

# Tutorial letter 201/1/2016

## GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE: THEORY, STYLE AND POETICS

### ENG2602

#### Semester 1

#### Department of English Studies

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Persuasive Prose or Conversational Analysis

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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!

## RESPONSE 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 information in Chapter 1, 2 and 5 of your prescribed textbook and the information contained in Study Unit 3 of your study guide for ENG 2602 forms the foundation for this learning section. Please read and utilise what you have learnt in your answers to the questions below. The relevant activities provided in the prescribed reading will help you to read and analyse a text critically.

Carefully read the text “Think: The teen brain, drugs & Psychosis” taken from Momentum Health Members, Jump Magazine (Issue 1, 2015), p.14-15.

This text is available at the following URL:

[http://epublishbyus.com/jump\\_issue\\_1\\_2015/10040567#.VWgLu8-gpHw](http://epublishbyus.com/jump_issue_1_2015/10040567#.VWgLu8-gpHw)

Write an essay in which you critically analyse the text, focusing on the way language strategies and the layout of the text are used to create meaning. Please draw on the text analysis techniques that you have learnt in the course and provide textual evidence to support your answer. The following questions could be helpful to guide you when you structure your essay in a logical and clear manner. These questions should, however, not be formulated as subtitles in your essay and should be answered within the logical development of your ideas.

What is this text about?

What type or genre of text is this?

How is the text organised and how does this support the meaning the author wishes to communicate to the reader?

What is the aim of this text and how does it build up an argument to convince the reader?

What does this text presume about the reader? What presumptions, assumptions or ideologies are evident in the text?

What language strategies or techniques such as metaphors, irony, persuasion, recount, reporting, speech, inferences, rhetorical, formal and informal register etc. does the writer use in this text and with what purpose?

How does the language which has been used affect the meaning of the text?

If you use other sources to assist you in your essay, please include them in your bibliography to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism will lead to a 0% mark for your essay as this is a serious offense. Please proof read your essay before you submit to remove any typing, spelling and grammar errors that may have occurred.

To answer this question, you could have approached it in the manner outlined below. Please note that there is not one, correct way to write an essay and that you could have approached the question differently, as long as you address the question and demonstrate that you have reached the outcomes of the module (you can find these on p.4-5 of Tutorial Letter 101).

The assignment asks you to do an analysis of the text and provides seven questions to guide your analysis. Your first step would be to read through the text a few times and then to answer the questions in paragraph form. Please note that this is only the first step in answering the question.

This is the way in which I answered the seven questions:

- What is this text about?

The text is about the dangers of using drugs, especially for teenagers who are more vulnerable to its negative effects because they are in a developmental stage where their brains are undergoing major changes. Drugs can alter and harm this development process with detrimental consequences for the drug user.

- What type or genre of text is this?

This is an example of persuasive article, found in *Jump*, the membership magazine of Momentum Health. It is written to persuade the reader that the use of drugs is especially harmful to teenagers and their development.

- How is the text organised and how does this support the meaning the author wishes to communicate to the reader?

The layout is unthreatening to a non-assured reader, since the text does not follow a narrative structure. The headline catches the attention of the non-assured reader with its double meaning. The reader can either **think** about the information provided or be alerted to the effects of drugs on the ability of a brain to **think** in the future. The text is visually informative, allowing readers to read selectively and in any order they choose. The text consists of an eye-catching photo, a thought provoking headline, informative text to provide background as to why this information is so important, three statistical facts provided in a prominent and eye-catching spot and an information box on the right hand side in which salient facts about how the most popular drugs can cause harm. In another coloured block on the left top corner of the second page information is provided on what a parent can do to protect their youngster. It gives explains what psychosis is and why you would wish to avoid that happening to your teenager. The last information box is visually emphasised with an arrow to associate it with the future. In this box, Momentum Health informs the reader how their medical aid might assist persons in need of rehabilitation.

By presenting a sequence of facts and hints, the text uses the **stacked** generic structure. The non-assured reader can choose to read different categories and need not follow from the beginning to the end. For example, the reader could start with statistics section and then move to the other sections.

- What is the aim of this text and how does it build up an argument to convince the reader?

As stated above, the aim of the text is to persuade the reader that drug use is especially harmful to teenagers and their development. This is achieved by the following persuasive techniques:

- An expert's opinion is cited

The main body of the text cites Dr Lize Weich, a psychiatrist at Stellenbosch University. Her profession as well as her association with the university reinforces the idea that she is a credible source of information on the topic of drug use.

- Statistics are included

The text includes alarming statistics emphasizing how widespread and common drug use is among teenagers. The source is cited as the Anti Drug Alliance South Africa 2012 Survey, which again suggests credibility.

- Logical and fear appeals are used

By citing facts, the text makes a logical appeal to the reader. The facts cited are also fear-inducing as they emphasise the most detrimental effects of drug use. The reader of the text may fear for their own or their children's health after reading it.

- What does this text presume about the reader? What presumptions, assumptions or ideologies are evident in the text?

