

Tutorial letter 201/2/2016

GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE: THEORY, STYLE AND POETICS

ENG2602

Semester 2

Department of English Studies

CONTENTS

1. Pre-examination information.
2. Responses to the assignment question:
Assignment 1: Prose: Fiction

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Dear students

PRE-EXAMINATION INFORMATION

The examination will be a two hour paper. You will be expected to write two essays. The paper will be divided into two sections: a section on language and a section on literature. You will be expected to answer one question per section.

The section on language will have a question on Persuasive Writing and a question on Conversation Analysis. You will be expected to answer one of these questions.

The section on literature will have a question on Prose Fiction, a question on Poetry, and a question on Drama. You will be expected to answer one of these questions.

Even though you will have a choice in the exam, we suggest that you do at least some preparation on all the sections, and perhaps prepare at least two units per section in detail. If you only prepare one unit per section there is a risk that you could find the question on the unit that you prepared to be difficult. If, on the other hand, you are prepared to answer a question on more than one unit per section, you would be able to switch to answering on a different unit.

In each unit, you can expect the following types of questions:

Persuasive Prose: you will be given a short passage from an unseen persuasive text (such as a newspaper article, an advertisement, a political speech, etc.). You will have to write an essay in which you analyse the passage: this means that you will have to outline briefly **what** the passage is about, **why** it has been written, and **who** the target audience is, and then to explain in detail **how** it has been written. Your essay should focus on **how** the author **uses language** to persuade his/her target audience.

Conversation: you will either be given a transcript of a conversation or asked to construct one yourself. You will then be asked to analyse the conversation according to specific aspects and features of Conversational Analysis. You could also be asked to write an essay on an aspect or a range of aspects of Conversation Analysis, such as (but not limited to) turn-taking, pauses, overlaps, fillers, cooperative principles, implicature, politeness, etc. Refer to the 'Conversational analysis additional resource' document under the 'Additional Resources' tab on myUnisa for a survey of the key facets of this section.

Prose fiction: you will be given a short passage from an unseen prose fiction text. You will have to write an essay in which you analyse the passage, discussing in detail how it uses language, for example, to portray character, shape, tone and setting, for thematic and symbolic effects, etc.

Poetry: you will be given a poem from the list of poems provided under 'Additional Resources' on myUnisa. You will have to write an essay in which you analyse the poem, discussing in detail how it uses language to present and explore its main themes and concerns.

Drama: you will be given an excerpt from an unseen play. You will be expected to write an essay in which you analyse how the passage uses language, for example, to form imagery or reveal the qualities of the characters in relation to the passage's main themes and concerns.

Use the following additional guidelines to help you prepare for the examination:

- Read your study guide and the prescribed book. Make notes of the important features of each genre of writing.

- Read as widely as possible, including newspapers, magazines, novels, short stories, poems and dramas. Write notes on the texts that you read, outlining the way they use the strategies that are appropriate to each genre.
- Pay attention to general features of language use, such as point of view, register, diction, tone, irony and figures of speech as you analyse extracts from texts in preparation for the examination.
- Write sample essays in which you examine the way each extract in the reader uses the resources of its genre.

Good luck with your preparations!

RESPONSES TO ASSIGNMENT 01

QUESTION 1: PERSUASIVE PROSE

The assignment consisted of **TWO** questions. You were required to answer either Question 1 or Question 2. If you had chosen Question 1, you would have been required to answer a question on Persuasive Prose.

The extract is taken from George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. **Please do not use your knowledge of the whole book to answer as you are required to focus on this extract alone.**

Read the speech carefully and then write an essay of about 1000 words in which you critically analyse the content of the text, focusing on the following key questions: Who? What? How? Why? Your analysis should be guided by the following:

What? (What type of text is this?)

How? (What is the purpose or function of the text? What does the text set out to achieve and how does it do that/)

Who? (For whom is the speech intended?)

Why? (Why was this text written?)

