their types" is an example of a question that requires demonstration of literal comprehension.		
25. In these two sentences: (a) I know their culture. (b) The culture of flowers is difficult. (b) carries the academic meaning.		
26. 'Polyseme' refers to the fact that a word can carry more than one meaning.		

27. Evaluation skill involves appreciation of the beauty of words and expressions.		
28. Surveying a text means reading it actively paying attention to guide questions you have asked.		
29. Recalling and reviewing what you read are synonymous activities.		
30. Written assignments that attract good grades are those supported with evidence of wider reading.		
31. The unit of any one of your study modules is an example of a text.		
32. Connectives are sentences that indicate logical relationships.		
33. Personal experience based on prior knowledge can help you understand a text you will be reading.		
34. "The preachers said some good words. Some of those applied to everyone". The word 'those' refers to the preachers.		
35. "Your system says something about worker roles. Ours does *not*". The word 'not' substitutes the words 'your system'.		
36. "Psychology has got difficult words, but Economics has got the most". In the second part of the sentence, we have an example of ellipsis.		
37. Connectives such as *and, also, secondly, in other words* are examples of cohesive devices.		
38. The following conjunctions indicate the result of what has already been said before: *to sum up, in brief, in conclusion.*		
39. To show the importance of what you intend to say, bring it at the beginning of the sentence. This is referred to as transposition.		
40. Knowing how a text is formed is a skill that is important for purposes of reading with understanding only.		
41. Describing something means the same as defining it.		
42. The following sentence is an example, not a definition: *Madiba is one of the schools in Mahalapye.*		

43. When you see words like: *a case in point, for instance, such as,* while you are reading this prepares you for a classification of information.		
44. To draw comparison involves establishing differences, while contrasting phenomena involves establishing similarities.		
45. "There are <u>more</u> business enterprises in town, and <u>fewer</u> in rural areas". The underlined words are examples of degrees of comparison.		
46. "Planning <u>makes it possible</u> to run a successful business". The underlined words are an example of a connective that illustrates cause and effect.		
47. The correct thing to say is: data is collected…**not** data are collected.		
48. When you read these words in a text: 'to sum up', you know that an introduction will follow.		
49. You are likely to compare and contrast when you present an argument than when you narrate information.		
50. It is easier to measure somebody's ability to communicate when the person presents written work than through speech.		

Answers to Self-assessment Exercise

50.True	49.True
48. False	47. False
46. True	45. True
44. True	43. False
42. False	41. False
40. False	39. True
38. False	37. True
36. True	35. False
34. False	33. True
32. False	31. True
30. True	29. False
28. True	27. False
26. True	25. True
24. False	23. True
22. True	21. False
20. True	19. False
18. True	17. True
16. False	15. False
14. False	13. False
12. False	11. True
10. False	9. True
8. True	7. False
6. False	5. False
4. True	3. False
2. True	1. False

Unit 6

Writing Communicatively

Objectives

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- define words using contextual clues;
- write in appropriate style which communicates intention without ambiguity;
- apply alternative approaches to build a strong vocabulary;
- link pronunciation and spelling to communicative writing; and
- use cohesive devices to write coherently.

Introduction

Writing is, certainly, the most complex of the four communication skills. Demonstration of writing skills is normally developed last. This is because from the time we learn to communicate, the first skill we learn is listening to parents or siblings. After that we learn to talk. The next thing that adults in literate societies do is to ask children to look at pictures, which is a form of reading. Children are only asked to shape letters of the alphabet (writing) after they have listened, spoken, and read about something. Why should writing be so complex yet so important?

Some basic considerations

It is important to note that what you write has to make sense to whoever reads it. If that reader is your examiner, you will score points not for what you had in mind, but for what your prose communicates. Inefficient prose simply fails to communicate. Unless your style is clear, no other virtues or skills, which you may posses can be recognized.

In a research carried out before writing this handbook, we used students' coursework assignments and examination scripts. Analysis of patterns of communication from different subjects, led us to the conclusion that there are general ideas about efficient writing with which students should be familiar. Bearing in mind that writing comprises numerous features, we selected for

discussion these areas: accuracy and appropriateness of language; punctuation; ambiguities; cohesion; coherence, etc. To benefit from the subsequent discussion, it is necessary that you bear in mind examples from your area of study.

Who Writes the Assignment?

Is it 'I' or 'The writer' who writes the assignment? Several students whom we interviewed asked this seemingly strange question. The question arises from a general concern about 'voice'. When you write the essay do you say:

> **I** am convinced that a lunatic caused the Second World War.
>
> Or
>
> **The writer** is convinced that a lunatic caused the Second World War.

This is an old argument in academic writing. There is a strong view that if you are the originator of an argument, there is no need to distance yourself by saying, "**The writer** is convinced…" Anyone who reads your work knows clearly that you are the one writing, hence there is nothing wrong in the use of *I, in my opinion, personally, I argue that…* etc. This could be balanced by using expressions like: *one notices that…,it can be concluded that…, the argument that… is acceptable etc.* It is the overuse of *I* or *My* that becomes somewhat monotonous. It is noteworthy that use of the first person indicators has several stylistic merits.

Firstly, the voice shows personal involvement in the argument you engage in. Secondly, it marks a clear distinction between your own ideas and those of somebody you cite as an authority. Thirdly, the examiner is able to follow your thinking which she simultaneously compares with the way she thinks. In *Surviving your Dissertation* by Rudestam and Newton (1992), the argument in favour of using the first person versus the third person in academic writing is well defended. The book is worth reading. Similarly, there are ways of expressing personal views in an argument, which you can practise in the following activity.

In Column A, instances where views can be expressed are listed. In Column B, write a suggestion of how you would express your view against each instance. The first one has been done for you.

A	B
Agreement	I agree with X who says…
Partial disagreement	
Emphatic agreement	
Cautious agreement	
Disagreement	
Introducing your own point of view	

What suggestions did you come out with? Compare them with those raised by a colleague. Now compare yours with the following suggestions I got from college students.

1. To express *partial disagreement* you may write

    … but…

    … however …

    On the other hand…

2. To express *emphatic agreement,* use:

    X is certainly correct…

    I completely agree with…

    One cannot put it better…

3. To communicate *cautious agreement,* one can write:

    X may be correct, but…

4. *Disagreement* can be conveyed in the following way:

    I disagree with X…

    With due respect for X's view I think differently

5. Finally, when *introducing your own point of view* you may say:

    First of all I should like to say…

    The first thing we have to consider is…

In order to communicate your intentions more effectively, try to apply these expressions more consciously in the next assignments. To develop writing skills further, let us discuss an extract from an essay by a student studying communication at university. The extract is in its original form except that the sentences and some groups of words are numbered for convenience so as to facilitate discussion.

Speech and Communication

1. *The defination of speach is that it is interaction between two people,*
2. *Which act upon each other.*
3. *interaction should be in good speach different from writting.*
4. *According to Burford (2008) says good speach always make one understood.*
5. *When going for a discussion which is not of everyday colloquial form logical formation is called for.*
6. *Those who interact must show intrest in speach because listening is invaluable.*
7. *Conversation should be furnished with an abundance of well chose words.*

A closer look at this introductory paragraph shows that there are a number of problems to do with style. Sentence 1, for example, has one word that is wrongly spelt. The second group of words, which is meant to be a sentence is not a sentence. There are three problems in sentence 3. Firstly, the sentence is ambiguous. Secondly, the student has failed to use the specialist vocabulary of his subject correctly. Thirdly, two words are wrongly spelt. In sentence 4, the citing of a reference is ungrammatical, and there is an error of concord (subject-verb agreement). Sentence 5 reflects the student's weak command of word meanings, an error that leads to ambiguity. In sentence 6, two words are incorrectly spelt, and there is a clear example that the student misunderstands the meaning f the word 'invaluable'. Finally, apart from being ungrammatical, sentence 7 is also ambiguous.

On the basis of the student's paragraph, and the ideas I raised about it, work on this exercise.

You will agree that the style of the student, whose paragraph has been cited above, does not communicate proficiently. This could occur in any other subject (Economics, Principles of Management, Human Resources Management, etc.). From this example, it is noteworthy that in order to write communicatively you must strive to improve written English by revisiting those aspects of communication traditionally associated with English as a subject.

Developing Vocabulary

To be an effective communicator, you need to have good vocabulary at your command. When you have a sound vocabulary base, you are likely to make a better writer. Studies elsewhere have shown that students who work consciously to improve their vocabulary are more successful in their studies. If vocabulary development is useful, what are the best ways of going about it?

Using the Dictionary

Turning to the paragraph about speech and communication, it is striking that the student has not taken the trouble to find out that in the context of his subject, interaction and speech are synonymous. The words 'colloquial form' are not clear at all even to the student himself. Similarly, he understands the word 'invaluable' to mean the opposite of valuable, which is incorrect. College

students whose essays were analysed reveal this carelessness. There are ways of ensuring that only the appropriate word for the idea you mean to express is chosen, yet students do not follow them.

Get yourself into the habit of using the Dictionary in whatever subject you are studying. Words have more than one meaning. For example, if you decide to use a word in a given situation, and you are uncertain about it, it is prudent to refer to the Dictionary, if only to confirm that out of the several meanings you choose the correct one. However, one of the best ways of building up vocabulary is the use of contextual clues as explained below.

Using contextual clues

Many people, when asked how they should deal with an unfamiliar word would answer, "Check in the Dictionary". This is, however, not always practical especially when you are reading or writing fast. You can often determine the meaning of an unknown word by considering the context in which it appears. The surrounding words and sentences frequently provide clues to word meanings.

On the other hand, for you to be able to choose the most appropriate words to communicate an idea, you need to experience words a number of times in a variety of sentences. This method of learning words requires that you develop a good listening and reading habit. If you hear a word being used, or read it for the first time, find what it means in context. Should a word come up during a tutorial, and there is no time to seek explanation from the tutor, note it down and check its meaning later. The practice of keeping a notebook is not old-fashioned at all. I strongly encourage it as a means of building up a powerful vocabulary. Let us see if we can apply the idea of contextualization in the activity that follows. It is most likely that a student who treats the word 'invaluable' as the opposite of 'valuable' has never bothered to find out the meaning in context.

Use the context implied in each sentence to explain the meaning of the italicized word. Write your definition in the second column, then look up and record the more appropriate dictionary meaning of the word.

Sentence	Your meaning	Dictionary meaning
1. Teachers do not *tolerate* students who cheat.		
2. He drank a laxative to *neutralize* the acid.		
3. My theme was *redundant* so I changed the topic.		
4. The factions reached an *impasse* so they stopped the meeting.		
5. The student gave a *tentative* solution to the problem.		

Compare your answers with those of colleagues. How useful has this been in encouraging you to develop vocabulary? Practise this more regularly from now onwards. In the next activity, let us try an alternative vocabulary building strategy.

After spending some time with colleagues justifying the choices you make, construct similar exercises from your area of study and practise frequently.

Learning technical words

The word 'interaction', which was used by the student in the paragraph about speech and communication has a specialized meaning. When discussing the field of communication, the word means oral exchange of views. In this sense it is technical. A technical word is one that is used in the more educated or academic sense than its everyday social use. A good example is the word

'fault', which in the normal sense means 'blame'. However, in physical Geography, it has a special meaning, namely, the displacement of rock structure along a fracture,

As a subject specialist, it is important for you to remember that some of the most important words to be learnt are technical terms used in specific subjects. Mastery of the language of your subject is, in fact, an important aspect of mastering that subject. Let us begin with a simple activity as a basis for discussion.

?? Activity	
Column A gives a list of words commonly used in educational psychology. In Column B, list some of the technical words used in one of the courses you are doing	
A	**B**
Psychology	
Response	
Behaviourism	
Domain	
Cognitive structure	
Accommodation	
Motivation	
Innate	
Extrovert	
constructivism	

When you have listed the words, explain to a colleague the social and the academic meanings of each word. This exercise creates awareness that vocabulary ought to be handled with care.

Authors of textbooks sometimes define a technical word at the time they introduce it. These examples illustrate my point.

a. The *plot* of a novel refers to the events or incidents that take place in a story.

b. *Carthasis*, the release of tension and anxieties by acting out the appropriate emotions, has long been recognized as being helpful to one's health.

c. A *capitalist*, then, is an individual who invests money or other assets in a business, hoping to make a profit.

If you come across technical words that are not explained, it is best to look for meanings in the glossary that may be at the back of the book. Alternatively, you should use the index. Remember that once introduced and explained, many technical words may recur. Failure to learn such words when they are first presented, results in failure to comprehend later texts where the words are used.

