

Tutorial letter 201/1/2016

**APPLIED ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES:
FURTHER EXPLORATIONS**

ENG2601

Semester 1

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

This Tutorial Letter contains important information on pre-examination information and feedback on Assignment 01.

BAR CODE

Dear Students

Thank you for submitting your first assignment. A number of you dealt competently with the question and provided well-researched and argued essays. Well done!

This feedback tutorial letter serves to help you understand the requirements pertaining to Assignment 01. This assignment was based on Units 1, 2 and 3 of your Study Guide, and you were also advised to read Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of your prescribed textbook *Working with Texts* by Carter et al. (2008) before you attempted this assignment.

In order to complete this assignment, you were required to read Text 5.5 on page 147 of your prescribed textbook, *Working with Texts* by Carter et al. (2008). You were then asked to write a well-structured essay of about 2 ½ pages (approximately 1000 words) in which you compared and contrasted five given texts. The purpose of the assignment was to develop your ability to analyse texts and notice differences between them focusing on the following aspects:

- Genre
- Context
- Tone
- Register
- Style
- Purpose
- Figurative language
- Rhetorical devices
- Discourse markers
- Language features

The use of these devices in academic writing is discussed and clearly exemplified in Study Unit 1 (English language systems: persuasion and narration/ rhetorical analysis), Unit 4 (for use of transitions) and Unit 6 (for tone). Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of your prescribed textbook *Working with Texts* by Carter et al. (2008) elaborate further on these aspects of language use.

Because you were tasked to write an essay, credit was given to pieces of writing that had a clear structure with an introduction, a main body and a conclusion.

Structure of the essay

In your introduction, you needed to do the following:

- clearly indicate that you were aware of the purpose of the essay, i.e. to analyse the given texts, comparing and contrasting the aspects specified;
- outline the essay's main argument and its structure;
- use key sentences that help achieve the above e.g. "The purpose of this essay is to compare and contrast..."; "The essay will focus on the following aspects..."; "Further, the essay will provide evidence from the text in order to support the analysis...".

In the main body:

- you needed to demonstrate your ability to use academic English conventions, particularly the use of comparative discourse markers and transitions as you addressed the different aspects relevant to the essay question. The use of transitions was particularly important in this essay because you needed to give the reader the necessary ‘signposting’ which indicated that you were moving from a discussion of one text to another (given that you had a total of five texts to compare and contrast), using discourse markers to indicate that you were discussing one particular aspect such as ‘style’ as it applied to a particular text and then comparing and contrasting the same aspect (style) in the next text. Clear transitions and signals help create cohesion and coherence in an essay.

A conclusion in which you:

- indicated that you were making a transition from analysing the texts to concluding your argument;
- highlighted the key points of your essay, e.g. “The main purpose of the essay was to compare and contrast ...”; “It has been shown that the five texts belong to different genres...”.

PLEASE NOTE: The discussion provided below is an example of how you could have approached your essay. Thus it is not exhaustive. Only some of the possible aspects that could have been explored in your essay are included in the discussion that follows.

DISCUSSION

The five texts that you analysed for your assignment belong to different genres. ‘Genre’ refers to the type or form of a text. The classification of text into genres is based on criteria such as the communicator’s intended audience, purpose and topic. Thus Text 1 belongs to the genre of business letters where the communicative purpose is to advise the customer on the practical steps she/he needs to take in order to be granted an overdraft. Text 2, which is the *Teacher’s report*, on the other hand, belongs to the genre of school reports the purpose of which is to appraise concerned parties such as other teachers, school authorities and parents on the conduct of a student. Text 3, the *Memo from a university professor to his staff* belongs to a different genre altogether, which is that of business, organisational communication, where the purpose is to convey internal organisational information. The intended audience for the memo is the staff which is under the direct supervision of the professor, the author of the memo. Unlike Texts 1, 2 and 3, Text 4, the *Biology exam paper* belongs to the academic writing genre and the purpose is to test the knowledge of the learners in an academic setting. The intended audience of the text in this case would be the candidates who have to write the examination. Text 5 belongs to the business communication genre where the purpose is to inform, i.e. communicate the hotel’s requirements regarding checking-out procedures. You will note that in identifying the genre, we have also identified the intended audience for each genre as well as the purpose of the text. You have also noted that in identifying the purpose of a text, we focus on the question ‘Why?’ Why did the author of the text compose that particular text? Part of your task was to answer this question with reference to Texts 1 to 5. Was it for the purposes of informing, persuading, entertaining, providing guidelines, explaining something, giving instructions, encouraging someone to do something, describing, or telling a story?

‘Tone’ refers to the attitude of the author toward a subject or the audience of the message. Writers can transmit tone: humorous, critical, somber, excited etc. through their choice of words. In Text 1, for example, the author of the text begins by saying “Thank you for your letter” which conveys a positive and appreciative attitude to the customer in a way that says “we appreciate the fact that you are our customer”. However, the author uses the modal ‘would’ to convey the fact that inasmuch as the customer is appreciated as an important client, certain banking rules had to be followed before the request for an overdraft could be granted. The use of informal language at the end of the manager’s message in Text 1 is noteworthy. Reference to “earning your daily crust”, with its colloquial, informal choice of language, could be the manager’s attempt to lighten the serious, business-like tone of the letter. However, it could also be considered inappropriate in this type of communication.

Some parts of the other four texts are definitely inappropriate for their audiences and purposes: the formal tone and register of the university professor’s communiqué is abruptly changed with his sudden use of the colloquial phrase ‘screw up’. If this produced a slight shock in you as a reader, this proves how conditioned we are to expect a certain kind of language in a particular context. Similarly, the school report’s use of phrases like ‘a real pain’ and ‘bone idle’, and the expression that frogs go up to the surface ‘for a breather’ in the context of a biology exam paper which should use a consistently scientific register, have a jarring effect. The slang phrases ‘get a move on’ and ‘hanging about’ are equally out of place in the hotel’s otherwise formal, courteous notice.

Similar analyses of tone, register and rhetorical devices could be undertaken with the rest of the texts, focusing on their similarities and differences. The secret of success in such analysis is paying close attention to the linguistic details of the texts, and considering carefully how the writer’s choice of language produces certain effects. Explaining these effects is not always easy and requires practice. This is what this assignment aimed to give you the opportunity to do.

EXAMINATION GUIDELINES

The examination is **TWO HOURS** long. It consists of **THREE** sections, and you must answer all questions from each section. You will have to answer questions on each of the following sections of the module:

- English Language Systems: Persuasion and Narration/Rhetorical Analysis
- Language and Meaning
- Register and Genre
- Text Cohesion
- English Language Use and Variation
- Academic English

The examination for ENG2601 counts for 75% of your final mark. Your assignments count for the remaining 25%. It is therefore in your interests to be well prepared for the examination.

In Section A and Section B you will be required to read extracts from different sources and answer questions demonstrating your ability to read closely and with attention to the specific features and details of the texts. Section C is an essay-type question.

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

- Read your Study Guide and the prescribed book. Make notes on the important features of each genre of writing.
- Understand the specific terminology used in this module.
- Analyse and interpret texts provided in your study material. Write notes on each of the texts, outlining the different language features and strategies that are used in them.
- Pay attention to the way language usage creates different meanings and purposes.
- Practise the writing of sample essays in order to develop your ability to write in a style appropriate for academic purposes.

Good luck with your studies!

ENG2601 Teaching Team