The text appears in a magazine that is sent to the members of Momentum Health. The healthier Momentum Health's members are, the fewer claims they will submit. Therefore, it is in Momentum Health's best financial interest that their members are healthy. This magazine is aimed at informing its audience how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. We can thus presume that the audience of this text is health conscious and prepared to take action in the interest of their health. They are therefore open to suggestions on how to improve their health or to warnings about lifestyle choices and habits that are detrimental to their health. This specific article, which is about the effects of drugs on the teenage brain, is aimed at the parents of teenagers. This is specifically implied by the heading "Protect your child."

- What language strategies or techniques such as metaphors, irony, persuasion, recount, reporting, speech, inferences, rhetorical, formal and informal register etc. does the writer use in this text and with what purpose?

The persuasive techniques used in the text are discussed above. In addition to this, a word with a double meaning is used in the headline. As stated above, it suggests that the article presents the reader with something to think about, but it also points to the teenage brain's ability to think once it has been compromised by drugs. The language used is colloquial but still maintains an authoritative tone. This is achieved by combining formal diction, such as "adolescent," "mature," and "substances," with informal expressions such as "without thinking twice," "dagga joint," and "a bit of harmless fun." The effect of this is to make the message more familiar and accessible to a lay audience while maintaining credibility.

There is a repetition of the fact that the teenage brain is not mature yet in the sentences "the part of the brain that controls reasoning and impulses isn't fully mature yet" and "adolescent brains are not mature enough to calculate and avoid risks." This emphasizes that the teenage brain is especially susceptible to the negative effects of drugs, which in turn stresses the importance of the text's message.

Through a metaphor, the teenage brain is compared to a piece of machinery, since it is described to being "under construction" and the teenagers are referred to as its "owners." These are words used to describe and refer to objects such as cars. This suggests that in the same way that a car

is built, a brain develops. When this process is interfered with, it can have permanent, irreversible consequences.

There is parallelism in the last sentence of the passage. The second degree of comparison is repeated three times and the last two adjectives are also repeated: "The younger a person is when they start using drugs and the higher the usage in volume and frequency, the higher the risk." This last sentence summarizes the content of the text in a dramatic and unambiguous way. The risks of drug use are therefore emphasized in a clear, bottom-line way.

- How does the language which has been used affect the meaning of the text?

As stated above, the text combines an informal register with formal diction, which makes it accessible while retaining an authoritative tone.

You should know that this analysis is by no means exhaustive – there are more observations that you could have made about the text. It is also very important to note that these notes of mine are only the result of the first step of answering the question. Now that I have an idea what the excerpt is about and have answered the guiding questions, it is time to plan my essay.

Please follow the steps in Tutorial Letter 301 for more guidance in planning your essay.

**TOTAL: 50**

Kind regards

Mariëtta Bettman

## QUESTION 2: CONVERSATION

The assignment 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.

This assignment was based on 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. In these study units, you were introduced to speech acts, co-operative principles, politeness strategies, implicature, turn-taking mechanisms as well as techniques for analysing conversations. In this assignment, you were expected to apply conversation techniques you have learnt in this module to a comprehensive analysis of the text/dialogue. This means that your analysis needed to have been presented in a coherent manner, well-substantiated, and written in standard academic English.

### QUESTION 2.1

Read the text on **page 138** of the prescribed textbook and then respond to the question below. The text is a dialogue between a **teacher** and **pupil**. This question will specifically look at your ability to analyse a conversation in relation to the context. The context of this conversation has been provided at the beginning. Write an analysis of no more than **200 words (approximately ½ a page)** in which you describe how this context influences the way in which this conversation is conducted. In your analysis refer to the text to comment on the following:

Maxim of quantity	(5)
Maxim of quality	(5)
Maxim of relevance	(5)
Maxim of manner	(5)

Politeness

(5)

**NB:** Marks will be awarded for demonstration of clarity of thought, relevance, coherent presentation of ideas and the ability to provide appropriate textual evidence.

Your answer should have made reference to the four maxims of co-operation principle and politeness strategies in the dialogue between a teacher and pupil. All these maxims of co-operation and politeness contribute to the context (and meaning) of this dialogue. Thus your analysis needed to pay particular attention to how the context, as described at the beginning of the text, influences the way in which this dialogue is conducted. In addition, your analysis of the key elements of the conversation and structure should have been supported with relevant textual evidence and examples to illustrate the relationship between the maxims of co-operation principle, politeness strategies and context as described in this dialogue.

Therefore, credit was given to students who demonstrated an ability to analyse and engage with texts critically, to interpret the use of the maxims of co-operation principles and politeness strategies, to evaluate how these conversational principles and strategies contribute to meaning, as well as affect the context of the text as a whole. Furthermore, students were also given credit for logical development of ideas, relevant use of textual evidence, maintaining topical unity throughout the whole discussion, consistent and appropriate referencing of sources.

The discussion below serves as a guideline of how you could have answered **Question 2.1**. Thus, it is not exhaustive, and does not include all of the conversation features and strategies in the text/dialogue.