An important point to remember is that many technical words are derived from languages such as Latin and Greek. It is therefore instructive to discuss a few aspects about this fact, and these will be of interest to you.

Understanding word parts

One way of improving pronunciation, spelling, and the grasp of word meanings is by increasing your understanding of word parts. Later, we shall also discuss the link between pronunciation and spelling, on the one hand, and spelling and academic writing, on the other. Research with college students has shown that some of the problems that arise when technical words are used, is the limited awareness of how the words originated, as well as how prefixes and suffixes change word meanings in significant ways.

The main word is known as the **root,** e.g. the word 'port'. When a prefix is added to it e.g. '-im', it becomes 'import'. When the suffix '-able' is added, we have a new word 'portable'. Now attempt this activity.

?? Activity

In Column A, a list of words is given. Split each word into root, prefix, and suffix. The first one has been done for you.

A	B
international	Inter+nation+al
import	
adhere	
malnutrition	
pensionable	
triangular	
glorify	
acculturation	
disqualify	
notwithstanding	
disengagement	

Remember to use the same approach when forming new words from root words. For now, let us go beyond the skill of simply being able to identify word parts and look at the meanings. We shall begin with prefixes.

A prefix is added at the beginning of a word, and changes some words to their opposite meanings as in '-in'+'justice' = 'injustice', which means 'not just'. However, not every prefix changes a word to its opposite meaning. Instead it will alter the meaning in some way. For example, '-in'+'valuable' = 'invaluable', which means 'extremely valuable'. Unfortunately, it is not possible to discuss

prefixes and suffixes exhaustively. Only a selected few will be shared, then you are expected to build on that on your own.

Prefix	Meanings
mono-	alone, one
trans-	across, over, beyond
dis-	apart, away
pre-	before
Inter-	between, among
sub-	under, below
ex-	out
mis-	badly, wrong
con-	together, with
post-	after, following, later
anti-	against
pro-	before, for
un-	not, reverse
ad-	to, towards
in-	not, within
extra-	more than
re-	again, back
mal-	bad
com-	with, together with
de-	down from

Now, work on this activity.

?? Activity	

Guided by the context implied in each sentence, use a prefix to form a new word that completes the meaning of the sentence.

      a. Business _____ (poly) occurs when a company assumes unlimited control over other companies.

      b. The invigilator did not _____ (qualify) the student from writing.

      c. The tutor was _____ (composed) by the conversation that went on during the tutorial.

      d. Flu medicines will _____ (due) a cold, but they will not cure it.

      e. The USA did not _____ (grade) the country when it failed to pay its debt.

      f. I did not put an _____ (freeze) in my radiator.

Let us now move on to suffixes. These are word parts that are added to the end of root words. They change the meanings of words, and there is a very wide range of suffixes as shown in these examples.

      -ion as in confusion, election.

      -less as in speechless, restless.

      -ant as in repentant, defendant.

      -ess as in happiness, loneliness.

      -en as in weaken, fasten.

      -ise as in theorise, materialize.

      -age as in marriage, leakage.

      - ist as in columnist, specialist.

      - ment as in excitement, placement.

      -ful as in forgetful, useful.

- *able* as in comfortable, understandable.

-*ance* as in assistance, acquaintance.

-*ify* as in justify, notify.

-*ate* as in populate, fortunate.

-*ous* as in glamorous, dangerous.

-*ism* as in realism, socialism.

When a suffix is added to the root word, a new part of speech such as an adjective, a verb, or a noun is formed.

?? Activity

Use the appropriate suffix to form the correct word from the one in italics.

e.g. When water turns to *vapour* it *vaporizes.*

a. A substance which changes from a solid to a *liquid* is said to _____.

b. The *tough* _____ of a metal depends on the heat applied.

c. To make matter *solid* is to _____ it.

d. When some substance is *elastic*, we talk of its _____.

e. When matter is *pliable*, we talk of its _____.

f. When water turns into *crystals*, it _____.

g. Medium carbon steel is less *duct* _____ than mild steel.

h. *Hard* _____ reduces the flexibility of a metal.

i. Heating increases the *expand* _____ of a metal.

j. The shape of a beaker is *cylinder* _____.

A very wide range of new words with new meanings can be formed by the use of suffixes. On your own, identify some of the technical words from your area of study and form new words. Many of the root words are of Greek or Latin origin. Knowledge of this has proved very useful to students doing different programmes at College. Here are some examples.

Greek/Latin root	Meaning	Examples
duc	take, lead	Conduct, ductile
Mit	Send, let go	Transmit, mission
Port	Carry	Transport, portable
Voc	Call	Vocation, vocabulary
Tract	Draw	Retract, tractor
Auto	Self	Autobiography, autonomy
Capt	Take, seize	Capture, captive
Dic	Say, tell, speak	Diction, dictate
Manu	Hand	Manipulate, manufacture
Script	Write	Transcript, script
Vert	Turn	Controversy, revert
Stas	Stand	Withstand, stand
Pend	Hang	Suspend, depend
Psych	Mind	Psychiatry, psychology
Vid/vis	See	Vision, video
Audio	Hear	audience
Caput	Head	Capital, capitalise
Spect	Look	Spectacle, inspect
Graph	Write	Autograph, paragraph

Use these roots to do the next activity.

To accomplish this exercise, I am sure you will no doubt have realized the importance of having some knowledge of the meaning of the root word, the way prefixes and suffixes can combine to form new words, and how context determines meaning. Great improvement in their writing skills was reported by students who have worked consciously on these combinations .

So far, we have examined vocabulary development, an important aspect of effective written communication, from four angles. These are: using the Dictionary for meanings; using context clues; learning technical words; and understanding word parts. These will be combined with word pronunciation and spelling as vital aspects of writing skills.

Word Pronunciation

Many students who were interviewed did not see any link between pronunciation of words in general, and pronunciation of technical words from their particular subject area on the one hand, and their written work. To reflect on this, it is useful for you to make a point or two on the issue in this activity.

Share your suggestions with colleagues and see whether you agree with each other. The students we interviewed made very little contribution in response to this activity. The major reason was that they attach minimum importance to correct pronunciation. Even before we give some of the suggestions we shared with the students, it should be borne in mind that correct pronunciation of any language is absolutely necessary. Otherwise there is little point in learning a language, for example, English if we pronounce it any way we like. Now, back to the point.

You will meet many specialized terms in the different courses. Knowing how to pronounce them will also help you master their meanings. While you can often locate word pronunciation in the Dictionary, there are cases when such words do not appear in the book of words because of their technical nature. The first hint towards correct pronunciation is to divide the particular word into syllables. If a word has two syllables, that means it has two sounds; three syllables, three sounds, and so forth. For example, 'impacted' has three syllables, hence three sounds. How many syllables do you think there are in these words?

        Pythagoras _____ syllables.

        Frankenstein _____syllables.

        Tribulations _____ syllables.

        Centimeters _____ syllables.

        Equiangular _____ syllables.

        Classification _____ syllables.

Work on pronouncing one syllable at a time after dividing the word into syllables. When you are able to do that, you then put the syllables together in succession.

Secondly, divide between prefixes, roots, and suffixes and follow the hint suggested above. Look at the following words:

Determinedness = determined+ness

Exhilaration = ex+hila+ration

Incontrovertible = in+contro+verti+ble

Thirdly, when it comes to compound words, it is advisable to divide them into words, which form a given compound word, then work on the syllables of each word before pronouncing it. See if you can apply the hint to these words.

Straightforward	newsprint
Evergreen	supermarket
Stronghold	lawmaker

Suggest more words from your area of study.

Fourthly, listen carefully to the way your tutor or lecturer pronounces certain words. It is true that he/she may have a few pronunciation problems, because, like you, he/she might be a second language speaker of English. In spite of that, our research showed that mispronunciation by teachers did not affect students' writing skills in any significant way. Pronunciation should be consciously acquired from as many sources as possible. These include listening to native speakers on television, radio, or at social occasions. Conscious exposure to situations where the particular language is spoken can also be helpful. When traveling, or when booked at some hotel, for example, the likelihood of mixing with mother tongue speakers of English is greater. You, therefore, do well to make good use of such opportunities. Finally, among your colleagues doing the same course will be students who have had prolonged exposure to situations where the majority are L1 speakers of English. Listen to the way they pronounce words, and imitate them without feeling ashamed.

At this point, you may be asking: Why take all this trouble? How does this improve my writing anyway? The answer is that good pronunciation facilitates correct spelling, among other advantages. Written work that is full of words

that are wrongly spelt, certainly attracts lower grades. Faulty listening by college students caused the following examples of spelling errors.

certenity – for certainty

diagonise –for diagnose

pronounsation –for pronunciation

ciriosity-for curiosity

govument – for government

tengram for telegram

defination for definition

tarjet-for target

ajument-for argument

Now, add some more words of your own. After you have done that, work on this activity.

When you have attempted pronouncing the words and are agreed about correct pronunciation, get a colleague to dictate the words while you spell them in writing. Do you think your ability to spell these words can improve with regular practice? Let us now turn to the issue of spelling proper.

Improving your spelling

In academic writing, spelling words wrongly creates a bad impression, and can cost you the good grade that you aspire to obtain. Poor spelling is often the result of bad habits developed during the early school years. In College, poor spelling is compounded by the unwillingness of many students to consult the Dictionary when in doubt about a given word. However, with work, such habits can be corrected. Is it not strange that we can write our names without

spelling them wrongly, but fail to write words from our area of study correctly? We have all heard very sound advice on how to improve spelling, but this wisdom amounts to nothing if we do not have the will to apply the advice.

The motivated student, that is, one with the will, typically gets disturbed when faced with pronunciation and spelling problems. Such a student will take every measure possible to correct the anomaly as well as to get the meaning of the word from whatever source. This is a sufficiently strong advice if you are serious about spelling and pronunciation. This applies to words and expressions too, the bricks that are used to construct sentences and paragraphs. When you can spell correctly, you should also master the vocabulary. Some tips will be repeated, if only to reinforce what you may already know.

- Make the Dictionary your companion irrespective of the subject you are studying.
- Keep a vocabulary notebook for spelling purposes and notation of word meanings. The very act of copying words itself is a move towards good spelling.
- Test yourself without looking at the word when you spell it.
- When it comes to long words, break them down into syllables. Do you remember this interesting word: **antidisestablishmentarianism?**
- Create and master lists of words central to the vocabulary of your special area of study. For example from economics you might have in your toolkit words like: capitalism, productivity, enterprise, resources, merx, etc.
- Master the spelling of commonly used words such as: accept, except, breathe, breath, exercise, to name a few.

Henceforth, ensure that you have the Dictionary at hand, and religiously check and double check for the correct spelling before writing a word you are unsure of. In many cases, there are no rules to help you spell better other than developing close familiarity with tricky words e.g. *friend, achieve, receive,*

accommodation, etc. Now work on the following activity to gain more practice. The words come from assignments by college students.

?? Activity

Look closely at the list of three words in a line. One of them is spelt correctly. Write that word in the space provided.

Example:

Cieling   ceiling   ceilling   *ceiling*

1. breif   brief   breef   _____

2. relieve   releive   releeve   _____

3. hygene   hygeine   hygiene   _____

4. fullfil   fulfil   foolfil   _____

5. ninty   ninety   nineety   _____

6. angrily   angryly   angrilly   _____

7. arguement   argument   argumant   _____

8. carryage   carrage   carriage   _____

9. studing   studying   studyeing   _____

10. intrfered   interferred   interfered   _____

11. equipped   equiped   equpped   _____

12. regretible   regretable   regrettable   _____

13. beginning   begining   bigining   _____

14. catagorise   categorise   catgorise   _____

15. aquaous   aquous   aqueous   _____

16. gasseous   gaseous   gasious   _____

17. Okward   ocuard   awkward   _____

18. definition   defination   difinition   _____

19. specisse   species   spishies   _____

20. labeled   leibled   labelled   _____

21. diagrammatic   diagramatic   digrammatic   _____

22. Portugeese   Portuguese   Portugese   _____

23. particulary   particlarly   particularly   _____

24. examplify   exemplifie   exemplify   _____

25. acquisition   acquisation   aquisition   _____

26. conotation   conotetion   connotation   _____

27. curriculum	curricullum	curriculam	_____
28. corperation	corporation	coperation	_____
29. mentanence	maintainance	maintenance	_____
30. permisible	permissible	permissable	_____
31. procedure	proceedure	proceder	_____
32. acomodation	accommodation	accomodation	_____

Does this activity help you improve your spelling? Practise with more words of your own. In the next section we look at punctuation, which is another important aspect of communicative writing.