What specific linguistic strategies did the author use and HOW do these features help him to achieve his purpose? The linguistic features of this extract should form the bulk of the analysis

An extract like this one should be interpreted and analysed on its own merit and not for its literary value. If you did this then you would have received a positive outcome. However, some students tended to rely heavily on internet resources and failed to apply the information correctly or acknowledge their sources in answering the questions What?, How?, Who?, Why?. Adequately addressing HOW the features selected by the speaker aid his purpose is integral to understanding the speaker's purpose. These elements are crucial for establishing a link between linguistic features and the ideology they carry.

You may wonder why is it necessary to be able to identify the ideological content in written material. In Chapter Five of the prescribed textbook, *Critical Reading and Writing* by Andrew Goatley, you will learn about **subject positions**. It is important for you to understand and be able to explain reader-writer relationships by analysing a text. As a reader of a text you become a subject and certain actions are performed by the writer onto a reader. No text is neutral so when a reader reads a text they take a certain position.

You may have been taught to read texts in a certain way and this is what may be called a **reading position**. At school you may have read and looked at texts more for its comprehension rather than critically examining what and whose purpose such a text may serve. Now at tertiary level it is imperative for you to be able to identify the position that a text places a reader in and also be able to resist the position that a text may try to put you in. Therefore, it is often necessary for readers not to just accept the viewpoint of the writer and to resist his/her *presuppositions, inferences, implications and propositional attitudes*. **(It is very important for you to learn these concepts and apply them in your analyses if you want to obtain high marks in this module.)** By resisting subject positions one challenges the beliefs and assumptions of the writer.

Now that you know about the construction of certain ideological representations in texts we can move on to persuasive texts like the extract in your assignment. As mentioned previously, texts contain ideological matter that serves the writer's purpose. However, persuasive texts go a step further in that their main purpose is to convince the audience or reader into accepting the propositional content as real and accurate. In order to do so the writer/speaker uses many manipulative and persuasive techniques to capture the attention of the reader/listener and establish a connection with them in order to influence them to buy in or to act.

When you write an essay like this with various elements involved, you should structure your argument so that it flows and is not fragmented by subheadings. So if you are writing an essay that needs to address the questions What?, How?, Who?, Why?, and refer to linguistic features, then it may prove difficult to address those elements without fragmenting your arguments. The best way to deal with that is to use linking adverbs to indicate how the content of the following or previous paragraph links or contradicts each other.

However, for the sake of clearly outlining how the various elements should have been discussed this discussion will use subheadings:

1. What

While this extract is taken from a literary novel, it is a speech that has manipulative and persuasive strategies. The text content and structure signals to the reader that it is a speech. One person speaks for an extended period without interruption and his agenda is clearly revealed in the tone and use of certain linguistic features.

2. Why and how

The speaker clearly wants to have a certain influence on the audience and this is evident in line 4 when he expresses a strong conviction that he believes that it is his *duty* to impart the *wisdom* that he has acquired over time. It is interesting to note here that the burden of duty is self-imposed but the emotion tied to the word is enough to convince the audience to accept it without question. His claim that he understands the nature of life just because he has lived a long time is an illogical argument since old age does not guarantee wisdom and knowledge of life. However his use of age and wisdom and duty together provide a strong platform for his rhetoric. In the first paragraph his speech is laced with the pronoun, "I," indicating that it is his sole idea and purpose to impart knowledge. This sets him apart from the audience and creates a certain hierarchy which ironically he strives to get rid of in the next paragraph, by the pronouns "us" and "ours" in order to identify with his audience and establish a relationship with them. This attempt is further solidified with the use of the term, "comrade," which indicates a brotherhood. The use of these techniques clearly places this as a propagandist speech with the intention to change the mindset of the listeners and influence a change.

3. Who

The speech is aimed at a specific audience in order to obtain a certain result. The orator carefully and cleverly selects his words in order to achieve the desired effect. While he is addressing the animals of this particular farm, his speech encompasses animals all over England when he hyperbolises that not a single animal in the whole of England is free which in itself is an illogical argument since the wild animals that roamed freely in England were not subject to man's tyranny.