## DISCUSSION

The setting of the dialogue is in a teaching and learning environment during which the teacher played an audio-recording of a man with a strange, unfamiliar or different accent as a way of introducing his/her lesson on accents. Line 1 'what are you laughing at?' presents the **maxim of quantity** because it highlights the specific focus of the whole dialogue as well as the tone of discussion between the Teacher (T) and Pupil (P). The information provided in line 1 is informative and sufficient in terms what is to follow in the rest of the dialogue, and in setting the context for the reader. Throughout the discussion, we notice that the T is trying to establish why the P is laughing as it can be evidenced in line 5 'you're laughing at nothing, nothing at all?'

Lines 2-5 introduce the **maxim of manner** as the exchanges are ambiguous and lend themselves to different interpretations - T's questioning and probing manner could mean that s/he wants to find out whether P understands what the lesson is about; or whether T might have mentioned something without providing the necessary explanation; or whether there is specific content of the tape contains humorous, funny, comical material. P's repetitive and brief responses in lines 2 and 3 lack adequate information and motivation to account for his/her behaviour. Hence, P's vague responses here flout the maxim of manner because his/her actions can be construed as deviating from the co-operative principle.

Furthermore, P's response 'Nothing' (lines 2 and 3) suggests that the **maxim of quality** is deliberately flouted. T's attempts to elicit precise, explicit, definite information from P do not seem to yield positive results. Thus, T's dissatisfaction can be evidenced in the use of expressions such as 'pardon?' (line 3) and '...nothing at all?' (line 5). T's attitude demonstrates that s/he is not convinced or persuaded by P's reply that there is nothing funny, unusual, strange that prompted the laughter.

In lines 6-8 it becomes evident that P might have misunderstood the objective of the lesson as the answer given seems irrelevant and unrelated to the discussion on accents. This misinterpretation points out to the **maxim of relevance**. P's response 'No...It's really funny because they don't think as though they were there they might not like it and it sounds rather a pompous attitude' is ambiguous and the content does not correspond with preceding utterances. It can be argued that there is a break-down in conversation as both P and T are not talking about the same thing.

On the whole, T and P demonstrate **politeness** in different ways. T's manner of presenting questions in lines 1, 3, 5 - 'what are you laughing at?; 'pardon?'; you are laughing at nothing, nothing at all?' - could be construed as authoritative, regulatory in order to maintain discipline and orderliness in the classroom. Although the message of obedience, conformity, compliance is directed at P at this stage, it can be assumed that T is communicating to the rest of the pupils regarding appropriate and inappropriate classroom behaviour. P's repeated response 'Nothing' seems to be a polite way of acknowledging T's request as opposed to keeping silent or being impolite.

(25)

## Question 2.2

*Construct a conversation or dialogue (of about 10 lines) between 2 people in which you demonstrate the extent to which particular expressions and speech acts contribute to meaning. In other words, how are expressions and speech acts used to serve a particular purpose and function? **The conversation/dialogue should be your own construction.** Then analyse the conversation/dialogue and using the following questions as a guideline. Provide relevant examples from the conversation/dialogue to support your answer. Your analysis should not be more than ½ a page.*

*What is the conversation/dialogue about?*

*Why was the conversation/dialogue written?*

*What is the purpose or function of the conversation/dialogue and how does it achieve that?*

*For whom is this conversation/dialogue intended?*

*How are expressions and speech acts used to serve a particular purpose and function?*

*What linguistic strategies are used and why?*

**NB: 5 Marks** will be awarded for your ability to construct a credible and logical conversation/dialogue and **20 Marks** for clearly illustrating the purpose and function of specific expressions and speech acts.

Your answer to question 2.2 needed to include a conversation or a dialogue between 2 people that you have composed as well as an analysis. For instance, this could be a telephone conversation between a parent and child, a dramatic dialogue in a play, movie or television series, a social interaction between friends, a debate/argument in a meeting, a classroom interaction between a teacher and learner or a therapy session involving a doctor and a patient. In your analysis, you were expected to focus on the content of the conversation as a whole and demonstrate how the speakers achieve meaning and purpose. Furthermore, what specific linguistic strategies does each speaker employ to negotiate, maintain and respond during the course of the conversation? In other words, how do the speakers open and end the conversation; take and give each other turns; respond to questions; introduce or develop the topic, show politeness and cooperation. For example, do speakers use direct 'clean the house'; indirect 'she said she wasn't interested'; apology 'I'm sorry I'm late'; sympathy 'I really feel sorry for him' speech acts to describe or to express their feelings and actions. Speakers can draw on a range of conversational and linguistic strategies informal greetings 'hi', 'hey, how are you?'; change of intonation 'shut up!'; response or reaction an utterance 'hmm', 'yep', 'okay'; non-verbal response or paralinguistic features such as pointing a finger at someone.



Credit was given to students who were able to construct a meaningful real life conversation as well as apply techniques covered in this module to analyse conversation.

(25)

**TOTAL: 50**

Kind regards

Pinky Makoe