Punctuation

What do you think is the importance of punctuation in academic writing? As you try to answer that question, read this extract from an essay by a business management student doing first year at university. He was responding to the question: Why we study business management?

> *Why study business management is the title of a book and also a question a well motivated learner or student might answer because I've got to especially if they are at secondary school where it is part of syllabus compulsory until the age of sixteen the advantages of studying are learning about business applying new words and for enjoyment*

Punctuation marks were deliberately left out so that it becomes easier for you to answer the question posed at the beginning of this sub-section. You probably find the extract meaningless because there is no indication where one sentence ends before the next one begins. What is more, you cannot even breathe because there are no commas. You cannot believe that examples of such texts are common in students' written work. It is precisely for that reason that you have to consciously learn about punctuation. Punctuation marks have been left out, and to ensure that you attend to them, let us share some of the commonly used punctuation marks.

- **Commas (,)** separate parts of a sentence.
- **A fullstop (.)** is used to end a sentence, and the next sentence will then begin with a capital letter.
- **A colon (:),** which is a rather infrequently used punctuation mark, indicates a fairly close interdependence between the units it separates.
- **A semi-colon (;),** on the other hand coordinates or joins two independent but related clauses or sentences.
- **The hyphen (-)** either separates the prefix from the second part of the word, or joins compound words.
- **An apostrophe (')** is frequently used to indicate the genitive, that is, the possessive singular or plural (e.g. student's or students').
- **A question mark (?)** is used after a direct question.
- **An exclamation mark (!)** is used after an exclamation or a command.
- **A dash (-)** is used to indicate a break.
- **Brackets ( )** are used to clarify, or to avoid confusion.

Some of the punctuation marks described here apply to the extract cited above. In order to apply this knowledge, do this activity.

?? Activity
Punctuate the extract by the business management student using the punctuation marks shared in the discussion above.

Now, compare what you have written with the work of a colleague and see whether you agree about the different punctuation marks you have used. If there is any disagreement, find out the reason for that. When next you write an assignment, make sure you apply the punctuation marks correctly.

Conclusion

What have you learnt about communicative writing so far? It will be clear that writing involves many skills, including those discussed above. The skills have to do with listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing can be complex, for certain, and some of the areas have not even been covered. The next unit, which deals with how to present assignments, contains several ideas. The issues raised in the present unit: vocabulary development, using the dictionary, using contextual clues, learning technical words, word parts, spelling, and pronunciation have received detailed attention for a simple reason. As aspects of writing, they are often not given attention by student whose major subjects are not English. However, a conscious and systematic study and subsequent application of these will help you become an accomplished writer.

Unit 7

Presenting Essay-type Assignments

Learning Outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to :

- interpret key words of an essay topic;
- decide the context of the question;
- specify the special conditions of the question before responding in writing;
- plan the essay; and
- write an effective introduction, the essay body, and conclusion.

Introduction

In almost every discipline, essay-type questions are a common form of assessment. These may be short or long questions, which, nevertheless, require you to develop specific skills to go about writing essays that will attract good grades. Some essays get very low marks simply because you miss it right from the beginning by failing to interpret the question correctly. It is suggested at the outset that you do the following to assist you to understand the question:

- Identify the key instruction words.
- Identify content words.
- Identify special conditions of the essay

Let us examine these ideas separately in some detail.

Key instruction words

One way of ensuring that you have carefully considered the question is to underline all the key instruction words. We refer to them as 'instruction words' because they carry the instructions to be followed in the assignment, e.g. discuss, describe, enumerate, analyse, evaluate, etc. It is critical that you understand them, but more importantly, understand their differences. In cases where a question carries two or more such words, you will need to ascertain

that you adequately address both or all of them, and that there is balance of treatment. An example of such a question would be:

> **Compare** and **contrast** the rational empirical model with the incremental model of policy making. Use relevant examples to **illustrate** how the incremental model has been used in formulating policies in your country.

Instruction words have been highlighted. Think of examples from your special area of study, and identify instructional words. Fortunately, the main instruction words are well known across academic disciplines, and what they require you to do is clearly understood. The taxonomy (list) of such words is given below, and you are expected to familiarize yourself with it as well as to apply it when writing essays.

Instruction word	Meaning
Account for	Explain the reason for, giving an indication of all relevant circumstances. Do not confuse this with 'give an account of'.
Describe, relate, give an account of, trace	These are similar and require that you organize facts in a sequence under main and subordinate points. You may comment where necessary.
Enumerate, outline, state, list	Organize facts in a sequence but be concise and brief, omitting minor detail, and classifying the material.
Summarise	Give the main points and facts briefly, leaving our details and illustrations.
Analyse, discuss	Visit the various aspects of a concept and approach it from various angles.
Critically discuss, review	Write a critical appraisal on the subject. Include the following where appropriate: a definition, reasons, pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses, etc.
Explain, interpret	Clarify and spell out the material you present. Give reasons for important features and try to analyse the cause. Comment and give your judgment where appropriate.
Define	Write an appraisal providing authoritative meaning. State the limits of the definition and show how what you are defining differs from other categories.
Evaluate	Carefully appraise the issue at hand, citing both advantages and limitations. Emphasise views of authorities and personal judgment based on the facts presented.
Justify	Write a critical appraisal to support a given viewpoint.

	Use convincing arguments.
Prove	Establish that something is true by citing factual evidence or giving clear and logical reasons.
Illustrate	Use specific examples, figures or diagrams to explain, demonstrate or clarify a problem, situation or view.
Compare	Look for characteristics that resemble each other. Emphasise similarities but be aware also of points of difference, mentioning them where necessary.
Contrast	Stress the differences between items in the question, pointing out similarities where necessary.

Content or context words

These words mark or reveal the location where content should be focused. For example, in the essay question cited above, the general content area covered by the question is policy formulation. The specific area is 'your country', that is Botswana if that is the country you come from.

Special conditions

It is important that you take note of any special conditions that have been imposed on the question. The following words normally guide you in the determination of special conditions:

- 'with special reference to…';
- 'using at least two examples…';
- 'using practical experience…' or
- with reference to any post colonial policies on business management…'

All that has been said so far requires that you study the question carefully. One way of simplifying the task is to break down the question into sub questions:

- What is the main task in this question?
- Which terms must I define?
- What subsidiary questions must I answer?

The next step after satisfactorily answering these and other questions is to **read** for the question. This implies that:

- your reading is focused on specific sub topics of the question.

- your reading is selective.
- you apply the reading skills and the SQ3R technique to maximize reading.
- You use the contents page and index sections of books and journals to quickly find out what you want.

To reflect on what we have discussed so far, work on this activity.

?? Activity
List all the steps you would follow in analyzing an assignment topic.

After listing, share your ideas with a colleague then move on to the next section that deals with the different parts of the essay.

The Introduction

It is not possible to provide exhaustive models of introductions on essay writing. Experience has shown that as individual students you always find your own favourite ways of presenting your assignment. Some students tackle essays by finding a good quotation to capture the reader's interest. Others make a controversial proposition to start off the debate and set the scene. But, what exactly is the purpose of an introduction in an essay?

Basically, your introduction should say something about how you have decided to structure your essay. Structuring an essay simply means dividing the essay into sections, depending on the demands of the particular question. In a nutshell, one of the cardinal purposes of any introduction is to provide the reader with a summary route map to help clarify what is to follow.

The reader needs to figure out from the onset the direction in which you are heading, or put in a simpler way, what you intend to do. However, there is a more fundamental reason for careful construction of the introduction. The introduction gives the opportunity to set the intellectual and conceptual level of

the assignment. In this regard, you do yourself no service by beginning in a manner that creates a poor impression.

Now, let us examine the following assignment topic and see how you can introduce it.

Question

Using suitable illustrations from the Botswana business system, discuss the extent to which businesses can be said to be formal organizations.

A possible introduction for this question could be:

The paper starts off by giving theoretical perspectives on organizational classification in general. This helps to place the topic in context. The paper goes further to outline characteristics of organizations such as its goals, structure, hierarchy, and then focus on whether businesses measure up to those characteristics. The business will be examined in respect of each of those characteristics. An attempt will then be made to give structures of both medium and bigger businesses. The key terms, namely, 'business system' and 'formal organisation' will be defined first.

?? Activity

a. List the things that the writer of the introduction intends to do.
b. What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the introduction?
c. Write an alternative introduction to the same topic.

Work on this activity with close reference to the question and the introduction.

A word of advice is that you should avoid re-wording the question, e.g.

> *This assignment will use suitable examples to discuss the extent to which schools are formal organizations.*

All you have managed to do is to re-state the question, and this does not add any value to the discussion.

Here is another example:

> *Question*
> *Discuss the concept of staff motivation in your own business.*

A possible introduction would be:

> *The concept of motivation is central to all organized behaviour. Within businesses, motivation of staff assumes even greater importance as employees are expected to achieve the goals of the business. This paper defines and explains the concept of motivation, the types of motivation, and the motivation strategies used in a business. The paper will also evaluate the extent to which these motivational strategies are either functional or dysfunctional. Finally, innovative strategies will be suggested.*

It is clear from this introduction that the body of the essay will unfold in the following way:

- defining and explaining the concept of motivation;
- defining and explaining the types of motivation;
- discussing motivational strategies; and
- suggesting innovative motivational strategies.

Different types of introduction

There are several ways of introducing essays that can be identified (cf. Barnes, 1995), and some of these are discussed below.

a. Rocket launcher

This is when you begin with a very intriguing issue by launching a few ideas and see where they land. In this approach, you sometimes launch a

question to provoke the reader to think seriously about the main issue you raise e.g.

Have you ever thought why idiots are better than educated people?

b. A quotation

In this case a quotation is used to capture the interest of the reader. You however need to be extremely careful about the choice of the quotation, otherwise the whole essay is going to be constrained by it. For example in an essay on motivating aspiring entrepreneurs you might say:

Somebody has said, "Do not give up when you fail the first time. Try the second time, for then you will fail better".

c. Promiser

This is a commonly used approach where you begin your assignment by making promises about what you are going to cover. Common beginnings in this approach include:

- "This work discusses…"
- "This paper explains…"
- "This assignment analyses…"

Of course, the important thing to remember is that the promises made in the introduction must later on be fulfilled, otherwise you become guilty of teasing the reader.

d. Explainer

In this approach, you explain a concept or problem before going on to the important business of the essay. This is a starting point, which is often used when dealing with a complex subject matter, and you want to make sure the reader is not guessing about what you present.

e. Questioner

This is very similar to the rocket launcher already discussed above, but unlike it you use a question as a means of raising an issue. However, an essay that begins with a question irritates some readers. As an example, based on the question of motivation in business, you may introduce the essay with the question:

So, what exactly is the meaning of motivation in business?

f. Dictionary buff

This is an approach where you use a dictionary definition. This is not popular with many readers for a number of reasons. Words from academic subjects have special meanings, and usually dictionary definitions have a superficiality in them that does not go deep enough to fathom the academic meanings. Such definitions, therefore, are regarded as a poor means of establishing what you intend to communicate.

?? Activity

a. Which of the introduction types have you used before?

b. How effective have you found them in raising the quality of the essays?

c. Which dictionary meanings from your area of study do you think are rather shallow when defining a concept?

Quotations

Lecturers have come across weaknesses in students' work regarding citation of references. The biggest problem with students' assignments is that they fail to acknowledge the sources of information they used. We refer to this as plagiarism, that is, the unacknowledged use of an idea or ideas, which are not originally your own. Plagiarism is an academic offence in the sense that theft, piracy, and robbery are in ordinary daily life. In other words, when you plagiarise, you commit a crime. All works referred to in the essay should, therefore, be acknowledged. Such acknowledgement is usually introduced by words like: '*X argues…, points out…, observes…, notes…, contends…, says…,* and many more that you will come across in your reading.

Students frequently misunderstand the purpose of quotations. Many students find it easy to locate a good quotation, but face immense difficulties in using it well in the essay. The first thing to establish is whether the quotation is appropriate.

A common error that is often noted by lecturers is the use of quotations that are isolated. These are cases where the quotations are not linked to the discussion either before or after a given quotation has been cited. Actually there are numerous reasons why a quotation is used in an assignment, and these three are the commonest ones:

- to support a previous point – like calling a witness after the accused has made a statement;
- to set up a comparison; and
- to facilitate analytical/critical discussion.

Whenever you quote, it is necessary to ask yourself whether each of your quotations is doing any of these.

Some students make an error by stringing together four or five quotations and try to speak through quotations. The point is that if you cite a quotation, and find that there are others who agree with that author, you simply give the name and year of each author as in this example:

Hanson (2005: 33) defines centralization as "the delegation of authority over specific decisions…" The same view is echoed by Dube (2000), Smith (2001) and Helga (1999).