4. The use of linguistic strategies and **HOW** this serves the speaker/author's purpose:

The interconnectedness of the questions is evident in the previous paragraphs were mentioned is made about the use of pronouns and emotive language which is very significant in a text of this nature. This extract is charged with **emotional content** that is carefully selected and used by the speaker to inflame and incite his audience. The use of emotive words serves to trigger a response that is sometimes irrational and unbalanced individuals can become receptive and malleable in the hands of an expert orator. Words like "miserable," "forced," "slaughtered," are carefully selected because of their emotional connotation and can incite and inflame the listener and open their consciousness and stir them to action. It also creates a feeling of discomfort and unease about their previous acceptance of the treatment.

Accordingly, while the rhetorical questions encourages the audience to think about the issues highlighted, it affords the opportunity to question and challenge previous thinking as well as to provide the answers, thus presenting information as obvious answers. There are many examples of rhetorical questions in the extract like "Life of ours?" and "those who dwell upon it?" Notice how these questions allow the animals to think but never to answer as the answer is provided for them. But the question gives them a feeling of being included in the process.

Furthermore in paragraph three, he comes across as an expert when he speaks of the fertility of the "soil of England" and the capability of the land for providing "food in abundance." He does not have any proof to back up his arguments, but if you remember he prefaced his arguments with an acknowledgement of his age and knowledge, establishing at the outset his credibility and gaining the respect of his audience. It creates the assumption that because the speaker has lived longer, he has experienced more and therefore has a better understanding about life and how things should be.

The speaker uses repetition to draw attention to the repeated words. This ensures that it is remembered by the audience long after the speech has ended. In his speech he repeats the words, "no animal," in order to emphasise the misery associated with the lives of all animals thus ensuring complete cooperation on the basis of the unfairness associated with the plight of the collective. As I have mentioned previously, the speaker cannot make an assumption like that since wild animals roam freely and are not subject to man. The effect is that the animals will remember that man does not allow their kind any kind of freedom from servitude for all animals which demonises man and identifies him as the enemy. In effect, this serves his purpose in ensuring collaboration in the struggle to get rid of man.

As you may have noticed there are various persuasive techniques employed by the speaker in order to get the audience to accept the propositional content and assertions made. The use of oratorical skills coupled with verbal dexterity ensures the acceptance and cooperation of the animals. Assertions and opinions presented as expert knowledge and wisdom ensures respect. If you were listening to this speech how you would be positioned?

Best wishes for the exam!

Bernice Badal

QUESTION 2: CONVERSATION

Assignment 1 consisted of **TWO** questions. You were required to answer either Question 1 or Question 2. If you had chosen Question 2, you would have been required to answer questions on conversational analysis.

The conversational analysis assignment was based on Chapter 3, 'Texts and interpersonal meaning' and Chapter 5, 'Reading and writing positions' of your prescribed textbook, ***Critical Reading and Writing***, by Andrew Goatly, as well as **Study Unit 6** of your Study Guide. This study material introduced you to various aspects of conversational analysis such as subject positioning, inter-subjectivity, adjacency pairs and turn-taking. The material also provided information pertaining to the techniques for analysing conversations.

In this assignment, you were expected to demonstrate your understanding of the conversational concepts, with specific reference to rhetorical devices and how they are applied in conversations. You were further expected to provide evidence regarding your understanding of how conversational aspects feature in texts. Marks were awarded for the ability to present ideas in a coherent and grammatically appropriate manner that reflects meticulous attention to linguistic detail. In addition, you were credited for your ability to write an analysis that is in alignment with the stipulated requirements.

QUESTION 2.1

Construct a conversation or dialogue between two people (of approximately 10 lines). Then analyse this conversation/dialogue to illustrate **how the rhetorical devices in the list below contribute to meaning**. Your analysis should not be more than ½ a page. Provide relevant examples from the conversation/dialogue to support your answer.

