

Tutorial letter 201/1/2014

APPLIED ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES: FURTHER EXPLORATIONS ENG2601

Semester 1

Name of Department: English Studies

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This tutorial letter contains important 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 questions and provided well-researched, well-argued essays. Well done!

This assignment is based on Study Units 1, 2 and 3 of your Study Guide. In these study units you were introduced to persuasive and rhetorical devices, register and genre as well as the relationship between language and meaning. Therefore, you were expected to draw on the text analysis techniques that you have developed in this module. In addition, you needed to provide relevant evidence from the text to support your discussion. Credit was given to those students who related the discussion to what they have learnt in the module ENG2601, and structured their answer in an essay format. This means that the discussion in your essay needed to be presented in a coherent and logical manner with a clear introduction, body and conclusion.

For this assignment you were expected to write an essay of no more than 2 ½ pages (approximately 1000 words) in which you analyse the ‘Argument Clinic’ dialogue on pages 175-178 of the prescribed textbook *Introducing English Language* by Louise Mullany and Peter Stockwell. You needed to read the dialogue carefully, paying particular attention to the following aspects

- language features and strategies used by speakers in this text
- the types of argumentation techniques that are used in this text
- rhetorical devices in the text and the purposes for which these are used
- the ways in which meaning is created in this text

PLEASE NOTE: The discussion provided below is an example of how you could have approached your essay. Thus it is not exhaustive. There may be other aspects that have not been covered in this analysis.

The discussion:

This text is a dialogue involving four speakers. Initially the conversation is between the Receptionist, Man and Angry Man and later on Other Man joins in. The opening of the dialogue sets out the reason why this particular Man has approached the Argument clinic: ‘Good morning, I’d like to have an argument, please’. In addition, we learn that Man has not been to the clinic before based on the Receptionist’s question ‘...have you been here before?’ to which he responds ‘No, this is my first time’. It appears that the role of the Argument clinic is to train people in argument techniques and skills, at a fee, as it can be noticed from the Other Man’s response - ‘I’m not allowed to argue unless you PAY’. What is interesting at the beginning is how the Receptionist responds to the request ‘I see, well we’ll see who’s free at the moment. Mr. Bakely’s free, but he’s a little bit conciliatory. No. Try Mr. Barnhart, room 12’. The Receptionist’s choice of words here suggests that Mr Bakely is perhaps not assertive, forceful or challenging enough compared to Mr Barnhart. Hence the Man is advised to approach Mr Barnhart in room 12. Mr Barnhart is characterised as someone who is able to facilitate a stimulating, exciting and interesting argument. This implies that Man will benefit immensely from Mr Barnhart’s approach and develop the necessary argumentation skills.

In terms of argumentation/persuasive techniques, the three participants - Angry Man, Man and Other Man – all use different linguistic strategies to argue or put their points across. For example, Angry Man tends to use provocative language to challenge Man: ‘WHADDAYOU WANT?...DON’T GIVE ME THAT, YOU SNOTTY-FACED EVIL PAN OF DROPPINGS!..SHUT UP FESTERING GOB, YOU TIT! YOUR TYPE MAKES ME PUKE! YOU VACUOUS STUFFY-NOSED MALADOROUS PERVERT!!!’. The choice of words here is ironical, sarcastic and somewhat humorous in effect, because it is shocking to hear such a torrent of insults in response to what is an inoffensive utterance. Angry Man’s response would be totally inappropriate in a normal social situation. It can be argued that this is a deliberate attempt by Angry Man to engage and provoke Man to respond in a similar manner to utterances such as ‘snotty-

‘faced’, ‘evil pan of droppings’, ‘festering gob’, ‘stuffy-nosed...pervert’ etc. Considering the context of this dialogue, specifically that this takes place at an Argument Clinic, it would be expected that Man should be expected to present and support his position. Unlike Angry Man, Other Man employs emphatic language ‘I have told you once...I’m telling you I did!...Now let’s get one thing perfectly clear: I most definitely told you!’ as a way to get Man to persuade. Even though Angry Man and Other Man use different linguistic strategies and argumentation techniques, both are forceful and definite in expression. That is, the approach of the two colleagues is aimed at developing, cultivating, enhancing and sharpening Man’s ability to reason or make his case accordingly.

The conversational exchange between Other Man and Man further reveals how both speakers use rhetorical devices to influence the direction of the dialogue. The repeated use of utterances such as - ‘I’ve told you...’, ‘No you didn’t!’, ‘I’m telling you I did!’, ‘You didn’t!’, ‘...Anyway, I did!’, ‘You most certainly did not!’ - shows the role of rhetorical devices in a communication and the extent to which speakers can employ these as effective persuasive devices to subtly influence the kind of response that they want to get from one another. It appears that Other Man creates an impact through the exaggerated use of the following utterances: ‘I’ve told you once...I most definitely told you...Oh yes I did’. Man refutes Other Man’s claims and defends his position by repeatedly saying ‘No you didn’t!...Oh, this is futile...I came here for a good argument...An argument isn’t just contradiction’. It is clear that the intention of the speakers is to manipulate the conversation to their own benefit.

As you can see, there is a lot you can write about and draw on from this dialogue. You need to carefully read the text and make sense of what it is all about, then identify and explain language strategies, argumentation techniques and rhetorical devices that are used as well as the purposes thereof. As you can see, I have not managed to discuss every aspect of this dialogue. However, my aim was to show you how to go about an analysis so that you can continue in greater confidence, discussing as much as you can in your essay and paying particular attention to the ways speakers in this text create meaning.

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:

- Cohesion
- English language use and variation
- Genre and register
- Language use and context
- 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 interest 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 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 of the important features of each genre of writing.
- Familiarise yourself with specialised terms 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 the texts.
- Pay attention to the way language usage creates different meanings and effects as you analyse the extracts in your study material in preparation for the examination.
- Write sample essays for practice in order to develop your ability to write in a style appropriate for academic purposes.

Good luck with your studies!

Dr P Makoe (Primary Lecturer)