This reduces the need to give separate quotations for each of these authorities. The whole essay would otherwise become a collage of other people's ideas. There are certain commonly used expressions that are used in order to lead to a quotation.

…points out

…comments

…puts it emphatically

…the point is supported by…when he says…

…this view contrasts sharply with…who says…

…this view is not accepted by…who is keen to point out…

The question is: How are different types of citations presented? Here are some points to note.

1. Quoting the exact words of an author

Reflect the author's surname, year of publication, page, and actual words, e.g.

According to Swain (1980:67), "communication is the exchange and sharing of meaning…".

2. Paraphrasing words of the author

Paraphrasing is used when reporting what the author said, not the exact words, e.g.

Mercer (2004) argues that knowledge is acquired with the guidance of an adult who possesses more experience than the learner.

3. Quoting from more than three authors

For a quotation from a work by three authors, the names of all three should be mentioned. However, for a quotation from a work by more than three authors, only the name of the first author mentioned should be mentioned, but all names should appear in the reference list at the end of the essay. The following is the way to quote from work by three or more authors in the text. Barnes *et al.* (1995:82) say, "… interaction is an essential component of all distance learning study materials, and writers should strive to make study units talk".

4. Quoting from an article in a journal

Cite as you would cite for a book, but reflect the journal in the reference list e.g. Cleghorn (2006) observes that distance education study materials can also be used to develop e-learning courses.

5. Quoting from an author who is quoted in somebody's book

Modise (cited in Mercer, 2004: 45) argues that " tutorials are an essential component of open and distance learning".

Note that direct quotations, which exceed three lines must be indented, single spacing must be used, and no quotation marks are used. The source of the quotation may be placed either at the beginning or at the end of the quotation.

6. End of essay references

References are all the sources you drew from when writing the essay. They should be presented in alphabetical order at the end as follows.

Barnes, D. *et al.* 1995. *Interaction in distance education.*
        Johannesburg: Juta Publishers

Cleghorn, D. 2006. "The tutor's voice in distance education". In
              International Journal of Distance Education. Vol. 6, pp 452-486

Mercer, N. 2004. *Scaffolding in education.* Gaborone: Longmans

Swain, M. 1980. *Communicative Competence: Chomsky revisited.*
        Ottawa: Penguin Publishers.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion focused on presentation of assignments, especially the essay type. The most important starting point is correct interpretation of the topic as a whole. This is followed by interpretation of key words, which you should possibly underline. Thereafter you should decide on the context of the topic and the special conditions of the question before responding. It is essential that you plan the essay to determine what you will include in the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.

Unit 8

Concluding and Editing the Assignment

Learning Outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- draw appropriate conclusions to essays;
- edit the assignment before handing it in;
- avoid general weaknesses identified in essays; and
- match assessment criteria to good essays.

Introduction

A well-drawn conclusion is important for a quality assignment, especially the essay. The aim of this unit is to discuss various ways of drawing conclusions compliant with different types of assignments. We also discuss editing as an important aspect of ensuring that the assignment has been accomplished proficiently. There are general weaknesses that tutors and lecturers identify in assignments. These are examined before you are given assessment criteria used by those who mark your work. It is hoped that familiarity with the criteria will help you write assignments with improved insight into markers' expectations.

Assignment Conclusion

The conclusion of any assignment is the last bit of the body of the assignment that draws together what you have said. Whereas in the Introduction you explained what you intended to say, you went on to say it in the body, that is, you elaborated on the main ideas by supplying details. The conclusion sums up and reflects on the main ideas. You tie up the loose ends and take a position, for example:

> *In conclusion, it is clear that although the Group Model has more advantages than the Process Model, it has not been used to a great extent in the Botswana educational policy-making process.*

You have to be deliberate about your conclusion, and the following are some of the possible ways of ending the assignment. They tell the reader that you are concluding:

- In brief…
- In conclusion…
- In short…
- On the whole…
- To conclude…
- To summarise…
- To sum up…
- This paper has attempted to…
- From the arguments above, the following conclusions can be reached…
- Although the debate is not closed, several conclusions are possible…

These and many others could be used. The nature of the topic and the foregoing debate will often determine the conclusion.

Editing the Essay

It is possible to spoil what would otherwise have been excellent work by submitting unedited work. This is often caused by failure to budget time, resulting in some assignments being completed at the reception desk before submitting. Regrettably, this has resulted in shoddy work being submitted.

Editing (revising) work involves looking carefully for faults of grammar, spelling, organization, citation of references, quotations, content, paragraphing, and introduction. The process of editing, although sometimes frustrating, brings satisfaction and enhances your chances of getting a higher grade for the work. As you edit your essay, bear these questions in mind:

- Does what I said in the introduction match what I say in the body and in the conclusion?
- What can I assume the reader (lecturer or tutor) of my assignment knows about this area?

- What do I really mean? Could my statements have another meaning different from what I intend?
- Can I sort these ideas into separate sentences?
- Are the arguments sufficiently justified?
- Is my style tentative and academic?
- Is what I am saying my own? If not, have I acknowledged the sources? If so, have I done it accurately? Are the citations correctly set out and incorporated into the grammar of my text?
- What are the implications of what I am saying? Is that what I intend?
- Is what I am saying fact or opinion?
- Is there nothing sexist or racist about what I am saying?
- What am I saying, and why am I saying it?
- Do I need to re-read any sources, or read more sources?
- Have I presented my essay according to the specification given in the guidelines provided by the College?
- Is my writing correct at the level of spelling, punctuation, and grammar?
- Are my references correctly set out?
- Did I avoid the use of contractions: *don't, can't, it's,* and write in full: *do not, cannot, it is.*

General weaknesses of assignments

Your tutors and lecturers have noted several weaknesses in assignments. It is a fairly long list, and what is presented here is not exhaustive.

- Plagiarism.
- Too much dependence on modules resulting in answers that are similar.
- Poor citations.
- Poor layout.
- Weak expression.
- Poor development of ideas and concepts.
- Inadequate coverage of question.
- Poor handwriting.
- Inaccurate referencing.
- Late submission of work.

- Listing or stringing of definitions and quotations.
- Inability to present and sustain an argument.
- Failure to illustrate ideas with relevant or real life practical experiences.
- Failure to understand questions, resulting in being off topic.
- Essays that are either too short or too long.
- Thin reading.
- Poor paragraphing.
- Copying, that is, reproducing somebody's work.

You do well to avoid all these and earn yourself a good mark.

Assessment criteria

When the tutor or lecturer marks your assignment, it is graded according to certain criteria or qualities. There is no secret about this, so you need to know why some people score distinction, first class, or A grade, while others actually fail. Below is a useful guide on that.

Grade	Comments
A	- All sections outstanding - Evidence of wide reading - Analysed in depth to support arguments - Substantial first hand research - Ideas well integrated - Issues well understood - Best possible organization and presentation - No significant stylistic or grammatical errors - Does not omit any of the most important themes - No irrelevant material - Original
B	- All sections are good - There is evidence of wide reading - Interpreted intelligently

	▪ Some independent thought ▪ Fairly well organized ▪ first hand research ▪ presents no serious stylistic flaws ▪ competent but not highly original ▪ makes an obvious attempt to meet set objectives
C	▪ evidence of some reading ▪ satisfactory analysis ▪ there is some understanding of issues ▪ evidence of minimal research ▪ the material is relevant ▪ satisfactory coverage of major points ▪ style descriptive rather than analytical ▪ some important issues overlooked ▪ treatment of topic superficial in some instances ▪ referencing is largely correct
D	▪ rather narrow source-base used ▪ issues generally understood ▪ shallow analysis ▪ little first hand research ▪ some sections not organized well ▪ some reading evident ▪ exhibits little understanding of topic ▪ poor writing and communication skills ▪ minimal research basis ▪ there are lapses of disorganization in some parts
F	▪ Very narrow source base is used ▪ Issues not understood ▪ No analysis of issues

	▪ Jumbled ideas
	▪ Contains irrelevant material
	▪ major points not covered
	▪ Little reading
	▪ Numerous spelling and grammar errors
	▪ Objectives of the assignment have not been met
	▪ Style sound illiterate

?? Activity

Explain the importance of each one of the following items to you as an individual student.

a. Editing of your own assignment.

b. The keywords of conclusions.

c. The assessment criteria used by your tutors or lecturers.

Conclusion

Somebody has said an essay without a conclusion is like a cat without a tail. Typically, a conclusion signifies that nothing else will be discussed thereafter. Similarly, if you do not edit what you will have written, the risk is that you will submit work that contains mistakes and errors that could have been corrected through a second reading. It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that for that high grade you aspire to obtain, you should take time to craft an effective conclusion, as well as edit the assignment.

Unit 9

Participating in Seminars

Learning Outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- apply communication skills needed for attending or leading a seminar;
- lead a seminar discussion;
- present a seminar paper; and
- apply ideas from seminars to written assignments.

Introduction

Participating in a seminar and leading one require good communication skills. The reasons are quite understandable, namely that there is need for prior reading around the topic upon which the seminar is based. Secondly, it is necessary to take into account oral presentation skills, listening skills and report writing. Thirdly, participating in a seminar calls for a critical and informed discussion. Seminar discussions take place very early in academic life, even as early as high school. The Tourism undergraduate student who is given this topic to prepare:

Compare and contrast the dining market and the eating market,

will have to coordinate a wide range of skills to engage colleagues meaningfully in a seminar discussion. The skills of eloquent presentation, expressing ideas fluently in writing, critical thinking, accommodating other people's views, to name only a few, are called into play. The question to ask is: How best can I improve my competence in these skills, and in many others, so as to participate better in seminars?

The answers you give will depend on what you consider to be the importance of tutorials in academic life. As a matter of interest, tertiary students who were asked to say what they thought to be the benefits of leading seminar discussions gave these responses:

a. Seminars help me to organize my ideas.

b. When participating in a seminar, I choose the most relevant expressions to convince my audience.

c. They help me develop self-confidence when expressing myself.

d. When colleagues give different views, my understanding of the topic is broadened.

e. Leading a seminar or being a participant is an opportunity to get ideas for use in my written assignments.

Now, do this activity to reflect on the foregoing points.

?? Activity

Look at each point separately and say why you agree or disagree with it. Share your views with colleagues**.**

If colleagues come up with views that are different from yours that is to be expected. The whole idea is to make you think more seriously about how best to prepare a seminar paper or to participate in a seminar gainfully. The subsequent sections of the unit encourage you to do exactly that, and hopefully some of the questions you may have about seminars will be addressed in the process.

Exemplification

Is a seminar the same as a tutorial? This seemingly simple question is best addressed by looking at these two situations.

Situation 1

Those who belong to my group should go and read around this topic in preparation for a discussion on Tuesday afternoon. The topic is: *Why job design is considered to be important in the motivation of workers.*

Situation 2

Tafara is going to lead us in a discussion on Wednesday next week. He is going to look at this topic, and I expect everyone to prepare. Here is the topic: What falls apart in Achebe's Novel *Things fall Apart.?*

The short activity below, which is based on the two situations helps you clarify the distinction between a seminar and a tutorial.

?? Activity
a. Situation _____ is an example of a seminar, while Situation _____exemplifies a tutorial.
b. Suggest a reason for choosing Situation 1 or Situation 2 as an example of a tutorial.
c. Suggest a reason for choosing Situation 1 or Situation 2 as an example of a seminar.

After discussion with colleagues, compare that with these comments.

Situation 1 is an example of a tutorial assignment, while Situation 2 is an example of a seminar. Usually, a tutorial assignment is a topic given with the view of holding a discussion under the supervision of the tutor or lecturer. Participants are expected to prepare by doing some background reading, organizing information, and raising questions related to the topic. When the group meets, it is the tutor who guides the discussion, using the topic to direct contributions. Turns are allocated to members of the group to ensure that everyone takes part. A productive tutorial will show that students engage in constructive academic debate.

Situation 2 is an example of a seminar topic. Although it is an assignment to be prepared by every student in the group, the responsibility for detailed preparation and for leading the discussion rests with one of the group members, and not the tutor. The normal procedure is for the individual to present his/her ideas first before members can join in, though the presentation approach will vary from one topic to another. For example, the group

members may respond at the different stages of the presentation, or wait until the entire presentation is over. The tutor or lecturer behaves very much like any of the students, and only comes in to contribute to the dialogue. What would you say is the value of a seminar?

The following ideas have been raised in answer to the question. Examine them critically and see to what extent they can help in improving studentship.