Subject positioning

Style

Tone and mood

The conversation/dialogue should be your own construction. Marks will be awarded for your ability to construct a concise conversation/dialogue that clearly illustrates your understanding of rhetorical devices and how they are used to make meaning.

N.B.: **5 marks** will be awarded for a clearly articulated conversation/dialogue and **10 marks** for a precise analysis that explains how the identified rhetorical devices are used to create meaning.

Discussion

In the first part of your response to Question 2.1 you were expected to construct a conversation between two people. Note that this conversation should have been **your own** construction. You were, therefore, NOT expected to use the text in your textbook or any other source. Your text should have been constructed in a manner that should have reflected the stipulated rhetorical devices.

The second part of your response should have been an analysis of the constructed text. In your analysis you should have clearly reflected how the listed rhetorical devices are featured in the conversation. For instance, the analysis should have reflected the role of **subject-positioning** in the creation of the meaning of the conversation. You should have also made mention of the heterogeneity of subject positioning and how it influenced your constructed conversation. Again, you would have indicated how, in your created text, **style** features as a rhetorical device that has a bearing on the diction and the exchanges within the adjacency pairs that would have been reflected in the conversation. Your analysis would have also drawn attention to how your constructed conversation served as adequate demonstration of the manner in which style, in turn, affects the register of the conversation with regard to the **tone and mood** in conversations.

(15)

Question 2.2

Question 2.2 focuses on the ability to provide definitions for key conversational concepts and demonstrate how they feature in texts. In other words, you should be able to identify the role and function of these conversational concepts in texts.

Read the text on **pages 99-100** of your prescribed text book, ***Critical reading and writing*** by Andrew Goatly and answer the questions below. The text is a dialogue between **P & W**. Define the following concepts and then show how these feature in the given text:

Turn-taking	(7)
Implicature	(7)
Inter-subjectivity	(7)
Tone – i.e the way in which context influences the pitch, mood and register	(7)
Speech acts/ conversations actions- including the different purposes of speech acts	(7)

N.B.: **2 marks** will be awarded for a clear and detailed definition. **5 marks** will be allocated for a demonstration of how the concept features in the text.

Discussion

Your response to this question should have entailed definitions of the listed conversational aspects that are featured within the context of the stipulated text.

You would have noted that the context of the conversation is an interview session in which **P**, as the policeman, is the interviewer and **W**, as the witness, the interviewee. This would have drawn attention, albeit obliquely, to the nature of the exchanges and their bearing on the **turn-taking** structure. In accordance with the requirements of the question, you would have thus defined the aspect of turn-taking as the way in which speakers manage conversations to allow each other the opportunity to communicate their opinions within the context of the conversation.

For example, you would have observed how the aspect of turn-taking features to in the conversation when **W** is abruptly interrupted by **P**, (*in lines 4 & 5*) as he attempts to provide further information, "He was wearing a..."// "And how tall?" **P**'s interruption comes across as a flouting of the principle of turn-taking. However, it simultaneously serves to illustrate the concepts of **implicature** and **inter-subjectivity** in which speakers assume a common understanding of intentions. Within this frame of reference, therefore, you would have noted that it would be reasonable for **P** to refrain from furnishing further information because **W** understands, by implicature, what the apparently ill-phrased or incomplete question is about (*line 5*).

In addition, you would have pointed out how the interrogative context lends a curt and impersonal **tone** to the dialogue which comprises naturally occurring questions and responses. This is reflected throughout the short utterances that serve as exchanges in the **speech act** between P & W. The **purpose of the speech act** is for W to provide P with specific information, thus dispensing with the need for an exchange of pleasantries or peripheral information. This is evidenced when **W** raises a concern about the time because he has "...to fetch the children from school" (*lines 8 & 9*). P's response is indicative of the 'business-like' context: "Not much longer, no. What about his clothes?" (*line 10*). This confirms how the context of the interrogative speech act affects the **pitch, mood** and **register**.

(30)

TOTAL: 50

Best Wishes for the exam!

Neo Maseko