- Somebody has said that we write better what we have talked about. That means by talking to peers and tutors we learn new things about the subject.
- Engagement in seminars enables us to score higher grades in assignments and examinations.
- Research has shown that by talking about an academic area you learn better ways of using language to carry out intellectual activities.
- Research has also shown that students who are afforded the opportunity to lead and participate in seminars perform better in related academic activities.

The foregoing points have also led to yet another question, namely, How do those benefits come about? The ideas highlighted below, show why seminars are thought to be a logical enterprise.

a. You achieve new understandings because of paying attention to what others have said.
b. You clarify your thoughts by expressing them aloud.
c. By interacting with others you learn how to communicate through discourse that suits the situation (practice of discourse pragmatics).
d. Active participation helps you develop the skills of agreeing and disagreeing in an academically acceptable manner. Such skills cascade to assignments and examinations.
e. Constructive criticism offered by colleagues helps you revise the way you think, which leads to better insight into the topic.
f. The new ideas that arise from the discussion stimulate further reading.

g. Academic talk with classmates helps you share jokes while dealing with serious issues. The jokes relax the atmosphere and make learning fun and less burdensome.

?? Activity

i. To what extent do you agree with the points listed above regarding the benefits of seminars?

ii. Suggest any other benefits from your experience that can be derived from either participating in or leading seminar discussions.

It will be clear by now that the benefits are numerous, and one can finally observe that participation allows you to practise applying knowledge gained from lectures and background reading in solving academic problems. You can also seek explanation of concepts or ideas from colleagues, which no lecture or textbook can provide with immediacy. The presence of the tutor or lecturer while a student leads the seminar ensures that possible sources of confusion are clarified and discussion checked for accuracy.

Writing the Seminar Paper

The actual presentation of the seminar paper depends for its success on how well it has been prepared. Experience shows that preparing to lead a seminar can be a nightmare for students who have expressed their concern by asking questions such as these:

- How do I know that the tutor or colleagues will agree with me?
- Will I be able to communicate in acceptable English?
- How do I know whether the information I present will be relevant or not?
- What if I fail to answer questions asked by colleagues?

These and several others are quite natural, and there can be no simple answer to them. The best advice is that you should give yourself as much

practice as possible in leading seminars. Welcoming every opportunity to make presentations best does this.

Let us extend the discussion by looking at a topic from principles of management. You should feel free to substitute it with one from a subject of interest to you. Here is the topic.

> *Explain what you consider to be the key success factors in the strategic plan called the "Winner". Your discussion should make reference to a typical business situation.*

Now, work on the next activity before reading on.

?? Activity

Read the topic more closely and write your views in response to these questions.

    i. Write the key words of the topic.

    ii. What needs to be explained in the question?

    iii. For what educational level do you think the topic is suitable?

    iv. What do you already know about the topic?

    v. What sources do you need to consult in preparation for a seminar paper?

Exchange your views with the tutor and colleagues. Note the areas of agreement and disagreement. The brief exchange will have helped you gain more insight into the topic in a number of ways.

- You were able to reflect on the depth of knowledge you have on the topic.

- You started thinking about the sources you would need to read.

- You were able to question your understanding of some of the key words.

- You are able to anticipate areas that colleagues will seek clarification on.

- You are in a better position to plan your seminar paper because you now understand the topic.

Reflecting on the last point, what characterizes a good plan? Before the write-up, you have to ensure you follow a map, the plan. Essentially, planning involves decision- making regarding how much information you should produce. There are four vital sources of information necessary for a scholarly presentation write-up. These are:

a. What you already know and can recall about the topic.

b. What you have already seen or heard from others about the topic.

c. What some authors say in relevant literature.

d. How much you need to incorporate in your write-up.

Once you have clarified this, you are a step ahead, then what next?

You must take into account the significance of your topic in the advancement of the knowledge of your group considering the level of education you are dealing with, that is, whether it is diploma or degree level. A topic like the one from principles of management, or any of the following makes different demands at the different levels of the education system.

1. In planning a physics experiment, which are the sources of objectives and factors to be considered for a successful experiment?

2. Why does the human body need energy?

3. Consider the influence of urbanization on rural stability.

4. Discuss the view that in *The merchant of Venice* it is the women rather than the men who shape the course of events.

5. The rise and fall of the Zulu Empire is attributable to one man's despotism. Discuss.

6. Why do we have different eating habits in different societies?

7. How has the law and order maintenance act been used to control the media in post-colonial African countries?

8. Discuss the main duties of a franchisor and those of a new franchisee before and during the operation of a business.

9. Describe any five computer network topologies you are familiar with and indicate their impact on practice.

10. Illustrate the distinction between competence and performance as described by Chomsky.

Now, make a choice of any one topic from those listed above, and bear it in mind as you follow the unfolding discussion.

- Firstly, remember that when responding to a question, you are dealing with a problem.
- Secondly, supply authoritative thinking on the topic, wherever possible.
- Thirdly, provide a personal stance on the topic, that is, where you either agree or disagree with the topic, say so and give reasons.
- Fourthly, analyse the topic critically.
- Fifthly, support your discussion, wherever possible, with theoretical grounding. Academic subjects are, by nature, influenced by theories. It will be less scholarly, especially at diploma or degree level to present your discussion from a merely commonsensical perspective.
- Finally, consider the language used to discuss the topic. Specialist register associated with the topic should be used to bring out the scholarliness in the given area.

Together let us quality assure the introduction to Topic 3, which is about urbanization by working on this activity.

?? Activity

Read this introduction then work on the question that follows.

Urbanisation is for the urbanized who go to work not in the fields. They spend their money. They ride buses. Urban people do not walk.

a. What limitations do you find in the introduction?
b. How do you think the introduction could be made more scholarly?

The text betrays an element of shallowness, which is worsened by the lack of sophistication especially at diploma level. Most probably the presenter lacks familiarity with relevant content material, or is constrained by poorly developed linguistic resources.

Here is another introduction on the same topic:

Urbanisation, which derives its distinctiveness from being the opposite of ruralisation deserves intensive investigation in comparative terms. Explication of the phenomenon will shed more light on trends in developing countries.

What are your comments about it? While there is some element of verbosity, the attempt to be scholarly is evident. There is focus on comparing the two concepts, and the choice of register is significant, and we can only hope that what the seminar presenter promises will be fulfilled subsequently.

The Written Presentation

Students have often asked whether they should make the written presentation descriptive, explanatory, narrative, or argumentative. The answer is that the report should be all of those. To illustrate my purpose let us move on with the discussion using this topic.

Discuss the main duties of a franchisor and those of a new franchisee before and during the operation of a business.

- To begin with, you may want to characterize the key terms, e.g. 'franchisor' and 'franchisee', in which case you will be **defining** them.
- You may then follow that up with what the subject looks like, i.e. **describin**g it.
- Your description tells or explains 'franchisor' and 'franchisee' practices elsewhere. By doing that, you will be **narrating** some relevant practices.
- In the process of narrating, you are expected to indicate specific instances, that is, **illustrating** the points you make.
- When illustrating, you will be showing similarities and differences of the instances. That means **comparing** and **contrasting** them.
- Under each key term will be sub topics such as 'business climate', or 'location of the franchisee'. In other words, you will be **classifying** your information.

- The observation as to why a relationship between franchisor and franchisee occurs involves **analysis** of the situation.
- You then end with a personal view, wherein you **synthesise** your views.

Your presentation should, therefore, be written in an inclusive manner where you do the following at various turns: define, narrate, illustrate, compare, contrast, classify, analyse, and synthesise the information at your disposal.

Oral presentation should then be simplified once the written report is place. All you need to remember is that you should adopt a persuasive tone in order to convince your audience.

Conclusion

Participation in and presentation of seminar papers is a recognized method of cultivating profound understanding of an area of study. By talking about ideas, you communicate to others what you know, and at the same time provoke reaction from colleagues. Although there is a distinction between a tutorial and a seminar, both activities involve interaction that can easily be observed. A good language base enables the seminar presenter to report more effectively. We, therefore, expect scholarly presentation to show certain communicative features such as: a clear factual base; conceptual understandings; the correct use of principles and rules of the area of study; and engagement of colleagues in problem solving. To achieve that, you need to read widely around the topic, and have a firm grasp of theories and ideas, which scholars in the subject have developed.

UNIT 10

Preparing for examinations

Learning Outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- work out a plan to prepare for exams;
- critically evaluate the significance of ideas that are suggested towards improving exam-taking behaviors:
- come up with your own ideas of how to prepare for exams in your subject; and
- complete activities given here and relate them to your main study area

Introduction

An examination tests your knowledge or ability by oral or written questions. Such testing normally follows a period of study during which you study a subject or a course. Therefore, there is a sense in which the way you organize your studies at college (Unit 1); how you use language for purposes of communication (Unit 2); your approach to listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Unit 4); assignments are presented in the course of the semester or term (Unit 5); and the manner of presenting seminar topics (Unit 7), all lead to the final destination: writing the examination. In researching material for this unit some of the questions that students were asked were:

a) *How do you prepare for an examination?*

b) *How do you feel about an examination?*

Here is a paraphrase of an interview I held with Mothusi in one of the teachers' colleges in Botswana.

Exemplification

Mothusi's views and feelings.

The examinations Mothusi takes include multiple-choice and true/false questions as well as essay questions. To prepare for exams, Mothusi said that towards exam days, he gives himself more study time, chooses quiet places for study, reads lecture notes over and over again, practices past-

exam questions, reads new books on different topics, prays hard for better results.

When he was asked to explain how he felt about exams, he confessed that he got into a state of panic. He was afraid that he would forget everything because there was just too much information to be remembered. He has a friend who enjoys writing essay type questions, yet Mothusi has serious difficulties choosing the correct ideas to write about. He has no problems with multiple-choice questions because there are times when he guesses, and this relieves tension. He is scared because he never knows what topic will appear in the exam. All this leaves him sleepless, and he loses appetite. When that happens, he develops stomach cramps, which also affect his concentration.

In your opinion, what specific steps can Mothusi take to overcome his problems with tests? To reflect on this question, attempt this activity.

?? Activity

a) In answer to how to prepare for examinations, Mothusi makes a number of suggestions. List any three you agree with, and then add any 3 of your own which Mothusi did not raise.

b) Mothusi confesses that he gets into a state of panic towards exams. Suggest any 3 ways of preventing panic.

You would probably agree with Mothusi that revising past exam questions is worthwhile. You probably also came up with the suggestion that preparation for exams begins with your first lecture at the beginning of your course. Justify each of these suggestions in a discussion with colleagues. As far as panic is concerned, I have little doubt that we are all in one way or the other, victims. Some people have called this: exam fever. One way of preventing it is to ensure that you do everything necessary from the day you embark on your

course to the moment you sit the exam. What exactly do we mean by doing everything necessary?

Avoiding panicking

It is human to panic, but certainly not a sign of studentship to be overwhelmed by panic. The old adage that prevention is better than cure can be extremely useful. Remember how time flies. Many students have confessed how no sooner has the semester started than they hear their lecturers calling them to start preparing for exams. I have advised my students to try these steps, and the feedback I get from those who religiously follow them are good grades. To be well-prepared you must:

a. consistently attend classes;

b. be punctual to your classes;

c. take notes during lectures;

d. contribute actively to class discussions;

e. study notes after classes;

f. make your own additional notes; and

g. take part in study groups outside class.

If you panic like Mothusi because you forget important concepts, then you need to memorize some of the knowledge. This is important when studying for an objective test. For example:

1. Psychology is the study of (culture/the mind)

2. What is the function of the following computer components?

a. Control unit

b. Primary storage

c. Input buffer

3. ZPD stands for _____.

You therefore, need to have certain material memorized in order to answer these questions correctly.

In Unit 6, we looked at technical vocabulary and argued that every subject has specialist vocabulary or registers that the competent student is expected to recall. Similarly, there are certain key notions you should be able to define and exemplify. Here are examples from Management of Business.

4. What is supply and demand analysis?
5. Cite three examples of commodity supply, and three for commodity demand.

In Unit 3, one of the hints you were given was that when preparing an answer to the essay-type question, it is essential that you interpret the topic correctly. Failure to do that causes you to write off-topic, and perhaps miss the point. In the following topic, there are directive words which should be interpreted.

6. Briefly discuss, citing examples from the curriculum of your country, the rationale for drawing up school syllabuses in your area.

?? Activity
a. Which four words do you think need interpretation in question 6 above?
b. Suggest as many concepts as possible from your subject that need definition and list them in column A. in column B cite, at least, two examples on each concept.

A	B
Concept	Examples

What has been discussed so far are some of the steps you can take during the semester or during the calendar year to prepare for exams. Let us move closer to the exam day itself.

Taking exams in general

You have done everything necessary to prevent panic. This may include prayer, perhaps! In the next day, you face the 'day of reckoning'. How do you use the remaining moments profitably?

Firstly, spend the night before the exam making a final review of your notes. Then go to bed without interfering with the material you have learned. Your mind tends to work through and absorb the material during the night. You should, therefore avoid watching your favorite video, or engaging in a social discussion that is likely to upset your mind.

Secondly, be on time for the exam and be ready. We have known students, very capable students, who misread the timetable and miss out an exam, or arrive minutes late. This worsens the state of panic. If you arrive late or without the material you need (pen, ruler, etc.), you could be setting yourself up for failure.

Thirdly, read over all the instructions on the exam before you begin. Many students distort their chances at the very beginning because they do not understand or do not follow instructions. Do not let this happen to you.

Fourthly, budget your time. Exam papers are normally presented in sections. Determine how much time you will allocate for each section. Much depends on the question type, and the number of marks allocated to each question. It is pointless to spend 20 minutes on a question where 5 marks are indicated, while you spend 10 minutes for a question worth 15 marks. Work on the following activity to practice the vital hint of time allocation.

Your justification is likely to come up with an allocation of more time for the two essay questions. Probably allow an hour or so. You should also leave a few minutes to proof read the answers before handing in the paper. Also, question types make different demands on the way you answer as explained below.

Answering objective questions

You have now taken your place in the examination room, and face the section on objective questions. Is there a way of handling such questions? The following hints may be helpful.

Answer easy questions first. If you spend too much time cracking your head over difficult questions, chances are that you will not finish the exam. Instead, put a light check mark (X) beside the hard questions and continue working through the entire section, answering all those you can do right away. Go back and work with difficult questions in the time remaining. When you do that, follow these tips:

- In multiple-choice questions, cross out options you know are wrong and guess among the remaining choices.

- Answer all questions, including ones you feel you cannot do. It is better to give an answer than to leave the space blank, unless the instructions specify that points will be deducted for wrong answers.
- When guessing, do not change answers. Studies show that your first answer is usually the best.
- In multiple-choice tests, if the first choice is correct, still make sure you read the other options to confirm there is no other option better than your choice
- In an objective question such as:

What are the distinguishing features of morphology and phonology?

You are advised to make a brief plan on a piece of paper to avoid repeating the same features.

?? Activity

a. Suggest two more hints, which have worked for you when you tackled an objective test.

b. Choose any one hint from those cited above and suggest two reasons why you think it is worth following.

Preparing for the essay-type exam

Essay-type exams involve presentation of ideas in prose, and can range from answers whose length is as few as five lines to as many as five foolscap pages. For example:

7. In not more than 5 lines, write a brief explanation of photosynthesis.
8. Philosophy is the mother of all subjects. Discuss

The two questions are clear examples of questions that require you to answer in some detail and writing in clear, complete sentences. Such questions require that you have both a good understanding of the relationship among

various parts of the course material and ability to organize such material in your answers. The hints given in Unit 7 on how best to present your assignment are applicable here. For example, you need to: plan your answer, determine the key ideas for inclusion in the body; interpret the key words, etc. After writing the essay, you should leave time for editing. This is an essential step during which you correct those careless mistakes we all make when writing under pressure. Also, you can correct language errors and factual inaccuracies before handing in the script.

Apart from the above, by far one of the most serious problems that students like Mothusi face with essay questions is the failure to interpret key instruction words such as writing a 'brief explanation', or discussing an issue. We refer to these as instruction words because they carry the instructions to be followed in the exam question.

I read an extract from a literature essay by a student in answer to the following question:

> In *Cry, the Beloved Country* Stephen Khumalo really stands for the voice of Christianity in a world gripped with evil. Discuss this view.

Here is the extract from one of the students.

> In *Cry, the Beloved Country* Stephen Khumalo really stands for the voice of Christianity in a world gripped with evil. Any reader can see this in the events I am going to describe.
>
> When the little girl arrives with the letter while Stephen is in his office in Ndotsheni, we know that trouble begins here. He has to prepare for the long and tiring journey to Johannesburg, the city of evil. People like Gertrude drink beer, which is really evil. Boys like Absolom rob and break houses. This is very evil. Stephen sees this and suffers quietly. He is a real Christian.

You may not be a student of Literature, but I think you will agree that the instruction word is 'Discuss'. My understanding of 'discuss' is that a student

should present an argument, providing reasons for and against the statement. If we take this as a reasonable definition of 'Discuss', to what extent do you think the literature answer (cited above) agrees with the instruction word 'Discuss'? Let us work out the next activity as a way of answering this question.

?? Activity

   a. Read the student's answer closely and then list, at least, 4 weaknesses about it.

   b. Select any one of the 4 weaknesses you consider to be major, and give two reasons for your view.

The shortcomings I identified in this extract are: firstly, the answer repeats the words of the question; secondly, the student contradicts the instructional word 'discuss', and decides to 'describe'; thirdly, the essay merely narrates events without building an argument; fourthly, generalizations are made, for example, that drinking is evil; fifthly, the student seems to be concerned with showing us that Stephen is a real Christian, which is not the main point.

Your points may be totally different from mine. That is beside the point. In fact, if you share them with a friend you will find that your understanding will be broadened. What I consider to be a major weakness is the student's preference to describe instead of discussing the topic. The danger is that he will end up simply retelling events in the novel, which we all have access to. He can hardly earn a passing mark. Where does the problem lie really? Most likely, it is the student's failure to understand what the key word, 'discuss', instructs him to do. It is, therefore, very important that people like Mothusi should familiarize themselves with some of the most commonly used words. To what extent are you familiar with these words yourself? The next activity engages you in some brain-work. Try it before comparing your answers with those of a colleague.

?? Activity

Column A contains instruction words. Column B contains explanations of such words in jumbled order. Pair up the word and the correct explanation in the space provided by writing the number and the letter e.g. 1D. 2F. etc.

A	B
1. Compare	A. Write an itemized series of concise statements.
2. Contrast	B. Give a detailed account of
3. Criticize	C. Look for and explain similarities
4. Define	D. Establish the truth of an idea by citing factual evidence.
5. Describe	E. Show and explain adequate grounds or evidence for decisions.
6. Discuss	F. Write in a list or outline form, giving points consistently one by one.
7. Enumerate	G. Give a reasoned and well-informed judgment about the merit of an idea.
8. Evaluate	H. Clarify and interpret something.
9. Explain	I. Translate by giving examples of and commenting on a subject.
10. Illustrate	J. Set down the precise meaning of a word, phrase, or concept.
11. Interpret	K. Use figure, diagram, or example to clarify an idea.
12. Justify	L. Organize a description under main and subordinate points, omitting minor details.
13. List	M. Explore an issue by reasoned argument, debate, giving reasons for and against.
14. Outline	N. Setting ideas in opposition in order to bring out differences.
15. Prove	O. Make an appraisal of the worth of something, which can include your own opinion.
16. Summarize	P. Make a survey of a point or idea, examining the subject critically.

17. Review	Q. Give brief account of the chief points or substance of a matter.

Now fill in your answers in the space provided, and compare them with those of classmates'. I probably left out some instruction words, which are commonly used in your subject. List these in the space provided, and give their meanings in the right hand.

Word	Explanation
18.	R.
19.	S.
20.	T.
21.	U.

When you enter the examination, and start working on the essay-type questions, remember to interpret key words correctly. Essay writing is a skill. Therefore, an essay should be a well structured, and well reasoned written argument answering a particular question, not the one in your imagination.

Conclusion

Earlier, it was pointed out that an examination tests your knowledge. Exams of that nature rarely test you about content you did not cover. This unit has attempted to focus your attention on what you could do to prepare for that day when you are examined on what you covered in the syllabus. You will probably say, "All that has been covered here is not new. It is just common sense". This is quite true. In fact as true as the little story I will narrate here:

> *A preacher used to stand before his congregation, and always repeated these words, "repent ye sinners". One day, a member of the congregation said: "Why do you keep on telling us to repent? We have heard that before, and you know very well that all of us here have repented." Upon hearing this, the preacher answered. "I repeat that because even those who have repented continue to sin."*

If what has been said here on how best to prepare for examinations is common sense, why do people continue to fail exams? While it is true that

you have heard about these hints before, it is how you interpret and apply them that counts. You do not want to be like Mothusi who confesses that he gets into a state of panic when he nears exams. I expect you to face the day with confidence, and this is cultivated by sound study habits beginning from the first day of your study programme.

UNIT 11

Carrying Out Research

Learning Outcomes

After working through this unit you should be able to:

- formulate a manageable research topic;

- write a research proposal;

- Identify relevant literature;

- decide on sampling procedures, methods, and instruments; and

- use theoretical ideas to address your research questions.

Introduction

Universities, technical colleges, and vocational colleges of different kinds expect students to carry out a research project as part of their studies. This general trend undoubtedly reflects an increasing awareness to broaden the range of skills and knowledge beyond the routine essay or assignment. In this unit we deal with those very fundamental ideas you will need to carry out basic research. I am convinced that carrying out research successfully is one of the best ways of making knowledge your own. The experience provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate some originality in identifying a topic or a line of argument, and follow it in a systematic way.

Three technical terms are often used when talking about research, and these are: research project, dissertation, and thesis. Although writers have used the terms interchangeably, a distinction is often made. One criterion that has been used is one of length. Of the three, the research project is the shortest, while the thesis is longest, and the dissertation falls somewhere in-between. Further, students at certificate or diploma level talk of doing a research project. Those doing Undergraduate or Master's studies, talk of a dissertation.

Doctorate students on the other hand, talk of a thesis. Whatever we call it, the activity of researching into a topic is conceived more seriously than the writing of a long essay.

Findings from university students at under-graduate level, partly led me to discuss the issue of academic research. It became clear from the data collected that students had difficulties: formulating research topics; developing a proposal, that is, a synopsis of what they propose to do; determining what sort of literature to use; deciding on who the research subjects are; and selecting more effective methods of investigation and the instruments to be used. These are the basic requirements of any research, which we shall discuss systematically. Depending on what you are studying, you may want to add more requirements. Let us now attempt a definition of the term 'research'.

What is Research?

Suppose you are called upon to present a research paper, or write a research project, what exactly are you expected to do? Here is an activity. Fill in your ideas before moving on.

?? Activity
What do lecturers expect you to do when they ask you to carry out some research?
a.
b.
c.

What ideas did you come up with? To what extent do your ideas agree with those of classmates? I got some interesting responses from students at one of the universities in Zimbabwe. Examine them closely and see if they agree with what you think about the objectives of research. Students think that lecturers expect them to:

i. find out more information about a topic;

ii. read many books;

iii. Find out what other people think;

iv. write a report; and

v. draw information from people in the community.

I agree with all these observations except that, in my opinion, they miss out an important element. All the points say nothing about handling information in a critical manner. We need information, but it is what we do with it that makes research what it is. A meaningful definition of 'research' should include all the above-mentioned points plus the element of criticism. We can, therefore, define research as simply a systematic studial effort to provide answers to a topic by providing information, which we should present critically.

In view of what we have discussed so far, formulate your own definition and write it in the space provided.

?? Activity
My own definition of research is:

After defining research to your satisfaction, let us now examine some of the steps we normally follow when we carry out research.

What is a research problem?

We carry out research because we have something bothering us, and we want to find solutions to it. That something is normally an academic problem in our area of study. To make the problem clearer we have to ask one or more questions. The questions give a sense of direction to what you are interested in. As an example, a student of linguistics might have these questions about the way lecturers and students interact orally:

a. Why do lecturers dominate oral interaction while students do not participate actively?

b. Are there any ways of interacting that lecturers could use to encourage active participation by students?

The sense of direction, which these questions give is that they ask about a relationship between two aspects, namely, the strategies used by lecturers during interaction, and the behavior of students influenced by the lecturer. The research term we use for these two aspects is 'variables'. We refer to the first variable, that is strategies used by lecturers to promote interaction (e.g. questions, verbal clues, etc.), as the independent variable. This variable can be manipulated or deliberately selected to influence behavior. The second one, that is the response of the students, is known as the dependant variable. It is so called because it can be measured to determine the effect of the independent variable. Thus, the independent variable refers to the input, whereas the dependent variable is concerned with observable behavior or output. Therefore, to test for the clarity of a problem we must ask unambiguous questions from which variables are really identifiable. To reflect on this matter, work on this activity.

i.   Think of an area from your specialist subject (which has been bothering you). Ask one or two questions to show the problem.

ii. List the independent variable and the dependent variable.

When you have accomplished that, you are now ready to move on to the next research stage, the formulation of a topic.

The research topic

The topic is more or less a summary of the problem to be investigated. The reader of your topic should be left in no doubt about its main focus. Out of the several areas of interest you may have in mind, you will have settled for a particular one. In that particular one there are many possible problems which you also narrow down to a few. In turn, your topic will also be more focused. For instance, the research problems raised by the linguistics student suggests further sub-categories to be considered regarding oral interaction. These include oral strategies for lecturers; the response of students using appropriate language; teaching methods necessary for effective interaction; the learning atmosphere of particular lecture rooms; and so forth. Any of these sub-categories can be investigated separately so that a topic can be formulated on that basis. Here are two topics. Study them closely before making any comments.

a) *An investigation into the link between reading and oral skills of lecturers and students.*

b) *Lecturer intervention and the quality of students' linguistic response.*

When I carried out this exercise with my students, they all concurred that (b) was a better topic because it was:

- More focused unlike (a);

- The problem of intervention and its effects on students was not in doubt; and

- The independent and dependent variables are easy to identify.

I thought this was good reasoning to which can be added one or two more ideas. Just exactly how does one arrive at a topic after specifying a problem in question form?

The first step is to obtain broad familiarity with the field. The linguistics student will, for example, has to explore relevant literature and talk to experts about classroom discourse. This strategy helps you finalize what topic best covers your research questions. See if the following guidelines can help you make up your mind on a topic.

a. The topic must sustain your interest for a long time.

b. Narrow down the topic to a specific area.

When topic (a) and (b) are compared, (a) touches on reading and oral skills. Further it talks of lecturers and students, so that it is rather too broad. Remember the view that it is better to say a lot about a little, than to say a little about a lot.

c. It is advisable to avoid topics that may be linked too closely with emotional issues in your life. A topic that stirs up emotional issues in

you risks being biased in its procedures. In the process of data collection, objectivity is bound to be compromised.

    d. A topic that is overly ambitious and overly challenging can cause you problems. Select a topic on the basis of convenience and workability. One research expert put it this way: "There are two types of dissertations, the great ones that are never completed, and those that are completed." From your experience, you could easily add some more guidelines for discussion in class. The next step is to formulate research aims bearing in mind that you are concerned with research that gets completed rather than a great and impressive one that never takes off the ground.

The research aims

Aims are simply the intentions you have for carrying out systematic investigation. These are based on the problem questions and directly derive from it. Let us take one of the research problems posed in one of the questions cited by the linguistics student:

Why do lecturers dominate oral interaction while students do not participate actively?

Try and formulate one or two aims based on the problem.

?? Activity
I suggest the following aims:
a.
b.
c.

Now compare your aims with those of the students doing their final year at university.

    i. To establish patterns of interaction during a lecture

ii. To find ways of involving students during lectures.

iii. To suggest alternative methods that can be used to develop lecturer awareness of the principles of discourse.

Notice how these aims sharpen the problem further. When aims are spelt out, they are also influenced by what researchers normally refer to as assumptions. The research assumption is something that is generally believed to be true, and is rarely questioned. For example, we assume that a human being thinks. The difference lies in the quality of thinking when we look at individuals. However, this does not discredit what is widely believed to be a human attribute. You will remember that the problems raised by the linguistics student led to the decision about a topic which was formulated thus:

Lecturer intervention and the quality of students' linguistic response.

After a close examination of the aims and the topic, do you see any assumption in the background? What does the student assume? My students gave me two assumptions, and these are:

a) Lecture room interaction is a communicative phenomenon

b) The way a lecturer presents information influences the way students use language in order to take part in the lecture.

When you assume something you are saying "that is as it should be". You are suggesting that a situation exists where something causes another thing to happen (lecturer intervention causing a certain type of linguistic behavior).

If you ask certain questions, which we termed the problems of interest to you, you can make certain predictions about your investigation. This is known as the hypothesis, as explained below.

The hypothesis

A research topic could be investigated using one or more hypotheses. To illustrate what a hypothesis is, a story is told of a wise man who took some youths into a deep forest (problem created). He asked them to find their way out, before abandoning them (the youths were made to have an aim). The

wise man believed that the youth would not like to remain secluded from society indefinitely (an assumption). The youth had to find ways to get out of the forest (hypothesis). Why do we call this a hypothesis? The reason is that the youth have clues they can use to find their way out of the problem. In research, therefore, a hypothesis is an expectation of the outcome of the study using clues.

The linguistics student who investigates the influence of lecturer intervention on the students hypothesizes about the relationship between methods of intervention (the independent variable), and the student response (dependent variable). He will also take into account other factors which are neither independent nor dependent variables. These may include the attitude of the lecturer towards students; the class sizes; communication resources available; to name but a few. These will inevitably affect the quality of the interaction, and are variable on their own. The term used in research is 'moderator variable'. That term is used to indicate that the moderator variable affects the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. It should, therefore, be considered when you are trying to get out of the thick forest of the topic you try to investigate.

If, as already observed, a hypothesis is an expectation of the outcome of a study, or your tentative solution to the problem, what hypothesis could the linguistics student formulate? Bear the topic, aims and assumptions as you respond to this activity.

?? Activity

Write a hypothesis in response to this problem: Why do lecturers dominate oral interaction while students do not participate actively?

When you have worked out one, exchange views with colleagues, showing in what ways the variables are implied. When you have done that, critically

evaluate the following hypotheses, on the same problem, originated by university students.

i. Exposing lecturers to alternative strategies of interaction improves students' level of participation.

ii. The students' level of participation is dependent on the lecturing style.

It is important to bear in mind that a hypothesis should be testable. The purpose of testing a hypothesis is to determine whether it is supported by fact. For example, a hypothesis like i) above has to be tested with a number of lecturers, in different subjects, with different students. A number of criteria could be used before the hypothesis can be accepted. If, on the basis of testing the hypothesis we fail to yield confirming results, it would be fair to reject it. After getting this far, your next step is to work out a proposal.

The research proposal.

Let us look back on what you have achieved up to this point. You have identified an area of interest which you have reduced to a problem statement. You put this in the form of questions. To familiarize yourself with the broad area, you undertook some consultation with tutors, and carried out some reading related to the area. You then narrowed down the area and came up with a topic in which variables are made explicit. You went on to make certain assumptions on the basis of which you specified the research aims and the hypotheses. Now, you can write the proposal. In the next section we attempt to answer these questions which students have often asked: What is a proposal? How is a proposal written? What are the characteristic features of a proposal?

Firstly, in university programmes the prelude to conducting a dissertation is presenting a proposal. A research proposal is the action plan that justifies and describes your proposed study. Secondly, it serves as a statement of intent on the part of the student. The student clarifies the direction she will follow in testing the hypothesis. This is done with the approval of the lecturer supervising you. It means there is some agreement that data may be collected and the study may be completed. Thirdly, there is no prescribed way

of structuring your proposal. However, a good proposal contains a statement of the problem and hypotheses associated with that. It should place the research in context, and give a brief statement to justify the relevance of the investigation. Review of the relevant literature ought to be briefly presented, together with the proposed method and plans for data collection and data analysis. Never mind if some of the terms I use here sound unfamiliar and intimidating to you. They will be clarified subsequently. The important thing for the moment is to be clear about the nature of the research proposal. Attempt this exercise to reinforce the foregoing ideas.

?? Activity

A research proposal includes aspects you deal with before writing it. Complete the blank spaces.

    a. A research _____ is normally presented in question form.

    b. A research _____ refers to the belief people hold about a phenomenon.

    c. A research _____ is a possible answer.

    d. A research _____ is a statement of intent.

    e. A research _____ gives a map to be followed.

    f. A _____ variable influences observable behavior.

    g. A _____ variable refers to observable behavior.

Compare your answers with those of colleagues before moving on to the next section. If you are working on your dissertation, chances are that by incorporating these thoughts you will make good progress. In the next section we look at the choice of a research design.

The research design

Many students have had problems coming up with a research design for their chose topics. There is quite some substantial literature about research designs, which makes it difficult to cover much ground about it within the

scope of a sub-section. As the title of the unit promises, only basic information on the subject is provided. If you need more details, I suggest that you read some of the books listed in the bibliography section.

To begin with, what is a research design? The simplest definition of a design is that it is a specification of operations for the testing of a hypothesis. It answers the question: How do you propose to carry out the research within a given set of conditions? The range of research designs includes: pre-experimental designs, true experimental designs, factorial designs, quasi-experimental designs, and ex post facto designs. The two types that are commonly used are: the true experimental design and the quasi-experimental design. I focus on these two in some detail, but before doing that let me draw your attention to some shorthand used for displaying designs.

If we chose our research subjects (sample) randomly and assign them to groups, we use R to show randomization. If we gave group A, a test, but did not do the same for group B, we refer to A as the experimental group and B as the control. The test we give group A is known as treatment, and we use the letter X to designate the presence of treatment. -X is used for group B, thus designating the absence of treatment. When you want to compare treatments you label them X1 X2 X3 X4, etc. We use letter O to signify an observation or measurement. Depending on the number of observations you make, numbers are often used after the letter O as in O1 O2 O3. Let us link this to one of the hypotheses spelt out by the linguistics student:

Exposing lecturers to alternative strategies of interaction improves students' level of participation.

In the following activity, explain what you think the student is doing with two groups of lecturers.

?? Activity
Interpret the symbols used in this design by writing your interpretation in the space below.
R   X   O
R   -X   O

Discuss with a colleague before you move on.

True experimental designs

These designs are so named because they control for what we refer to as internal invalidity. We explain this term later. An example of this type of design is what is known as the Pre-test-Post-test Control Group Design. Two groups, the experimental and the control group are employed. The experimental group receives the treatment, while the control group does not. Both groups are given a pre-test and a post-test. In the case of the two groups of lecturers, our research subjects or participants, the control group has the same experience as the experimental group (except for the treatment, of course). In a situation like this we say the design controls for history and maturation. In this situation, history refers to the events occurring in the university environment of the lecturers at the time the experimental variable "alternative strategies of interaction" is being tested. On the other hand, maturation signifies the process of change that takes place within those lecturers participating in the experiment. This true experimental design can be represented as follows.

R   01   02   X   03   04
R   01   02   -X   03   04

Quasi-experimental designs are different as illustrated below.

Quasi-Experimental designs

The distinction between these and true experimental designs is that they are partly, but not fully, true experimental. They exist for situations where experimental control is difficult. They are not as adequate as the true experimental design. The two commonly used ones are the Time-Series Design which we represent thus:

01   02   03   X   04   05   06

?? Activity

In the space provided, write a brief explanation of what you think is happening in the above presentation.

Another Quasi-Experimental Design is the Non-equivalent Control Group Design. This is commonly used in educational research where, for example, the linguistics student may not be able to assign lecturers, the research subjects randomly to treatments. The lecturers may be composed according to the fields of specialization which the researcher may not want to interfere with. Even the numbers will not be the same, so the groups are non-equivalent and are left intact. The only difference between this design and the pretest-posttest control group design is that the quasi-experimental does not have random assignment of subjects. To control for selection bias, the linguistics student will have to use a pretest so as to demonstrate initial equivalence of the intact groups. The posttest observations will enable the researcher to draw comparisons of the effectiveness of the experimental group of lecturers, which received instructions on how to use certain interactional strategies (the treatment), as opposed to the control group. This is how the design is structured.

01   X   02

03   -X   04

The next question that comes to mind when a design is in place is: What method can be used to collect research data? However, before attempting an answer, it is important to establish whether your research is quantitative or qualitative. Let us examine that briefly.

Quantitative versus qualitative research

Let us take the example from linguistics to which we referred above and reword it thus:

> *Students taught by lecturers who use group discussion method perform better in tests than those taught through the lecture method.*

If we follow the pretest-posttest control design, we would compare the scores of students taught by those lecturers exposed to principles of group discussion, with those taught through the conventional lecture method. The

former group will be our experimental group which receives the treatment, while the latter is our control group. We would then look at the percentage scores (the data) of the groups and analyze them. This is the quantitative approach (in its simplest form) to research.

In quantitative research, mathematical figures are used to describe patterns. The purpose is to isolate a variable of interest (the independent variable), and manipulate it to observe its impact on the dependent variable. In the above case the percentages are the mathematical figures, while the group discussion method is our independent variable. The performance of students, as measured in percentages, is the dependent variable.

In qualitative research, on the other hand, the data are in the form of words as opposed to numbers. For example, if we obtained students' and lecturers' views about the effectiveness of group discussion (through a questionnaire), the following responses are plausible.

    i.   Group work enables us to know how the other students think.
    ii.   Group work wastes time. We will not complete the syllabus.

Our next step is to reduce the views into themes or categories. We then describe, interpret, and evaluate them subjectively. Qualitative methods are commonly used in the social sciences where they are useful in the generation of categories for understanding the meaning that people give to events. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, make use of descriptive statistics. A question can, however, be asked: Is there any link between qualitative and quantitative methods?

There is a very close link. The distinction made above is an oversimplification of what is otherwise a complex matter. We can use statistical data to make qualitative evaluation. For example, the percentages arising from our comparison of the two groups can lead to qualitative interpretation when we attempt to answer 'why' and 'how' questions. Similarly, if we go back to the views expressed by those who respond to our questionnaire (the

respondents), their responses can be categorized according to the numbers of students or lecturers who express the same views. That way, we are able to reduce data to percentage (quantitative). This mutual interrelatedness of quantitative and qualitative research methods has come to be known as 'triangulation'. Thus, when you combine the objectivity of statistical data, with open-ended verbal responses, or transcripts of audio-taped information, you will be making use of one kind of triangulation.

?? Activity

   a) Suggest a hypothesis based on a topic from your study programme.

   b) Illustrate quantitative and qualitative data.

      Quantitative data:

      Qualitative data:

   c) Illustrate triangulation between the quantitative and qualitative data.

Take your time and discuss your views with members of the class. This is going to help you gain a clearer understanding of research concepts discussed up to this point. We shift our discussion to data collection methods once the research design has been structured.

Describing your research tools.

Once you have defined your variables, for example, the group discussion method (independent variable) and student performance (dependent variable), you must decide what research tools will best measure such variables. Research tools are also known as instruments, and your choice must be based on these three important questions:

a) How appropriate are the tools?

b) What are the measurement characteristics of the tools?

c) How am I going to score findings using the tools?

Answers to these questions are vital before you enter into data collection. A lot of frustration is avoided if you carry out this initial mapping out first rather than realizing problems mid way in the research.

There are several research tools that are tried and tested in the field of research. It is not the intention of this unit to get into details about how such instruments are structured, how you test them to ensure they are viable for your research, and so on. I refer you to books listed in the bibliography for that. Within the scope of a unit dealing with how you can carry out basic research what you probably need is an awareness of what some of the tools are.

Questionnaires and interviews are usually similar in structure. The major differences lie in that a questionnaire seeks a written, while an interview seeks an oral response. Secondly, the two are administered differently. One of the features of these instruments is that they are useful in converting into data information directly given by the subject. For example, in answer to the question:

What is your opinion about group method?

The following answer can be given:

Group work enables us to know what other students think.

This provides access to what is inside the subject's or respondent's head. Apart from that, the tools make it possible for you to measure the knowledge level of a subject. You can also determine the values and preferences of somebody, as well as what that person thinks (attitudes and beliefs).

These tools can be either structured or unstructured. In a question like:

Group work method is superior to lecture method.

true or false / agree or disagree

The respondent is expected to make a choice from given alternatives. This is a clear example of a structured question. An unstructured question, on the other hand is open-ended as in:

Why do you think group work method is superior to lecture method?

There are advantages and disadvantages attached to each one of these two instruments. Here is an activity to reflect on that.

?? Activity

For each instrument, suggest strengths and weaknesses in the columns provided.

Instrument	Strengths	Weaknesses
Questionnaire		
Interview		

There are numerous possible answers. For example, it is cheaper to run a questionnaire because you can mail to respondents, whereas with an interview, you have to travel to individuals, and that makes it more expensive.

The next tool for discussion is audio-taping an event that is recording voices of people in a given situation, e.g. a lecturer lecturing on a topic, or a group discussion among students. When you have done that, you will then play back the recording, and reduce it to written record. We call that activity 'transcribing'. When you have all the data, you are well positioned to analyze as you consider appropriate.

Videotaping is another tool where you take videos of proceedings. Instead of sounds only, the actions and visual accessories in the lecture room further enhance your transcription. In either audio-taping or videotaping you have the advantage of repeating the recordings as many times as you wish until you

get more accurate transcriptions. This is unlike observation where once what you want to observe is past, you cannot revisit it.

Observation is one instrument that researchers continue to use in order to source data. During a lecture, for example, the observer may want to collect specific data. She sits at the back while the lecture progresses and notes down whatever it is she wants. It could be the pattern of turn-taking that students allow one another while engaged in a collaborative activity. It could also be the type of question a lecturer asks. Are they recall or closed questions, or open-ended questions? The observer will tally the frequency of question types for analysis at a later stage.

The use of records as a source of data is an instrument widely used by researchers. If the linguistics student wanted to assess the quality produced by learners who used group method, as opposed to those who used the lecture method, she might access their written work over a certain period of time. She will then analyze that and draw comparisons using specific categories. Other types of records include subject syllabuses, information from archives, records of previous court proceedings and many others. Records contain data that researchers can use to test a variable spelt out in a hypothesis. For more detail on these tools, you need to read from other sources. However, it is necessary for you to say something about any one of these tools applicable to your situation.

?? Activity

Audio taping, videotaping, observation, and the use of records are some of the research instruments. Select one of these and list its advantages to you. The instrument:

Compare your views with those of a friend before moving on.

Procedures

When carrying out research, you are expected to provide a description of the steps taken to contact research participants, obtain their co-operation, and administer your instruments. The linguistics student, for example, will have to indicate procedures taken to contact lecturers and students when conducting interviews. It is also necessary to reflect on how you are going to analyze your data.

Data analysis

A research proposal should include a statement that describes statistical tests and other methods of analyzing data that will be used to address the hypotheses and research questions. The benefit of including this statement is that it forces you to plan in advance how you will treat data before collecting them than after data have been collected.

Delimitations and Limitations

You are encouraged to make a statement on the research delimitations. Delimitations imply the limitations you deliberately impose on your research design. For example, the linguistics student might choose to investigate lecturing practices in one college only owing to cost factors. This is an example of a delimitation. Thus, delimitations usually restrict the populations to which results of the study can be generalized.

Research limitations, on the other hand, refer to restrictions over which you have no control. For example, if the linguistics student wanted to investigate interactional practices in two primary teachers' colleges, and two secondary teachers' colleges, yet there is only one primary college in the province, that is

a limitation over which the researcher has no control. That is an example of a limitation.

?? Activity

On the basis of the hypothesis you suggested earlier suggest one delimitation (a) and one limitation (b).

How do (a) and (b) influence your procedures?

Suppose you have taken all the necessary steps of your research, you now need to write the research report. What should be included?

The research report

The research report is the write-up you are going to present to your supervisor for examination. While there is no strictly standard format of presenting a report, there are certain characteristic features we associate with a good report. Irrespective of the number of chapters, a report is expected to cover these areas: introduction, method, results, discussion, and references. Each of these has subheadings under it. To simplify matters, I list a number of features to serve as a checklist for you.

Write-up items

- The topic
- Statement of the problem
- Research aims
- The research questions
- The hypotheses (if necessary)
- Justification
- Limitations
- Delimitations
- Definition of variables
- Research design
- Literature review
- Instruments
- Procedures
- Data analysis
- Presentation of results
- Conclusions

There are probably other items you want to include. All depends on the requirements of your topic and you should feel free to include such items.

Before submitting the research report for examination by your supervisor, it is important to edit it first. Thorough editing will help you make corrections and amendments that may be necessary. Read Unit 3 more closely for a more detailed explanation of the merits of editing. Some of the merits are that you correct all the ungrammatical structures that interfere with effective communication: you check whether you have acknowledged sources correctly; you check whether ideas are presented logically and coherently.

Conclusion

In today's academic institutions, carrying out some form of research is an expectation that students are expected to meet. Students have expressed some of the difficulties they have in coming up with a research topic, formulating a proposal, defining the problem, identifying the research sample, determining research methods, etc. Fortunately, there is a corpus of researched information on how best to approach the subject. We discussed some of the ideas in the forgoing sections.

Successful research depends on a number of factors, for example, your ability to organize your studies. When you are well organized, it means you allow time to read around the subject, talk about the topic, and listen to other people's views on the same issue. You will remember that whole units have been devoted to that effect in previous sections. In case you have forgotten some of the things we said, you do well to revisit the units.

Self-Assessment Activity

Covering Units 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11

Instructions

1. Read all the units (6-11) carefully.
2. Answer all questions in the space provided by ticking either True/False.
3. Reflect on all the courses you are studying as you work on the assignment.

Answer **True / False**

Item	True	False
1. You are able to score a higher grade for what you intended to say, although you do not say it.		
2. Written presentation is said to be ambiguous when it communicates proficiently.		
3. There is room for using the first person when making a written presentation.		
4. The words: 'I completely agree with…' emphasise the speaker's concurrence with a given position.		
5. Only those students doing a course in English are encouraged to use the dictionary.		
6. Contextual clues are the hints that can be used to interpret meanings of words within a particular situation.		
7. Listening has nothing to do with developing an understanding of word meanings.		
8. A word, within a given subject, is said to be technical when it has more than one meaning.		
9. Prefixes and suffixes modify the root word.		

10. Interpretation of the keywords of an essay takes place after planning what to write in the essay.		
11. The content words of an essay topic refer to the special conditions imposed on the question.		
12. When reading in preparation to answer a topic, it is necessary to be selective.		
13. The first written statement in an essay is directing the audience on the way you propose to structure your argument.		
14. Of the following introduction types, the explainer is the least appealing to readers: a quotation, rocket launcher, promiser, explainer, dictionary buff.		
15. (a) and not (b) is the correct way of citing references: (a) Atta (2008:76) says… (b) Atta in his 2008 book on page 76 says…		
16. Paraphrasing means quoting the exact words of the author.		
17. The sources you directly refer to are referred to as bibliography, not references.		
18. The student's expectations from a written assignment should be reconciled with those of the marker.		
19. All assignment conclusions are drawn in the same way.		
20. Submitting edited work spoils what would otherwise have been excellent work		
21. To edit an assignment is to audit with the view to correcting errors and mistakes.		
22. The marker takes into account whether you understand the distinction between facts and opinions.		
23. Thin reading and stringing of quotations are examples of a well-presented assignment.		
24. The following assessment criteria account for outstanding performance: significant grammatical errors; irrelevant material; a narrow source base.		
25. It is helpful to get somebody to edit your work.		

26. A seminar and a tutorial are one and the same activity.		
27. A seminar fuses the skills of listening, reading, and speaking.		
28. Agreeing and disagreeing are skills learnt during seminars or tutorials, and have a direct influence on the quality of written assignments.		
29. It is the lecturer or the tutor who should lead seminar discussions.		
30. Authoritative thinking and provision of a personal stance are synonymous.		
31.An argumentative write-up of the seminar paper can be inclusive of narration, description, and explanation of information.		
32. The synthesis of your argument, during a seminar presentation, comes at the beginning of the paper.		
33. Knowledge about seminars is necessary only to those who present papers.		
34. An examination can either be oral or written.		
35. The way you feel has nothing to do with how you prepare or how you perform in an examination.		
36. It is a normal thing to panic as you prepare for the examination, but an awareness of and practice of communication and study skills can prepare you to be calm.		
37. Making your own additional notes and taking part in study groups outside tutorials does not help you prepare for examinations.		
38. Clarity of instructions and budgeting time are critical elements of taking examinations.		
39. The other term for essay-type questions is objective questions.		
40. Multiple-choice questions have wider syllabus coverage than essay-type questions.		

41. Research is mainly concerned with sourcing ideas from authorities about a problem you want to solve.		
42. A research aim is presented in question form.		
43. The independent variable is the stimulus variable that causes something to happen.		
44. The rationale section of the project is the justification of a given study.		
45. Action research aims at increasing knowledge by developing new theories.		
46. A research topic should be more intellectual than emotional.		
47. The prediction of outcomes of a study before the actual data are collected is referred to as the research reliability.		
48. The dependent variable is the observed aspect of behaviour of the organism that has been stimulated.		
49. The qualitative approach to research deals with systematic measurement and statistical analysis of data.		
50. External validity of a study refers to the extent to which results can be generalised from samples to populations.		

Answers to Self-assessment Exercise

50.	True	49.	False
48.	True	47.	False
46.	True	45.	False
44.	True	43.	True
42.	False	41.	False
40.	True	39.	False
38.	True	37.	False
36	True	35.	False
34.	True	33.	False
32.	False	31.	True
30.	False	29.	False
28.	True	27.	True
26.	False	25.	True
24.	False	23.	False
22.	True	21.	True
20.	False	19.	False
18.	True	17.	False
16.	False	15.	True
14.	False	13.	True
12.	True	11.	False

10. False	9. True
8. False	7. False
6. True	5. False
4. True	3. True
2. False	1. False

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